UC San Diego UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Rethinking the Slasher Film : : Violated Bodies and Spectators in Halloween, Friday the 13th, and A Nightmare on Elm Street

Permalink https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8021w3p5

Author Anderson, Aaron C.

Publication Date 2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Rethinking the Slasher Film: Violated Bodies and Spectators in *Halloween, Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Aaron C. Anderson

Committee in charge:

Professor Alain J.-J. Cohen, Chair Professor Babette Mangolte Professor Wm. Arctander O'Brien Professor Don E. Wayne Professor Yingjin Zhang

2013

Copyright

Aaron C. Anderson, 2013

All rights reserved.

The dissertation of Aaron C. Anderson is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

to justine

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Abbreviations	viii
List of Figures	ix
Acknowledgements	xiv
Vita	xvi
Abstract of the Dissertation	xvii
Introduction	
Excavating the Slasher Film: A Latent Monstrosity	1
Works Cited	
Chapter One. Apparitions of Michael Myers: The Cinematic Destruc Small-Town America in John Carpenter's <i>Halloween</i> (1978)	tion of
Introduction	12
Halloween and the Representative Features of the Slasher Film	
Constructing an "Abject" Spectator: Aggression and Repression	
The "Skin Ego" and the Abject	
Michael Myers as "Contagion"	

A Physical and Psychological Monster	64
An Uncanny Villain	67
Haunting, Stalking, and Voyeurism	68
Small-Town Spaces and the Myths of America	80
Teenagers: Rebellion and Punishment	100
Haddonfield at Night: Turning Small-Town America Inside Out	107
Conclusion: Sadism, Masochism, and Claustrophobia	114
Works Cited	117

Chapter Two. Spaces of Horror: Graphic Violence, the "Culture Wars," and Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980)

Introduction	120
A Certain Pleasure in Viewing: The "Bisexual" Spectator	126
The POV and Viewer Identification	143
A Spatialized Horror: Parents, Teens, and Monsters	154
On-Screen Graphic Violence: Special Make-Up Effects in <i>Friday the 13th</i>	165
The Murders of Jack and Marcie: Teenage Rebellion and Graphic Violence	173
Home Entertainment, the Multiplex, and "Family Values"	191
Violence, Ratings, and Outcry	198
Siskel, Ebert, and Legacies of Protest	206
Conclusion: From Spaces of Pleasure to Spaces of Horror	213
Works Cited	215

Chapter Three. "One, Two, Freddy's Coming for You": The Dream-Work and Recursivity in Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984)

Introduction	. 219
The Dream-Work: Condensation, Displacement, Symbolism, and Repression	. 222
Falling Asleep, Waking Up, and "Ego Feelings"	. 230
Recursive Images Part 1: Signifiers of Freddy Krueger	. 234
Recursive Images Part 2: (Torn) Fabric and the Unsettling of Boundaries	. 245
Recursive Images Part 3: Symbolism and the Crucifix	. 254
Claustrophobic Spaces: The Suburbs and the Suburban House	. 268
Conclusion: Interrogating the Cinema and the Slasher Film	. 282
Works Cited	. 286

Conclusion

All Hell Breaks Loose: The Monster Inside	
The Slasher Film as Contagion	
Works Cited	
References	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BD	Blu-ray disc
CARA	Classification and Rating Administration (previously known as the Code and Rating Administration)
MPAA	Motion Picture Association of America
NATO	National Association of Theatre Owners
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts
PMRC	Parents' Music Resource Center
POV	Point-of-view shot
RIAA	Recording Industry Association of America
SE	The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Halloween, 1963: The Myers house (<i>Halloween</i> 0:02:30). Blu-ray disc (BD) still.	44
Figure 1.2: Gazing through the window: Michael's sister and her boyfriend (<i>Halloween</i> 0:02:59). BD still.	50
Figure 1.3: Abject corpse, through Myers' mask (Halloween 0:06:00). BD still	55
Figure 1.4: Unmasked: Revealing the child killer (<i>Halloween</i> 0:06:32). BD still	58
Figure 1.5: Myers choking Annie (<i>Halloween</i> 0:53:41). BD still	60
Figure 1.6: Shattering a secondary skin: Myers attacks the nurse (<i>Halloween</i> 0:10:32). BD still	66
Figure 1.7: Laurie watches Myers watch her (<i>Halloween</i> 0:15:54). BD still	71
Figure 1.8: From inside the school: Protective framing from Laurie's point-of-view as Myers stalks her (<i>Halloween</i> 0:15:56). BD still	72
Figure 1.9: Myers stalks Tommy, refusing to penetrate the secondary skin of the school's chain-link fence (<i>Halloween</i> 0:17:33). BD still	74
Figure 1.10: Frames within frames within frames: Tommy leaves the schoolyard and we are trapped (<i>Halloween</i> 0:18:13). BD still	75
Figure 1.11: Annie changing, the threat that Myers poses totally unperceived (<i>Halloween</i> 0:43:09). BD still	79
Figure 1.12: An intersection in utopian Haddonfield (<i>Halloween</i> 0:11:20). BD still.	87
Figure 1.13: The park across from the Strode house (<i>Halloween</i> 0:11:25). BD still.	89
Figure 1.14: The Myers house, present day (<i>Halloween</i> 0:13:19). BD still	91
Figure 1.15: Myers, an unperceived threat (Halloween 0:14:10). BD still	96

Figure 1.16: Watching Myers watch Annie greet her employers (<i>Halloween</i> 0:36:01). BD still	99
Figure 1.17: Myers slams on the brakes (0:21:48). BD still 1	.03
Figure 1.18: The girls look at Myers' stopped car (Halloween 0:21:59). BD still. 1	.04
Figure 1.19: Myers appears from behind a hedge (Halloween 0:23:42). BD still 1	.05
Figure 1.20: Myers appears in Mr. Riddle's yard (Halloween 0:26:39). BD still 1	.06
Figure 1.21: Myers has vanished (<i>Halloween</i> 0:26:41). BD still 1	.07
Figure 1.22: Neighbors ignore Laurie's screams for help (<i>Halloween</i> 1:18:20). BD still	.11
Figure 1.23: The opening shot of the film, 1963: The Myers house, 1963 (<i>Halloween</i> 0:02:30). BD still	.14
Figure 1.24: The final shot of the film (<i>Halloween</i> 1:28:36). BD still 1	.14
Figure 2.1: POV: Voyeuristically watching two counselors at Camp Crystal Lake (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:02:55 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:02:59). BD still	.47
Figure 2.2: POV: Voyeurism and teenage sexuality at camp (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:04:30 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:04:15). BD still	.48
Figure 2.3: POV: Interrupting and getting dressed (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:04:47 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:04:30). BD still. 1	.49
Figure 2.4: POV: "We weren't doing anything" (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:04:56 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:04:37). BD still	.50
Figure 2.5: On-screen graphic violence: The audience's first glimpse of blood (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:05:05 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:04:43). BD still	.51
Figure 2.6: A scream, frozen in terror (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:05:33 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:05:11). BD still	.52
Figure 2.7: Frozen and over-exposed (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:05:35 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:05:13). BD still	.53
Figure 2.8: Cunningham's reflexive cinema: The film's title card shattering the	

camera lens (*Friday the 13th* 0:05:40 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:05:20). BD still. 154

Figure 2.9: At the lake: Largely free from adult authority, the camp counselors relax (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:22:43 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:23:06). BD still	158
Figure 2.10: POV: Mrs. Voorhees stalks the camp counselors (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:22:51 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:23:13). BD still	159
Figure 2.11: POV: Mrs. Voorhees retreats slightly (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:23:39 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:23:58). BD still.	160
Figure 2.12: Pairing sex and death: Savini's special make-up effects and the abject corpse (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:39:55 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:40:14). BD still	178
Figure 2.13: Pairing sex and death: A close-up of Marcie's face (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:39:57 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:40:15). BD still	179
Figure 2.14: A violent assault from an unseen threat (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:42:36 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:42:53). BD still.	181
Figure 2.15: Potentially X-rated violence: An arrow through the neck (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:42:42 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:42:58). BD still	182
Figure 2.16: Jack and the ("uncut") performance of suffering and death (<i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:42:59). BD still.	183
Figure 2.17: Frames within the frame: Voyeuristically watching Marcie (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:44:06 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:44:44). BD still.	184
Figure 2.18: Marcie playfully revealing the audience (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:46:56 / <i>Friday the 13th Uncut</i> 0:46:36). BD still.	186
Figure 2.19: An unperceived threat (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:46:02 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:46:42). BD still.	187
Figure 2.20: Abject terror, the zoom, and touches of 1970s exploitation cinema (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:46:08 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:46:49). BD still	188
Figure 2.21: Special make-up effects and on-screen suffering (<i>Friday the 13th</i> 0:46:12 / <i>Friday the 13th</i> Uncut 0:46:52). BD still	189
Figure 3.1: Donning the weapon and announcing the director (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:00:56). BD still	236
Figure 3.2: Freddy points his weapon at us (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:01:01). BD still	237

Figure 3.3: Freddy's green and red sweatshirt (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:39:48). BD still	. 238
Figure 3.4: Blurring fantasy and reality: Tina in a body bag (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:24:21). BD still.	. 239
Figure 3.5: Tina's corpse being pulled down the hallway (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:25:04). BD still	. 240
Figure 3.6: "No running in the hallway" (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:25:38). BD still.	. 241
Figure 3.7: A temporary restoration of order (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:28:19). BD still	. 242
Figure 3.8: Stripes on the cloth top: "What happened?" (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:28:22). BD still	. 243
Figure 3.9: Trapped in Glen's convertible (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:28:35). BD still.	. 244
Figure 3.10: On the penetration of boundaries: The first full-screen image of the film (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:01:08). BD still	. 245
Figure 3.11: Tina in the dream world (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:01:12). BD still.	. 246
Figure 3.12: In Freddy's boiler room: Cloth, boundaries, nightmares (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:03:14). BD still	. 247
Figure 3.13: Tina's nightgown, upon waking: a "representation of penetration" (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:03:50). BD still	. 249
Figure 3.14: A hypnagogic hallucination: Freddy pushes on the wall above Nancy (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:14:09). BD still	. 250
Figure 3.15: The penetration of boundaries: Tina's chest slashed (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:17:21). BD still	. 252
Figure 3.16: The skin no longer holds: The inside flowing out (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:17:22). BD still	. 253
Figure 3.17: Symbolism: The first crucifix in the film (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:03:38). BD still	. 255

Figure 3.18: Symbolism from Nancy's POV: Tina's crucifix (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:14:22). BD still	. 256
Figure 3.19: Watching Tina be "crucified": A sacrificial lamb (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:17:51). BD still	. 257
Figure 3.20: Christic Freddy: Another sacrificial lamb? (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:16:05). BD still.	. 258
Figure 3.21: Freddy's charred skin (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:16:12). BD still.	. 266
Figure 3.22: Bookending the film: Childhood innocence in middle-class utopia (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:04:21). BD still	. 269
Figure 3.23: The final shot of the film: Dream/fantasy and childhood innocence (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:28:59). BD still	. 270
Figure 3.24: Isolation: Nancy in nightmare suburbia (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:37:31). BD still	. 272
Figure 3.25: Abject: Tina's "living" corpse and Catholic statuary (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:40:08). BD still	. 273
Figure 3.26: Nancy trapped by quicksand stairs (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:41:05). BD still	. 275
Figure 3.27: Freddy bursts through Nancy's mirror (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:41:26). BD still	. 276
Figure 3.28: Falling asleep: Nancy and Freddy in the bath (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:32:19). BD still	. 278
Figure 3.29: In the bath, Freddy threatens us (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 0:32:24). BD still	. 279
Figure 3.30: In Glen's room: Buckets of blood (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:08:41). BD still	. 281
Figure 3.31: The suburban prison (<i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i> 1:23:41). BD still	. 282

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Crucial thanks go to Alain J.-J. Cohen, my insightful and tremendously patient advisor. Without your intense support, diligent tutoring, and astute theoretical approach to the moving image, I would not be here today. You showed me how to analyze film and how to teach it and your intellectual acumen has been a major asset to this project. Thank you.

My doctoral committee deserves my most sincere thanks. Without your patience and thought-provoking questions I would not be here today. Wm. Arctander O'Brien: your thoughtful encouragement has been absolutely crucial to this process. Thank you. Don E. Wayne: I am thankful for your questions and comments along the way. Our discussions of utopia in particular have pushed me to add greater nuance to my theoretical frameworks. Yingjin Zhang: your work as a scholar is inspiring and I truly appreciate your kind yet challenging questions. Babette Mangolte: teaching under your direction, no matter how briefly, was extraordinarily rewarding and I am grateful for the opportunity. Former committee member Denise Ferreira da Silva deserves thanks as well. Your input at the beginning of this process has been crucial.

Thanks also go out to my M.A. thesis committee at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In particular, my former advisor Christopher L. Connery and my former committee member Rob Wilson helped me begin to flesh out and develop my theoretical concerns early in my graduate studies.

xiv

I would also like to thank K. Silem Mohammad for inspiring me to look at the poetics of the filmed image beginning as a first-year undergraduate student. Your continued support of my intellectual ventures has been a gift.

I owe an enormous debt to Justine Lopez for her keen editorial eye and ardent intellectual and emotional support over the years. Your input has been truly indispensable. I cannot thank you enough.

Thanks go to Jeff Gagnon, Michael Lundell, and Satoko Kakihara as well. The advice and insight from you all has greatly assisted me through this process.

Over the years, my cohort from Kresge College has challenged me intellectually and has persistently encouraged my scholarly development. Mario Ceretto, John Draper, Ben Hansell, Shuka Kalantari, Élan Klein, John Kusper, Morgen Lennox, Al Luo, Brendan Smith, Terra Tice, Deidre Zafar, and the rest of the Kresge crew: thank you.

Finally, my family deserves huge thanks. Especially my grandparents, my brothers, and of course my mom and dad: you have supported me my entire life. You are the greatest.

VITA

2013	Doctor of Philosophy in Literature University of California, San Diego
2009	Candidate of Philosophy in Literature University of California, San Diego
2006	Master of Arts in Literature University of California, Santa Cruz
2004	Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Film & Digital Media University of California, Santa Cruz

FELLOWSHIPS AND RESEARCH AWARDS

2012	Dissertation Fellowship University of California, San Diego
2011	Mid-Year Research Award University of California, San Diego
2011	Summer Research Award University of California, San Diego
2006	Master's Thesis Fellowship University of California, Santa Cruz
2005	Language Study Fellowship University of California, Santa Cruz

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Rethinking the Slasher Film: Violated Bodies and Spectators in *Halloween, Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*

by

Aaron C. Anderson

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Alain J.-J. Cohen, Chair

This dissertation examines the slasher film through close analyses of John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978), Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980), and Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). This dissertation argues that while one may find sadistic elements in these films, one also finds pronounced masochistic elements that continually thwart attempts to define the slasher film as exclusively sadistic. Recognizing this, this dissertation argues that these films are defined above all by the doubled, multiplied, and seemingly contradictory sadistic-masochistic subjectivities they offer. These subjectivities threaten to abjectly destroy established binaries (between male and female, self and other, inside and outside, and human and monster) while simultaneously interrogating the entire institution of the cinema.

Conceptually, this dissertation roots itself in Didier Anzieu's Freudian take on the connections between the body and psyche (through the notion of the "skin ego"), Gilles Deleuze's work on sadism and masochism, Gaylyn Studlar's work on masochism and "bisexual" identification in cinema, Julia Kristeva's understanding of the "abject," and Mary Douglas' work on purity, anomaly, and contagion (Anzieu 39, 88; Deleuze 125, 131; Studlar 32; Kristeva 1; Douglas 2, 5). Examining these three films through a psychoanalytic-semiotic lens, this dissertation isolates the key representative features of the slasher film and argues that despite popular mischaracterizations of these films as misogynistic "blood baths," they actually aim to shatter the narrative cinema's structuring of vision and pleasure (pleasure rooted in both sadism and masochism) as well as notions of security associated with the spaces of the small-town and suburban middle-class American family. The slasher film achieves this by tapping into repressed aggressions and constructing a sadistic-masochistic viewer that is at once human and monster, simultaneously desiring to protect and to punish. This "abject" blurring of the lines between human and monster is the slasher film's most salient feature. Ultimately, in the slasher film, the most horrifying, uncanny monster comes from within the psyche of the viewer.

xviii

INTRODUCTION

EXCAVATING THE SLASHER FILM: A LATENT MONSTROSITY

This dissertation aims to interrogate the various reactions that the slasher film inspires in viewers and would-be viewers: What is it about these films that arouses reactions ranging from cult fandom to vehement protest? How do we comprehend the (sometimes uneasy) pleasures that these films offer? How can we better understand the ways in which these films unsettle us? What do these (unsettling) pleasures tell us about ourselves and our societies? How can we simultaneously account for the revulsion that some viewers feel? How can we use these reactions to enrich our understanding of the cultural and critical backlashes against these films? These responses tell us fundamental things about our individual psyches, our individual latent monstrosities, and we should no longer avoid them. Employing psychological and sociocultural research, this dissertation offers answers to these vital questions, analyzing the diverse reactions of pleasure and un-pleasure triggered through these films.

Horror is ubiquitous. In its various forms, horror has never been more mainstream. We see this, for example, in the current zombie craze in film, television, and fiction, the cultural obsession with (seemingly) ordinary people doing horrific things (visible in the nonstop news coverage of the trial of Jodi Arias), as well as the anxieties, fears, and paranoias that inspire the hoarding of guns (to ostensibly provide protection against any number of diffuse/fantasized racial, economic, and/or

1

governmental threats). At the box office and in television ratings, horror has never been more profitable. The zombie television show *The Walking Dead* consistently garners huge ratings. Meanwhile, the enormous sums of money invested in Marc Forster's upcoming zombie film *World War Z* (a reported \$200 million) demonstrates a continued willingness on the parts of Hollywood studios to cash in on horror (Vanity Fair).

However, this obsession with horror (both as marketable text and as framework for understanding the world around us) is not new and should not be dismissed lightly. Instead, we should take such horror as a cue to cultural and psychological analysis. For instance, in reference to the current dominance of zombie texts, a recent article by Daniel W. Drezner titled "The Lessons of Zombie-Mania" argues that the figure of the zombie offers us a way to understand the "nontraditional threats" of "recession, epidemic and general unhappiness." We see something similar in the slasher film.

Whereas the zombie may be the most fitting cinematic monster through which to understand the contemporary moment, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the most significant cinematic monster was a killer that invaded the (somewhat) insulated spaces of the white middle class to stalk and kill teenagers. In the 1980s, Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, and Freddy Krueger were everywhere and functioned as metaphors for the pervasive social anxieties and traumas of the time. They also provided philosophical meditations on the past and the present. While today's zombie film or television show may tap into anxieties surrounding "recession, epidemic and general unhappiness," the slasher film does something very similar, engaging anxieties related to the threatened destruction of middle-class notions of community, security, and comfort. These exclusionary anxieties, largely related to class, race, nationality, disability, and geography, have not left us. Additionally, the slasher film interrogates the aggressive impulses at the root of these anxieties over a destroyed white middle-class security. The slasher film provides a fantastic example of a cinematic working-through of middle-class American life, gender, repression, aggression, the horror genre, and the narrative cinema's construction of viewer subjectivities and pleasures.

While violent cinematic and televisual horror may be completely mainstream today, it did not occupy such a central position during the days of the slasher film. Although some of these films were huge box office successes, they were persistently marginalized as a cultural form. In the 1980s, the marginalization and mischaracterization of the slasher film was deliberate and operated in the service of specific reactionary social movements. It also sidelined serious discussions of these films. We need to push beyond the standard reactionary readings of the slasher film in order to examine the ways in which it interrogates our individual and collective desires, pleasures, and fears.

Unfortunately, this marginalization, something like a willed repression of unacceptable urges, continues to this day. Today, due in part to what James Kendrick calls the "disreputable nature" of the horror genre, popular and academic critics have been allowed (and encouraged) to continue to dismiss or ignore the slasher film (148). This has gone on for too long. The slasher film tends to be thought of as playground for misogynistic male-on-female violence and effortlessly disregarded or demonized. We need to get beyond that impulsive reaction. But we also need to interrogate that reaction.

In the end, the slasher film provides meditations on pleasure and the nature of the self in a very unique form, essentially tapping into unconscious pleasures, desires, and anxieties. It turns violent, repressed aggressions outward. It portrays the potential explosion of aggressive instincts that we constantly battle. This (potential) outbreak of aggression exposes the monster that is always within us and offers the slasher villain/monster as a way to understand ourselves and our societies.

John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) exemplifies many of the elements of what would come to be known as the slasher film. Meanwhile, Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980) borrows, alters, and adds a number of stylistic elements to the slasher film. Years later, Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) offers a reimagining of the slasher film that takes stock of and assesses numerous aspects of the slasher film. These three films, exemplars of the slasher film, mark three distinct moments in the slasher film's evolution, its engagement with its own major representative features, and its understanding of its status as filmic text. From these exemplars, we aim to extrapolate and investigate the representative features of the slasher film.

In its analyses of these extremely multilayered films, this dissertation employs the linear narrative shot-by-shot and nonlinear configuration studies of Cohen's psychoanalytic-semiotic method in order to arrive at a greater understanding of the cinematic, psychological, and sociological aspects of the horror generated through these films (Cohen 151). Through this close analysis, this dissertation aims to scrutinize the "syntagmatic unfolding" of "recursive" cinematic elements offered by each individual film in order to arrive at a greater understanding of the "paradigmatic system" from which each individual slasher film emerges (157, 151). Here we examine the "recursive images," figures, and spaces that characterize the slasher film (152). We do this in order to better understand the cinematic system through which the slasher film taps into repressed aggression (as well as its expression in sadism and masochism and the audience's positioning in relation to these sadistic and masochistic elements). Ultimately, the slasher film may be most properly understood through an accounting of its representative features (what we might call, paraphrasing Cohen, the paradigmatic grammar of the slasher film) as well as the multiple and seemingly contradictory viewing subjectivities that the slasher film offers. Examining these elements is vital to understanding the ways in which the slasher film engages our latent monstrosities as well as our pleasures, fears, and anxieties related to the (potential) emergence of those monstrosities.

In Chapter One, we begin our analysis of the slasher film with an examination of Carpenter's *Halloween*. Through shot-by-shot analyses of key sequences in the film, we begin to isolate the key representative features of the slasher film on display in Carpenter's film (such as the use of teenage protagonists and the turning of ordinary white middle-class spaces into "uncanny" spaces of horror through the violent actions of a monster that is fundamentally linked to the spaces that s/he assaults) (Freud, *Standard Edition XVII* 220). In this chapter, we argue that *Halloween* sets the stage for the sadistic-masochistic slasher film as it taps into profound yet repressed anxieties and aggressive instincts by offering multiple, contradictory viewer subjectivities that shift between the sadistic and the masochistic (at times offering a subjectivity that is both sadistic and masochistic simultaneously). Theoretically, Chapter One grounds itself in Sigmund Freud's work on repression and the "uncanny," Gilles Deleuze's work on sadism and masochism, Didier Anzieu's work on the "representations" of (bodily) "penetration" (including the representational destructions of "envelopes" of "well-being"), and Julia Kristeva's work on the "abject" destruction of boundaries (Anzieu 32, 44; Kristeva 1).

We turn our attention to Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* in Chapter Two. This chapter argues that *Friday the 13th* further solidifies the major representative features of the slasher film (including the use of teen protagonists, the hiding/masking of the villain's identity, and the penetration of "safer" spaces of middle-class security and pleasure) and more fully explores the slasher film's play on sadistic and masochistic pleasures. Stylistically, *Friday the 13th* marked a significant evolution in on-screen graphic violence and special make-up effects, particularly as regards the slasher film. It also (at least partially) inspired an evolution in protest against and resistance to the violent and sexual content of the horror film (a tendency that remains with us, in altered form, to this day). However, as this chapter argues, these protests frequently proffered misreadings of the slasher film that suggested the slasher film was focused on the sadistic destruction of primarily female bodies and constructed a monstrously sadistic viewer. These protests have, to a great extent, determined the ways in which the slasher film has historically been (and continues to be) misread. This dissertation continually argues against this dangerously simplistic framework.

Extending the work begun in Chapter One, this chapter argues, through the work of Anzieu as well as the work of Gaylyn Studlar, that the pleasures of the slasher film are profoundly connected to pre-Oedipal fantasies that operate across and challenge traditional gender binaries. While the slasher film certainly offers horrific fantasies, some of these fantasies evoke un-pleasure while others evoke pleasure (at times simultaneously inciting an abject mixture of pleasure and un-pleasure simultaneously). Following Studlar, Chapter Two argues that many of the pleasures offered by the slasher film concern the construction of a "bisexual" subjectivity that is not bounded by the confines of male/female gender binaries (Studlar 32). In producing a "bisexual" viewer, the slasher film produces an abject destruction of boundaries that may be understood as pleasurable rather than horrific. Amending Studlar, however, Chapter Two argues that the slasher film, while indulging in masochism of a sort, retains elements of sadism, resulting in a sadistic-masochistic viewer (rather than Studlar's more fully masochistic viewer).

Chapter Three focuses on Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, a film that looks back on the slasher film and reimagines it in ways that draw particular attention to its recursive images, figures, and spaces, as well as its engagement with the structures of fantasy/dream/nightmare. This chapter argues that *A Nightmare on*

Elm Street at once functions as a slasher film, fully realizing many of the representative features of the slasher film, and functions as a commentary and metacommentary on those features and the controversy that the slasher film inspired. Through A Nightmare on Elm Street, the slasher film may be effectively read as being most concerned with (sadistically-masochistically) looking. Read through Craven's film, the slasher film may also through fantasies of aggression and the repression of that aggression (as well as the ways in which the slasher film taps into aggressive instincts and tugs on the sadistic and masochistic elements of the viewer's psyche). In this, the slasher film fundamentally troubles the operations of the cinematic apparatus. In this, the slasher film generates much of its pleasure through deconstructing and disrupting the traditional pleasures of cinematic looking. Chapter Three builds on the analysis begun in Chapter One and Chapter Two by turning to Freud's understandings of "condensation" and "displacement" at work in the dream, Paul Federn's work on falling asleep and waking up, René Girard's work on the "scapegoat," as well as Christian Metz's writings on the cinematic apparatus and its relation to fantasy.

Ultimately, the slasher film gestures to an abject breaching of boundaries (between inside and outside, self and other, active and passive, pleasure and unpleasure/pain, normal and abnormal, human and monster). In its focus on the monster as "anomaly" and scapegoat, however, the slasher film suggests that this abject breaching of boundaries is one that is simultaneously desired and disavowed by the viewer's psyche (Douglas 5). This is a horrific breaching of boundaries that is also, on many levels, a seductive one. In its construction of the viewing subject, the slasher film (pleasurably and abjectly) breaches boundaries and thoroughly destabilizes meaning and binaries. In the end, we argue that these films may be most effectively grouped together through both an assemblage and analysis of their representative features as well as through an examination of the fractured, seemingly contradictory, sadistic-masochistic subjectivities that these films offer to the viewer. We argue that these films, and the viewing subjects they produce, engage in an extremely important dialogue with the institution of cinema and the structures of looking that it creates, constantly probing the operations of sadism and masochism in everyday human interaction. The slasher film, as we argue below, effectively explodes out and destroys the structures of cinematic looking and pleasure through its construction of an extremely fluid, active/passive, pleasurable/unpleasurable, sadistic-masochistic viewing subject.

Works Cited

- Anzieu, Didier. *The Skin Ego*. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Cohen, Alain J.-J. "Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Aggressivity and Sublimation in Film and Painting." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 15.2 (2010): 135-62. Print.
- ---. "*Twelve Monkeys, Vertigo* and *La Jetée*: Postmodern Mythologies and Cult Films." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1.1 (2003): 146-63. *InformaWorld*. Web. 8 June 2009.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Trans. Jean McNeil. *Masochism*. New York: Zone, 1991. 9-138. Print.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 2001. PDF.
- Drezner, Daniel W. "The Lessons of Zombie-Mania." *The Wall Street Journal* 6 April 2013: n. pag. Web. 5 May 2013.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*. 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-64. Print.
- ---. "Civilizations and Its Discontents." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 57-146. Print.
- ---. "The Ego and the Id." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-66. Print.

- ---. "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX (1925-1926): An Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, The Question of Lay Analysis and Other Works.* 1959. London: Hogarth, 1975. 75-176. Print.
- ---. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.* 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.
- Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.
- Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. Print.
- Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.
- Kendrick, James. *Hollywood Bloodshed: Violence in 1980s American Cinema*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2009. PDF.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. Print.
- A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. Print.
- Vanity Fair. "Exclusive: The Making of Brad Pitt's World War Z, from Stunning Budget Overages and a Reshot Ending to Lots of On-Set Drama." The Hollywood Blog. Vanity Fair, 30 April 2013. Web. 5 May 2013.

World War Z. Dir. Marc Forster. 2013. Paramount. Film.

CHAPTER ONE.

APPARITIONS OF MICHAEL MYERS: THE CINEMATIC DESTRUCTION OF SMALL-TOWN AMERICA IN JOHN CARPENTER'S *HALLOWEEN* (1978)¹

INTRODUCTION

John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) introduces the audience to Michael Myers, a ruthlessly violent mental patient incarcerated in a state hospital from an early age, who returns to his hometown of Haddonfield, Illinois, to terrorize and kill a group of teenagers. In telling the story of Myers, Carpenter also tells the story of Laurie Strode, a young girl who eventually escapes the attacks of Myers, as well as the story of Haddonfield, a small, well-to-do American town, as Myers functions as a violent return of Haddonfield's repressed aggression. At the same time, *Halloween* tells our story as viewers, as our subjectivity is "doubled" and aligned with both Myers and his victims in a particularly "uncanny" and "abject" way (Freud, *Standard Edition XVII* 234; Kristeva 1).² Throughout its roughly 91-minute runtime, *Halloween*, while largely shying away from extended scenes of graphic on-screen violence, displays and

¹ This title refers to Mike Davis' discussion of "the literary destruction of Los Angeles" in *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* in which Davis analyzes disaster literature set in Los Angeles (274). As this chapter argues, the slasher film, in some ways, functions as a disaster literature of white middle-class small-town America.

² Subsequent to this citation of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, all parenthetical citations referencing page numbers from various volumes of Sigmund Freud's *Standard Edition* will be cited as "*SE*" followed by volume numbers (in italicized Roman numerals) and page numbers (in non-italicized Arabic numerals).

forces upon the viewer a psychological viciousness that many later slasher films do not.

However, this subjectivity remains (at least somewhat) pleasurable and it is the construction of this pleasure that is also not-pleasure that this chapter aims to analyze. In analyzing this extremely multilayered film, this chapter examines the cinematic aspects of the film through shot-by-shot analyses of particularly striking sequences (using the linear narrative shot-by-shot and nonlinear configuration studies of Cohen's psychoanalytic-semiotic method), the psychological aspects of the film, as well as the economic aspects of the film's history (both in terms of its production and its lasting influence in the horror genre generally and in the slasher film specifically).

Halloween, playing to our anxieties, encourages us to sympathize with the victims. However, we are also forced to participate in their victimization in a number of ways. In this we identify, at least partially, with the monster Michael Myers. Myers is a monster from within (us as well as small-town America). Myers, and Carpenter along with him, is a product of small-town America and is also the destroyer of it. Myers is human yet in his invincibility is also not human. He is nightmare bleeding into and coloring the realities of the characters in the film as well as the realities of viewers of *Halloween*. Myers' multiple/layered penetrations of his victims' and his audiences' realities are profoundly violent. However, as this dissertation argues, this violence is not necessarily a graphically or representationally violent one (in terms of blood, guts, and other special make-up effects).

In a chapter from *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle* partially dedicated to *Halloween*, Richard Nowell analyzes specific instances of graphic violence in Carpenter's film and argues that many of the deaths in *Halloween* occur off-screen and only one of them features victim suffering:

Halloween . . . featured only five murders. All but one of these killings was preceded by a brief struggle in which only fleeting shots of the victim's fear were displayed. Each death blow was located outside of the frame, and, with the exception of the opening murder, a single blow sufficed to bring about the victim's death. These deaths were each a silent, clean affair, with victims dying instantaneously and without fear or body-horror being shown. (96-97)

While Nowell's tabulations of on-screen violence are a helpful starting place, they do not tell the entire story of *Halloween*'s violence. As we argue here, the horror of *Halloween* is not primarily founded in graphic violence (in at least slight contrast to later slasher films such as Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* as well as later horror "cycles" such as the so-called "torture porn" film) (Nowell 5; A. Klein 5; Edelstein).³ Although *Halloween* certainly contains some graphic violence, its horror, the anxiety it produces, is more closely related to the construction of multiple and contradictory viewing subjectivities than it is to representations of bodies in pain. In the quote above, Nowell focuses perhaps a bit too closely on what is on the screen. By reducing violence to on-screen graphic violence, Nowell avoids the psychological aspects of *Halloween*'s violence (a violence inflicted upon both the characters and the spectator).

³ "Torture porn," discussed in a bit more detail in later chapters, is a term first applied by David Edelstein to a new cycle of graphically-violent films that includes the *Saw* and *Hostel* franchises.

One aspect of the film that particularly gestures to the more profound quality of violence in *Halloween* is the activity of stalking which Myers (and, in some sense, the audience along with him) engages in for much of the film. While the violence inherent in this stalking is, in many ways, off-screen and implied, it is nevertheless extremely present in the film. Stalking, explored in more detail later in this chapter, characterizes much of the film's violence, particularly the simultaneously sadistic and masochistic violence inflicted *upon* as well as *by* the audience in the process of viewing *Halloween*.

Ultimately, *Halloween*'s violence is, we argue, a more fundamental violence than the more graphic representations of violence in *Friday the 13th* (a film that will be discussed in close detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation). *Halloween*'s violence is, to use Kristeva's term, an "abject" violence (1). That is, it is a violence that assails the self at its most basic level, assailing that which differentiates self from other, inside from outside, normal from abnormal, and human from monster. *Halloween*'s violence is an abject violence that does not particularly fixate on representations of the abject in that it does not aim to evoke the abject by simply presenting representations of the collapse of meaning (found in images of corpses, blood, or pus, all elements that Kristeva names as representations of the abject) (3). Although it certainly contains glimpses of these things, *Halloween* instead explores the abject by opening up multiple contradictory subjectivities through which the spectator enters the film.

Halloween's violence is partially constructed through the use of subjective and roughly-subjective camerawork. These shots, often extreme long-shots, are filmed

15

from camera positions that approximate the physical location of Michael Myers as he watches his prey and thus relay the film's action from roughly Myers' perspective. These point-of-view (POV) shots from the villain's perspective recall particularly sequences in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* (1974) (Nowell 69). Such shots come to be a central representative feature of the slasher film and are exploited to great effect in *Friday the 13th*, a film released a couple of years after *Halloween*.

On the surface, in *Halloween*, these handheld POV shots might seem to encourage the audience to see the action through Myers' sexually sadistic and voyeuristic subjectivity (and this has been the way that many critics, both in the popular press and in academia, have interpreted these shots).⁴ However, as we demonstrate below, these shots and the subjectivities they generate and mediate are extremely complicated. Drawing on the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, this chapter will argue that the POV shot is one element at work in the construction of a sort of "free indirect subjectivity" in which the film conveys the psychological experience of the characters within the frame (Pasolini 551). Drawing on but modifying Pasolini (who argues, in a relation to a different moment in film history, that the POV is specifically not a device for constructing "free indirect subjectivity"), this dissertation argues that through the POV and the rough-POV shot, as well as through more traditional third-

⁴ One of the most prominent outcries against the slasher film came in the form of an epically paternalistic campaign against the slasher film by Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert. Although *Halloween* was notably not their object of scorn, as we will see in Chapter Two, the POV shot in the slasher film (particularly in *Friday the 13th* and those films released in response to that film's financial success), read in the simplistic fashion laid out above, was one of the main filmic elements that detractors of the genre, particularly Siskel and Ebert, found most offensive.

person narrative shots, the audience is aligned *both* with monster/villain through Myers *and* with the human/victim through those who Myers stalks. The end result of this complicated process are doubled or even tripled, abject subjectivities in which the binaries between human/monster and villain/victim are radically thrown into question, harkening back to the blurring of boundaries that Kristeva argues is key to the concept of the abject: the audience both stalks and is stalked, watches and is watched, brutalizes and is brutalized. *Halloween* breaks these and other generally safe divisions down. It turns the inside outside, forcing fractured, abject subjectivities onto the viewer. Meanwhile, as Myers blurs the boundaries between human and monster, he also transforms small-town America from a white middle-class pseudo-utopian space into a white middle-class nightmare space, essentially turning the "familiar" into the "unfamiliar" in a way that recalls Freud's understanding of the "uncanny" (*SE XVII* 220).

In *Halloween*, fractured, deviant subjectivities are literalized in the form of the destroyed body. The bodies of both the villain/monster and his victims become sites upon which these violent, contradictory subjectivities are made representationally apparent. As Myers kills, as he breaks open bodies, the fragility of the boundary that contains the self and separates it from others, the skin, is put on full display. This fragility is also spatialized as the various spaces of the American small town are intruded upon, contaminated, and attacked from within. Here *Halloween* representationally and psychologically taps into anxieties about the destruction of the self through the figures of the body and the community.

By tapping into these contradictory pleasures and anxieties, the slasher film in general and *Halloween* in particular, turns aggression that has been turned inward back outward. Through the fantasies offered by the multiple viewing positions imposed on the viewer in *Halloween*, we see this aggression find outward expression in both sadism and masochism, resulting in a sadistic-masochistic viewing position, that is, a viewing position that shifts between the sadistic and the masochistic and is sometimes, to varying degrees, both sadistic and masochistic simultaneously.

HALLOWEEN AND THE REPRESENTATIVE FEATURES OF THE SLASHER FILM

Halloween effectively set the stage for the wave of slasher films that proliferated in the 1980s. *Halloween*'s textual model however, was not necessarily an original one, as several critics note. Instead, the producers of *Halloween* designed their film to capitalize on several elements combined first in Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* (1974) (Nowell 80). The representative features that come to mark the slasher film include the invasion of everyday, white middle-class spaces, as well as the uncanny morphing of these spaces into their horrific opposites. These representative features also include the extensive use of POV shots (along with other filmic elements) that situate the spectator, at least partially, alongside the villain/monster while simultaneously situating the spectator alongside the victim. Additionally, the identity of the monster, an often superhuman and uncanny figure, is often concealed while the monster functions as a sort of voyeuristic haunting. The representative features of the slasher film also include the sounds of the heavy breathing of the villain, the sounds of the victims' and the villains' footfalls, and the performance of agony on the victim's face. In terms of narrative, the slasher film often employs open endings, in which the villain gets away. These open endings serve the double function of opening the door for sequels as well as extending the terror of the villain outside of the confines of a film's runtime. Lastly, as Carol J. Clover observes in *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, the slasher film often builds its narrative around a surviving character, usually a relatively virtuous female who is figured as active/male (35). Clover dubs this character the "final girl" (35). Although this dissertation does not explore the phenomenon of the "final girl" in close detail, and while we do not believe that the "final girl" is an absolutely essential defining characteristic of the slasher film, Clover's observations on the subject, particularly as regards structures of (potential) cross-gender identification, are certainly informative.

Regarding plot, slasher films often employed a specific variation of Hollywood's three-act narrative structure that included seven smaller movements (Nowell 82). On this note, Nowell convincingly identifies the following structure for the "teen slasher film" (listed here as Nowell observes it in *Halloween*) (82):

Part One: Setup

1. Trigger: As a boy, Michael Myers kills his sister on Halloween night of 1963.

2. Threat: Fifteen years later Michael escapes from the asylum in which he has been imprisoned and returns to his home town. *Part Two: Disruption*

3. Leisure: Three high school friends, Laurie, Annie, and Lynda, plan a night of fun.

4. Stalking: Michael tracks the movements of the girls.

5. Murders: Michael kills Annie, Lynda, and their boyfriends.

Part Three: Resolution

6. Confrontation: Laurie battles with Michael.

7. Neutralization: Michael is shot by his psychiatrist Dr. Loomis. (82)

However, our psychologically-oriented approach to *Halloween* expands upon Nowell's isolation of narrative movements in order to examine the psychological functions these plot elements. For instance, we might argue that the "neutralization" of the threat posed by Michael Myers near the end of the film is only a superficial one for two reasons: 1) Myers actually gets away, and 2) the real horror of the film is focused on stimulating profound anxieties about the categories of normal/abnormal, victim/villain, and self/other.

As Nowell argues, the goal of *Halloween*'s producers was "to craft a femalecentered small-town-set horror film that would fulfill the promise that the pioneering teen slasher, *Black Christmas*, had shown early in its second US theatrical run" (80). Nowell further elaborates:

The makers of *Halloween*, like the makers of *Black Christmas* before them, and like the makers of the teen slashers that followed, implemented the same production strategies designed to maximize the commercial potential of their film, as they attempted, like their peers, to secure an MPAA-member distribution deal with an R-rated film that promised to be marketable to young males and females because it shared content with some of the most lucrative trends in youth-oriented and blockbuster filmmaking of its day. (79-80)

When solely looking at the economic and industry conditions that allowed the slasher film to flourish, Nowell's analysis is particularly useful. However, the goal of this chapter is to build upon Nowell's purely economic analysis by examining not only economic conditions of production but also the psychological implications of what ended up on the screen. For instance, while Nowell focuses on the teenager solely as a source of revenue, this dissertation examines the subject positions opened up by the terrorizing Myers and the terrorized teenagers. Here this chapter argues that our concurrent identifications with Myers and his teenage victims situate us as *both* sadistic *and* masochistic viewers who simultaneously desire to watch/control/punish and desire to be punished for the control/punishment that we inflict through Myers' horrific violence.

CONSTRUCTING AN "ABJECT" SPECTATOR: AGGRESSION AND REPRESSION

The violence that *Halloween* enacts *on* and *through* the viewer threatens to blur and eventually destroy distinctions between human and monster, inside and outside, self and other (Kristeva 1). The result is a fractured spectator position, one in which the spectator is simultaneously aligned with both the villain and the victim. In this, the spectator comes to embody the "abject."

According to Kristeva, the "abject" is a "jettisoned object" that "is radically excluded and draws [one] toward the place where meaning collapses" (2). This "radically separate" entity is "[on] the edge of nonexistence and hallucination" and threatens annihilation (2). Meanwhile, the reaction of "abjection" protects against a complete collapse of meaning. "Abjection" here functions as a sort of mechanism of defense that functions as a "safeguard" from that which confronts us with annihilation (2).

While the slasher film brutalizes the body, transgresses its boundaries, and ultimately turns the inside of the body outside, it also brutalizes the psyche (of both the characters in the diegesis and the spectator watching the film) through multiple and contradictory subject positions forced upon the viewer. Here the slasher film explores the "terrain" of the abject, where meaning begins to collapse (Kristeva 18). In this collapse, the distinctions between self/subject and other/object begin to fall apart. This is a violent but not (completely) unpleasurable process in which the spectator, in completing the cinematic enunciation, obliterates differences between the monster, the victim, and the self.

The fractured spectator positions offered by *Halloween* involves a "doubled" subjectivity, in which Myers serves as a sort of double for us as spectators. This doubling references what Freud calls the "uncanny" (*SE XVII* 234). According to Freud, the uncanny may be "marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own" (234). Here "there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (234). However, as we gesture to above, *Halloween* does not stop here. Instead, the film doubles and destabilizes our subjectivity, forcing us to see Myers as a sort of double, and then re-doubles or triples our subjectivity as our subjectivities simultaneously align with Myers' victims. Ultimately, the spectator position forced upon the viewer by *Halloween* is "abject" as the feeling of "uncanniness" produced through the film entails a rapid, violent, and profound destruction of the self (Kristeva 2).

While Kristeva largely uses the term "abject" in describing very real threats to the self, this dissertation, examining the medium of cinema takes, in one way, a more

narrow approach in analyzing instances of the abject that appear on screen (as we are there concerned primarily with representations of the abject). However, as noted above, these abject images are not the principal way that *Halloween* commits its violence. Ultimately, in analyzing the fractured and clashing subjectivities opened up by the film, this chapter follows Kristeva's more broad understanding of the abject but does, in effect, provide a more radical application of the concept of the "abject" than Kristeva might, as we argue that the sadistic-masochistic spectator position is fundamentally an abject one. However, we argue that this viewing position is a somewhat pleasurably abject one, or rather it is one in which the experience of "abjection," defined below, is allowed to be somewhat pleasurable.

Through the relatively harmless form of the abject that we see in *Halloween*, we are allowed to gain some enjoyment from experiencing these diametrically opposed viewer positions. This is an effect similar to what Isabel Cristina Pinedo, in *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*, calls a "bounded experience of fear" (17). However, as gestured to above, this "experience" is not an entirely "safe" or "bounded," as it does, in the end, tap into very profound anxieties about the nature of the self and the annihilation of that self.⁵

⁵ In connecting the abject to the horror film, this dissertation is partially inspired by Pinedo as well as by Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis.* While Pinedo's work uses the concept of the abject as a way into discussing the collapse of meaning in postmodernism (with the monster functioning as signifier of that collapse) and Creed's work examines the construction of the female as monstrous and abject, this chapter goes at least one step further in arguing that the abject figure of the monster in the slasher film both signifies a collapse of meaning and itself collapses meaning by opening up multiple, disordered viewing positions through which the film forces (or subjects) the spectator into aligning with both monster and victim, essentially brutalizing her/himself in the process of consuming the cinematic text.

The anxieties tapped into by the slasher film, in this case John Carpenter's Halloween, are primarily concerned with the threat of dissolution of physical and psychic boundaries. To borrow Freud's language from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the term "anxiety" is used to "[describe] a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown [danger]" (SE XVIII 12). Meanwhile, the term "fear" implies "a definite object of which to be afraid" (12). Related to these, the term "fright" denotes "the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise" (12). In *Halloween*, we see all three of these at work in distinct ways that will be discussed over the course of this chapter. For now, we might say that the film Halloween taps into anxiety, particularly those anxieties related to the dissolution of physical and psychic boundaries. In *Halloween*, anxiety primarily concerns the spectator as the characters are rarely shown in states of anxiety. Meanwhile, "fear" impacts the characters directly when they are confronted with Myers. "Fright" also characterizes most of the characters' reactions to Myers as Myers tends to remain an unseen threat until the moment of attack, often catching his victims off-guard.

In brutalizing the spectator and forcing the spectator to brutalize her/himself, the slasher film taps into a field of repressed desires. As Clover argues, "the pleasure of looking at others in fear and pain has its origins in one's own past-but-not-finished fear and pain" (230). This experience of terror is one that is concerned with the emergence of the monster from within the self and the subsequent destruction of the self, two processes that should be classified as "abject." As Clover argues, through the work of Robin Wood: "just as attacker and attacked are expressions of the same self in nightmares, so they are expressions of the same viewer in horror film" (12). As Clover puts it: "We are both Red Riding Hood *and* the Wolf" (12). Thus a double position is set up for the spectator. This double position is set up at least partially through a device that Pasolini calls "free indirect subjectivity," a term that will be discussed in more detail below (Pasolini 551).

Along the same lines, Clover argues that the horror genre remains marketable to some extent due to its "engagement of repressed fears and desires and its reenactment of the residual conflict surrounding those feelings" (11). The "repressed instinctual impulses" that are being tapped into here are profoundly related to aggression (*SE XX* 142). As Freud notes, through repression, the ego is "[protected] against instinctual demands" and in the case of the horror film, sexually aggressive desires (*SE XX* 164). Repression also forces these aggressive instincts "away from consciousness" (163). This both produces anxieties and also creates more repression to deal with those anxieties. The slasher film, in its construction of a sadistic-masochistic viewing subject begins to unravel this repression and to explore these anxieties, at least temporarily, by bringing aggression to the fore and probing anxieties related to a threatened destruction of the self.

As Kristeva rightly observes, fear and aggression are intricately linked. At one point she asks: "does not fear hide an aggression, a violence that returns to its source, its sign having been inverted?" (38). The aggression that the slasher film taps into is both aggression directed outward, in the forms of sadism and masochism, and

"aggressiveness" directed inward (Laplanche 95). Here the slasher film indulges aggressive fantasies of sadism and masochism, often at the same time and within the same sequences and shots.

In our discussions of aggression, sadism, and masochism, we draw on frameworks provided by Jean Laplanche, in a chapter named "Aggressiveness and Sadomasochism" from *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* as well as by Deleuze in "Coldness and Cruelty." In Laplanche's reading of Freud, aggression turned inward falls into the "dimension of self-preservation" while aggression turned outward takes on a sexual form (and thus fits into the "dimension of sexuality") and finds expression in sadism and masochism (95). Consequently, Laplanche insists on the following terms and applications: the terms "sadism" and "masochism" should be used when there is "an element of *sexual* excitement or enjoyment" while "aggressiveness" is "essentially nonsexual" (87). "Aggressiveness" is made up of those urges that are turned around and directed inward (in order to protect and preserve the self by not allowing the self to act on its most violent impulses) (95). *Halloween* taps into aggression in both forms as aggression is directed outward and aggressiveness is turned inward.

Laplanche's take really emphasizes the "intersection of 'propping'" as the site from which aggression is directed inward with "auto-aggression," directed outward, into "sadism" or "masochism," or directed to the midway point of "reflexive masochism" (95). However, as we will discuss later, we agree with Deleuze's separating of sadism from masochism and therefore avoid the term "sadomasochistic"

as it tends to collapse distinctions between these two categories. As gestured to earlier, in *Halloween* we do see sadism and masochism operating simultaneously, although their functions are different.

By tapping into repressed aggressions, the slasher film allows us, or perhaps forces us, to both aggress inwardly (through the pleasure/displeasure of viewing the anxiety-producing horror film) and aggress outwardly (through sadistic and masochistic identifications). That being said, they do allow us to do these things from a distance. And here is the root of what Pinedo calls "recreational terror" (Pinedo 5). However, rather than simply applying Pinedo's framework to *Halloween*, this chapter seeks to extend her remarks, arguing that this terror, as it appears in *Halloween*, is not always so "recreational." Instead, it touches on profound anxieties related to the (threatened) dissolution of the self. Here *Halloween* engages the repression of a fundamental, originary anxiety: the anxiety of losing our selves, of being annihilated, of having our status as individual subjects destroyed.

In *Halloween*, the body of the victim functions representationally as the main receiver of outwardly-directed aggression, while the psyche of the viewer is the main receiver of aggressiveness. In sadism and masochism as well as aggressiveness, the skin is particularly significant. Connecting Laplanche to Anzieu's work in *The Skin Ego*, we are able to understand the skin as the site upon which sadism and masochism are acted out, gesturing to a literal destruction of the self. Meanwhile, in aggressiveness, the skin figures as a thing that we psychically destroy through our multiple identifications with victim and villain. The simultaneous appearance of

outwardly-directed sadism and masochism and inwardly-directed aggression gestures to "an anguished fear of psychical collapse" and throws all that we believe that we know about ourselves into question (Anzieu 34). Here we assault our understanding of ourselves as distinct individuals and threaten ourselves with a return to a psychic state in which our egos are undifferentiated and their boundaries are dissolved. This is the threat of a reversal of the process of "separation-individuation" in which "self and object representations [are] differentiated from each other" (Kernberg 193). In this, *Halloween* really gets at the abject and its destruction of categories that separate and differentiate (subject from object, human from monster, inside from outside): this is the threatened death/destruction of the self, a self that is bounded literally and metaphorically by a "containing" skin (Anzieu 40).

According to Freud, when considering the infant's feelings surrounding separation from the mother, "anxiety appears as a reaction to the felt loss of the object; and we are at once reminded of the fact that castration anxiety, too, is a fear of being separated from a highly valued object, and that the earliest anxiety of all—the 'primal anxiety' of birth—is brought about on the occasion of a separation from the mother" (*SE XX* 137).⁶ Furthermore, in the infant, "anxiety is seen to be a product of the infant's mental helplessness which is a natural counterpart of its biological

⁶ In this dissertation, we follow Melanie Klein's (along with Kristeva's and Freud's) use of the term "object" (related to concepts of "good" vs. "bad objects"). In this use of the term, "objects" are representations based on real things but "are phantastically distorted [pictures] of the real objects upon which they are based" (M. Klein 116). For Klein, "good objects" are perceived as providing gratification while "bad objects" are perceived as "frustrating" one's "desires" (116). These "bad objects" are essentially receptacles upon which the ego "projects its own aggression" and are seen as things that are "actually dangerous" rather than simply things that frustrate desire (116).

helplessness" (138). Through Anzieu we can directly apply Freud's work here to the body.

Anzieu understands the skin to be absolutely central to the construction and functioning of the individual self. According to Anzieu, "[the] boundaries of the body image (or the image of the body's boundaries) are acquired in the course of the child's detaching itself from its mother" (32). Anzieu, quoting the work of René Angelergues, describes the development of one's understanding of one's own body (which Anzieu and Angelergues refer to as "body image") as "a symbolic process of representing a boundary which functions both as a 'stabilizing image' and as a protective envelope" (qtd. in Anzieu 32). Furthermore, Angelergues observes that "[the] function of setting boundaries here connects with the necessity for bodily integrity" and that "[the] body image belongs to the order of phantasy and secondary development; it is a representation acting upon the body" (qtd. in Anzieu 32). It is essentially a metaphor through which we can comprehend the psyche's own understanding of the space of the body.

Ultimately for Anzieu, the skin has the double function of "protecting our individuality" and working as a "site of interaction with others" (3). For Anzieu, the skin functions at both the level of reality and fantasy, reality in that it is directly connected to the biological skin that surrounds our bodies, and fantasy in that a fantastical skin functions to both contain and protect us and our senses of self. As Anzieu argues, the "Skin Ego" is "a mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an Ego containing

psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body" (40). The "Skin Ego," according to Anzieu, comes about as "a response to the need for a narcissistic envelope and [it] guarantees the psychical apparatus a sure and continuous sense of basic well-being" (39-40).

The danger of the threatened destruction of self (representationally figured as a "containing" and "protecting" boundary of the skin) directly provokes anxieties about our own helplessness. Freud argues anxiety produced by a "danger-situation . . . consists in the subject's estimation of his own strength compared to the magnitude of the danger and in his admission of helplessness in the face of it—physical helplessness if the danger is real and psychical helplessness if it is instinctual" (*SE XX* 166). Along the same lines, Freud argues:

when the ego finds itself in an excessive real danger which it believes itself unable to overcome by its own strength, it is bound to draw the same conclusion. It sees itself deserted by all protecting forces and lets itself die. Here, moreover, is once again the same situation as that which underlay the first great anxiety-state of birth and the infantile anxiety of longing – the anxiety due to separation from the protecting mother. (*SE XIX* 58)

For Freud, "the fear of death makes its appearance . . . as a reaction to an external danger and as an internal process" (*SE XIX* 58). In *Halloween*, Myers representationally functions as an external danger. However, a more profound source of anxiety is created by the "internal process" of constructing an abject, sadistic-masochistic viewing subject.

As Freud notes of the connection between anxiety and the threat of annihilation:

The ego is the actual seat of anxiety. Threatened by dangers from three directions, it develops the flight-reflex by withdrawing its own cathexis from the menacing perception or from the similarly regarded process in the id, and emitting it as anxiety. This primitive reaction is later replaced by the carrying-out of protective cathexes (the mechanism of the phobias). What it is that the ego fears from the external and from the libidinal danger cannot be specified; we know that the fear is of being overwhelmed or annihilated, but it cannot be grasped analytically. The ego is simply obeying the warning of the pleasure principle. On the other hand, we can tell what is hidden behind the ego's dread of the super-ego, the fear of conscience. The superior being, which turned into the ego ideal, once threatened castration, and this dread of castration is probably the nucleus round which the subsequent fear of conscience has gathered; it is this dread that persists as the fear of conscience. (*SE XIX* 57)

This "fear . . . of being overwhelmed or annihilated" is vital to the slasher film's construction of horror. Ultimately, the fears and anxieties that *Halloween* taps into through the construction of abject spectator positions, are directly related to the threatened destruction of the self. Here again we are dealing with the threat of the destruction of the ego and, following the work of Anzieu, the destruction or disintegration of the body as a "container" of the ego (further detailed below) (*SE XX* 130; Anzieu 31).

The lack of boundaries that we are left with after the destruction of the body in the slasher film in some ways connects to Anzieu's observations about patients suffering from a borderline personality. As Anzieu notes, "the patient in such a state is suffering from an absence of borders or limits" (7). Although this is not the forced dissolution of boundaries that comes from the brutalizing of the body, the results are, in some ways, parallel. Anzieu goes on to describe the patient suffering from borderline personality as such: He is uncertain of the frontiers between the psychical and bodily Egos, between the reality Ego and the ideal Ego, between what belongs to the Self and what to others; he experiences sudden fluctuations of these frontiers accompanied by descents into depression, is unable to differentiate erogenous zones, confuses pleasant experiences with painful ones, and cannot distinguish between drives, which leads him to experience the manifestation of a drive not as desire but as violence. (7)

Furthermore, as Anzieu argues, borderline personalities are particularly susceptible to

"weakness of, or flaws in, the psychical envelope" (7). For Anzieu, this disorder is

primarily a disorder of the skin, understood in a larger than strictly biological sense

(although this sense is still very connected to biology). Here the skin is understood as

that which protects the self from outside threats, filters the body's experience of the

outside world, and differentiates the self from the world around it (10).

As Anzieu argues, the skin has several sensory and biological functions (14-

15). In addition,

the skin performs a series of functions that are essential to the living body when looked at as a whole, in its individuality and in its spatio-temporary continuity. It holds the body together around the skeleton and keeps it upright; it protects it (by its surface corneal layer, its veneer of keratin and its layer of subcutaneous fat) against outside attack; and, lastly, it picks up and transmits stimuli and useful information. (15)

However, as gestured to above, there is also the psychological element of multiple, fractured subjectivities, representationally figured (at least partially) as the violated, destroyed skin. *Halloween* assails the skin at both the physical and psychological level. If the healthy Skin Ego skin acts as a sort of "envelope," in the slasher film this function of the skin is brought to the fore, interrogated, challenged, and ultimately destroyed through the violation of the literal and psychical skin of the victim as well as through the psychic violation of the spectator (achieved in the creation of a sadistic-masochistic subjectivity constructed partially through "free indirect subjectivity," a concept further elaborated below).

Through the construction of a sadistic-masochistic subjectivity, Halloween interrogates this "physical helplessness" and "psychical helplessness," forcing the viewer to "admit" a peculiar form of helplessness. In the end, Carpenter's film literalizes this threat of annihilation by forcing the viewer to speak from the position of both the aggressor and the aggressed. It also spatializes this threat of annihilation by simultaneously mapping it onto the bodies of Myers' victims as well as onto the spaces of small-town America. *Halloween* then, through the viewer's abject subjectivity, destroys various meanings attached to the spaces of small-town America and the bodies that inhabit it. Ultimately, while the destruction of the human body is, in many ways, the most striking element of the slasher film (and the depiction of this destruction has historically been the source of many protests against the slasher film), the production of horror in the slasher film is simply due to the violent, graphic breaching of the boundaries of the body. Instead, much of the abject horror produced through the slasher film has to do with the invasion of safe, white, middle-class spaces. Not only is the slasher film concerned with blurring, troubling, or violation in terms of the body, but it is also concerned with violation in terms of space.

THE "SKIN EGO" AND THE ABJECT

As noted earlier, the skin looms large in Anzieu's study of the body and the formation of the ego. According to Anzieu, there are two important "variables" to examine when approaching representations of the skin (31). The first of these, the "Barrier" variable, has to do with representations that "[imply] a protective surface, membrane, shell or skin, which could be symbolically related to the perception of the boundaries of the body image" (31). As examples of this variable, Anzieu lists, among other things, "clothing," "animal skins," "a protective or overhanging surface," "an object that is armoured or has the form of a container," and "a being or object covered by or hidden behind something" (31). In *Halloween*, Myers' mask functions as an excellent example of this first variable, a sort of secondary skin that functions to protect and obscure the individual behind it. In *Halloween*, the mask also marks Myers as different, distinct from the characters that he hunts.

As J. Halberstam notes through the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "the aesthetic of pleasurable fear" that characterizes the contemporary horror film, "makes pleasure possible only by fixing horror elsewhere, in an obviously and literally foreign body" (13). Here we see Anzieu's first variable at work. In the slasher film in general and in *Halloween* in particular, this mapping of the other (that is also the self) onto an external body is achieved most notably through the use of the mask as a marker of difference. With the exception of two brief moments (one near the beginning and one near the end of the film), the audience does not see Myers' face. It is almost constantly hidden masked. The mask (or other disguise) is used again and again in

this way (as well as to add to the mystery of the killer's identity in many films) in the slasher film, with the notable exception of Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, although in the case of Craven's film, difference is visually inscribed on the skin, with Freddy's face and body covered in severe burns.

We also see this "Barrier" variable in the representations of the suburban house as Myers stalks and attempts to kill Laurie. In this sequence, the house functions as a too-strong container, at first trapping Laurie as she attempts to flee Myers' attacks and then locking Laurie out of both a neighbor's house and the house that she is supposed to be babysitting in. In this sequence, the function of the house as a protecting structure (a protecting skin and a fortified boundary) becomes its opposite: instead of protecting, it traps (this sequence will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

The second variable that Anzieu discusses is the "Penetration of Boundary variable" (31). In Anzieu's understanding, this second variable is the opposite of the first variable as "it relates to anything that may be the symbolic expression of a subjective feeling that the body has only a weak protective value and can be easily penetrated" (31). *Halloween* offers numerous examples of this second variable and appearances of this second variable tend to increase in later slasher films, particularly *Friday the 13th* and, at a more irrational level, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

As Anzieu notes, there are "three types of representations of penetration" (31). These include representations of: 1) "penetration, disruption or wearing away of a bodily surface (a wound, fracture, scratching, crushing and bleeding)"; 2) "modes or channels for getting inside a thing or of expelling something from inside to the outside (an open mouth, an orifice of the body or the doorway of a house, an opening in the earth from which liquid substances gush, X-ray pictures or cross-sections of organs showing their interiors)"; and, 3) "representation of the surface of a thing as permeable and fragile (something insubstantial or soft, without clear boundaries; something transparent; a withered, diseased, deteriorating or degenerating surface" (31). In *Halloween*, examples of this second variable are most obviously found in representations of the body being destroyed, that is, in cinematic representations of the self. These are representations of violence inscribed on the skin, representations in which the skin is torn, representations in which blood appears and marks the skin as having been breached as a boundary.

Perhaps most central for the slasher film is Anzieu's description of the third type of "representation of penetration." This representational breaching of the Skin Ego may be found in depictions of "expelling something from inside to the outside" (31). This, in many ways, is the central source of horror in the slasher film. In *Halloween*, this representation of penetration is signified most apparently in Dr. Loomis' hunt to find and expel Myers from Haddonfield. Dr. Loomis' hunt for Myers also highlights Myers' presence as a contaminating one. Kristeva also notes abjection's connection to pollution and impurity. In Kristeva's understanding, the experience of abjection is that which "purifies," at least symbolically, the abject (17). In this way, Dr. Loomis' quest to expel Myers from Haddonfield and neutralize him as a threat, approximates abjection. His hunt for Myers seeks to remove the impure, to "purify" it in some way.⁷

MICHAEL MYERS AS "CONTAGION"

Michael Myers, as a monster that blurs and disorders the boundaries between human and monster, inside and outside, self and other, brings "ambiguity" and "anomaly" to the seemingly well-ordered small town of Haddonfield (Douglas 5).⁸ Myers is both an insider and an outsider of humanity and humanness and an insider and outsider of the small town of Haddonfield. He is both a piece of reality and a piece of nightmarish fantasy (even the way that his origins are spoken of references the otherworldly). Although Myers is clearly a human being (the audience constantly sees his human body and gets a couple of glimpses of his human face), he is not spoken of as a human by Dr. Loomis and he does not bear the markers of mortality that a human normally carries. Along with Dr. Loomis' constant references to Myers' lack of humanness, there are numerous visual manifestations of this inhumanity, including Myers' seemingly superhuman strength, his ability to lift things that ordinary humans would find extremely difficult to lift, and his extraordinary ability to

⁷ Pinedo further expands on Kristeva as she notes that contemporary horror film "violates the taken-forgranted 'natural' order" as "[it] blurs boundaries and mixes categories that are usually regarded as discrete to create what Mary Douglas (1966) calls '[im]purity and danger'" (21). While Pinedo's argument here is clearly inspired by Douglas' work, this quote is essentially just a riff on the title of Douglas' book *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Seeking to explore this extremely fruitful connection further, this chapter goes directly to Douglas' concepts of "purity," "defilement," "pollution," and "contagion" and applies them to Myers' monstrous figure (Douglas 1, 3, 5).

⁸ In Chapter Three, this understanding of the "impure" monster as that entity which must be removed from society will be connected to René Girard's concept of the "scapegoat."

escape death (and this aspect of Myers' character comes to haunt the slasher films that came after *Halloween*). Carpenter also uses intertextuality (referencing other cinematic works) and intermediality (referencing them through the frame of the television) to draw attention to Myers' supernatural abilities, hi supernatural origins, and his place within the history cinematic monsters (explicitly referencing Christian Nyby's *The Thing from Another World* [1951], a film whose source material Carpenter later reworked, and Fred McLeod Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* [1956]).

While Myers draws on the history of the 1950s science fiction and horror (most notably in his seemingly supernatural strength as well as his ability to escape and survive, both qualities that will come to function as representative features of the slasher film and will mark many villains of the slasher film), he is, at the same time, categorically of our world. He is a product of small-town America, a product of Haddonfield. He threatens small-town America, and in the process threatens *us*, but he also *is* small-town America, he is *us*.

As Halberstam argues, in contemporary horror, "[the] monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities" (28). Similarly, Pinedo argues that the contemporary horror film depicts "an unstable, paranoid universe in which familiar categories collapse" (9). Building on Kristeva, Pinedo further explores the connection between the abject and the figure of the monster, arguing that "[the] monster disrupts the social order by dissolving the basis of its signifying system, its network of differences: me/not me, animate/inanimate, human/nonhuman, life/death" (21). This is precisely what the figure of Myers does in his violent combination of the human (being a troubled child from Haddonfield, Illinois) and the supernatural (possessing superhuman strength and an incredible ability to appear and disappear at will). This chapter, taking Pinedo's argument as a starting point, aims to further examine how the construction of multiple viewer positions within the film (through mise-en-scène, shot composition, editing, and sound) relates to (and creates) a dissolution of binary differences as well as what role these multiple and conflicting viewer positions play in the construction of cinematic horror.

Extending Pinedo's understanding of the contemporary horror villain as a combination of human and monster, this chapter argues that this human/monster, spatially situated within generic small-town America, the heart of the myth of the American Dream and neoliberal bootstraps individualism, becomes the primary site of (dis)identification in the slasher film. Our reading of *Halloween* extends Pinedo's use of Kristeva and Douglas, arguing that Carpenter's film maps monstrosity not only onto Michael Myers but also and concurrently off of the screen onto the audience. Our argument here is that the multiple, simultaneous, contradictory viewing positions offered by the film complicate, challenge, and disorder conventionally-understood identification processes. For instance, as Myers combines the normal with the abnormal, the human with the monster, the sadist with the masochist, and the pleasurable with the not-pleasurable, but the viewer, in the process of viewing the film, simultaneously occupies these multiple, contradictory positions, at the same time, within the same sequences and even within the same shots. In the danger that he

poses, Myers constantly threatens to infect small-town America. As Myers blurs these boundaries, he also brings the threat of disorder, the threat of dirt, to Haddonfield and to the viewer of the film. This is, in short, the threat of destruction or annihilation (first of self and then of society).

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that "cleanliness and order" are key markers of "civilization" (*SE XXI* 93). For Freud, "[dirtiness] of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization" and "[order] is a kind of compulsion to repeat which, when a regulation has been laid down once and for all, decides when, where and how a thing shall be done, so that in every similar circumstance one is spared hesitation and indecision" (93). Meanwhile, as Douglas notes, in "civilized" (vs. "primitive") order (the sort of order discussed here by Freud), "dirt is essentially disorder" and "offends against order" (2).

As Douglas argues, "ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience" (4). Furthermore, "[it] is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created" (4). Likewise, as Douglas observes, "[reflection] on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death" (5). In *Halloween* we find a disordering of this sort of "order."

According to Douglas, "dirt" is that which defies "our normal scheme of classifications" (37). Meanwhile, "[uncomfortable] facts which refuse to be fitted in,

we find ourselves ignoring or distorting so that they do not disturb these established assumptions" (38). Myers, as a monster, is a prime example of one of the "uncomfortable facts" that Douglas discusses. Combining both human and nonhuman elements, his presence is one of ambiguity. Likewise, in the blurring of the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, reality and fantasy that Myers brings, he is anomaly. His presence in Haddonfield is one of impurity and pollution. His violence pollutes all that he confronts. He is contagion reified into the figure of a terrifically powerful human-monster. His impurity marks him as that which must be expelled so that "order" may be restored to the town of Haddonfield. In the face of the imagined order of the American suburb, Myers brings fundamental disorder.

Carpenter constructs Michael Myers as an abject monster that is radically other (and self at the same time) through his actions (the graphic violence that he inflicts on- and off- screen), his appearance (his large body, lack of facial expression, lack of emotion), and his extremely limited characterization. At the same time, Carpenter creates Myers as a monster through his geographical origin (being both from small-town America and being small-town America's destroyer). Meanwhile, Myers, a monster that we first meet as a child, effectively functions as anomaly/ambiguity. When we first meet him as a child, he combines innocence with radical, polluting not-innocence. From the start of the film, the figure of Myers questions and collapses boundaries (between normal and not-normal, human and not-human, innocent and guilty).

Carpenter opens Halloween with a title card that reads "Haddonfield, Illinois." With this Carpenter sets the stage for the action to follow: it will take place in a town in Illinois, a state that is, geographically, more-or-less at the heart of the contiguous United States. A card that reads "Halloween Night / 1963" follows. This card situates the audience in time: the action it is about to see takes place in the past on a night that combines innocence with evil. Carpenter's minimalistic, repetitive, anxiety-producing score gradually grows in intensity and instrumentation as the credits role. The score then fades into the sounds of a chorus of children reciting a rhyme/incantation: "Covens of witches with all of their hosts / You may think they scare me, you're probably right / Black cats and goblins on Halloween night." This rhyme lists several sources of childhood anxiety. After the word "hosts," a sharp cowbell rings in the background, hardly noticeably. The children's voices are muffled, as if they were recorded on a cassette deck, and they echo and layer over one another. In its chanted delivery, this rhyme seems to reference the occult (a hidden sort of evil and/or a possibly repressed aggression). Here, Halloween immediately gestures to Freud's understanding of the uncanny ("magical practices" being one possible source of a feeling of "uncanniness") (SE XVII 244).

After the rhyme, one of the children boisterously screams "trick-or-treat!" Carpenter punctuates this outburst with the dampened ring of a cowbell being struck from the inside. This hollow clatter lasts approximately one second and overlays Carpenter's wipe from title cards to the first shot of the film: a handheld extreme long shot of the Myers house at night. The dampened cowbell also contrasts markedly with the ambient noise that envelopes the Myers house. This early series of contrasts highlights the superficial boundary between childhood/innocent and adult/not-innocent. This contrast, however, is one that *Halloween* will explode outward, as even the ritual of "trick-or-treating" menaces and combines innocence with not-innocence. This innocence/not-innocence combination becomes particularly pronounced when Michael, as a child, kills his sister Judith, thereby combining the innocence of childhood with the radical not-innocence of horrific violence. This combination of innocence with not-innocence is clearly an appearance of the uncanny. Likewise, this collapse of difference also gestures to Kristeva's understanding of the abject as that which destroys distinctions.

"FREE INDIRECT SUBJECTIVITY" AND THE SADISTIC-MASOCHISTIC SPECTATOR

After the credit sequence, Carpenter delivers one of the two murders that occur on screen and prominently feature the pain and distress of the victim. The first murder is delivered in a first-person POV shot from the perspective of a young Michael Myers. By witnessing this action through Myers' sadistic-voyeuristic gaze and tapping into the anxieties felt by his victims, *Halloween* begins by uniting radically different subjectivities and viewing positions. After the title cards discussed above, Carpenter wipes into *Halloween*'s first shot: a handheld POV. With this point-ofview shot, the audience/camera approaches and enters the Myers house in an extremely long take (clocking in at just over four minutes). The Myers' porch light is on, an interior hall light is on, and a light is on in an upstairs bedroom. A jack-o-lantern rests on a railing. The audience hears crickets and an owl hoot in the background. On the surface, and divorced from the extremely ominous credit sequence and children's rhyme, this appears to be an idyllic Halloween night (figure 1.1). However, the shot is handheld, and the shaky/wobbly camerawork ensures the audience that this is not simply a normal Halloween night.



Figure 1.1: Halloween, 1963: The Myers house (*Halloween* 0:02:30). Blu-ray disc (BD) still.

The shaky camerawork also implies that we are witnessing the action from the perspective of one of the characters. This first POV shot begins the spectator's experience of something similar to what Pasolini calls, in a different historical context, "free indirect subjectivity" (551). Here Pasolini draws a direct line between free indirect discourse in literature and the ways that films approximate the subjectivities of those within the frame without resorting to the POV shot. For Pasolini, when films engage in "free indirect subjectivity," they deliver the action of the film in the form of an "interior monologue" of the character (although one that is not a voice-over) (552). Through "free indirect subjectivity," the action of the film is delivered to the spectator through "the dominant state of mind of the protagonist" (553). While Pasolini clearly writes that the POV/subjective shot is *not* an example of "free indirect subjectivity,"

Halloween provides us with a series of sequences in which the POV might actually function to align the viewer not only with the killer (the position from which the shot originates), but also those characters that we actually see in the frame. The end result is a rather chaotic viewing position in which the audience identifies both with the killer/watcher and the victim/watched. In effect, through "free indirect subjectivity," we are aligned with the victim but our view of the action is contaminated by the gaze of the villain.

In this sequence, we begin to see the construction of this sort of "free indirect subjectivity." This provides an avenue for a more complete discussion of the sadistic and masochistic aspects of the horror film. As Clover suggests in her discussion of Powell's *Peeping Tom*, there are two processes of looking at work in that horror film. The first process is "to assault" while the second process "is to be oneself assaulted" (174). Clover connects the first process with activity and dubs it "assaultive," aligning it with sadism, while she identifies the second process with passivity and dubs it "reactive," aligning it with masochism (175-76). Clover's invocation of sadism and masochism is a useful starting point, however, we will modify and destabilize her approach, more fully separating sadism from masochism and then recombining them through a reading of *Halloween* that stresses the dual operations of both sadism and masochism, often within the same sequences of horror, through the construction of a sort of "free indirect subjectivity."

In his reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* through the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch in "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze argues

that sadism and masochism are two distinct qualities. Deleuze notes that when Freud discusses "the turning around of sadism upon the subject," it "[appears] that the sadist's superego is singularly weak, while the masochist suffers from an overwhelming superego which causes sadism to be turned against the ego" (123). To this we would add, following Laplanche, that both masochism and sadism are outward expressions of aggression with a distinctly sexual character (Laplanche 87). This contrasts with, but is certainly related to, aggression that is directed towards the self.

For Deleuze, the masochist lacks a super-ego while the sadist lacks an ego and s/he attempts to locate this ego in his/her victims (124). These lacks, of course, imply desires, as the masochist both lacks and desires a super-ego while the sadist lacks and desires an ego. According to Deleuze, "in masochism the ego triumphs and the superego can only appear from outside, in the form of the torturess" (125). In sadism, on the other hand, "the ego . . . is beaten and expelled [and] the unrestrained superego assumes an exclusive role, modeled on an inflated conception of the father's role - the mother and the ego becoming its choice victims" (131). According to Deleuze, "[the] irony of sadism lies in the two-fold operation whereby he necessarily projects his dissolved ego outward and as a result experiences what is outside him as his only ego" (125). As Deleuze puts it: "the sadistic superego expels the ego and projects it into its victims" (126). The victims then stand in for the sadist's own ego, which the sadist tortures. In many ways the slasher film, here *Halloween*, itself functions as a sort of torturer or torturess, torturing us by tapping into anxieties related to our own threatened annihilation as well as our own aggression to ourselves and then (re)turning this previously repressed aggression back outward in the forms of sadism and masochism.

Meanwhile, in Anzieu's take on the body and the biological origins of a healthy Skin Ego, the masochist, rather than having "a Skin Ego which [is] at the same time a protective shield and an envelope of well-being" instead has a "compulsion to repeat the experiences which reactivate both the envelope of excitation and the envelope of suffering" (44). As Anzieu notes, there are several "real" and "imaginary" disorders of the skin that directly link to masochism (20). These disorders include scratching, which Anzieu argues "is one of the archaic forms of turning aggression against one's own body (instead of turning it against the Ego, which would presuppose the existence of a more developed Super-ego)" (20). Secondly, Anzieu notes that "[mutilations] of the skin – sometimes real, but more often imaginary – are dramatic attempts to maintain the boundaries of the body and the Ego and to re-establish a sense of being intact and self-cohesive" (20). So we come back to anxiety as it appears in *Halloween*, specifically anxieties surrounding annihilation and the (potential) destruction of the skin, with the skin here functioning as that which literally and metaphorically holds the self together, contains the self, and differentiates the self/I from the other/not-I. In Halloween, this anxiety is paired with self-aggression as well as outwardly directed sadistic and masochistic impulses.

In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Clover gestures to the confusion or combination of sadistic and masochistic impulses at issue here. In the final chapter of her book, Clover points out that a large amount of film

criticism focuses on the construction of the male/sadistic gaze while ignoring the possibility of masochistic viewing positions and "male-with-female identification" that she finds particularly intriguing in slasher and "rape-revenge" films (and in the slasher film, Clover finds this most pronounced through the much-discussed figure of the "final girl") (227, 35). So, while Clover does admit that there is a sadistic element to horror films, she argues that we must also examine the masochistic element of horror viewing as it is this element that has historically been ignored by critics (she names, in particular, the works of Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz) (211, 230).

Perhaps arguing against the grain too much, Clover insists that the most effective horror films succeed not because they indulge in sadism but rather because they "play to masochistic fears and desires in its audiences" (229). She does, however, certainly gesture to "'two-way' aggression (sadism/masochism)" (229). Nevertheless, earlier in the chapter Clover seems to argue that viewing positions are *either* sadistic *or* masochistic at different points over the course of a given film (211). This chapter's reading of *Halloween* aims to complicate this, arguing that viewers experience both sadism and masochism (along with inwardly-directed aggression) differently yet simultaneously. Modifying Clover, this chapter argues that the slasher film, particularly *Halloween*, offers more complicated and unstable viewing positions in which viewers are positioned, within the same sequence of film, as simultaneously sadistic *and* masochistic. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the film's use of the POV and the approximate POV. After the opening credits, the first shot of *Halloween* is a POV shot. As the camera approaches the house, the shot becomes much more sexually and sadistically voyeuristic as the film immediately provides the viewer with a perspective aligned to the character that is approaching the house, a stalker that will soon be revealed to be a young Michael Myers. As the camera moves toward the front of the house, we see a young couple kissing through a see-through curtain behind the front door. The camera rests here for a moment. The shot is shaky, reminding us that it is a POV and as it approaches the house, we realize that the perspective of the shot belongs to a voyeur. This voyeur is hidden and we share in his/her perspective. Being hidden alongside the voyeur, we see what we are not supposed to see. We experience some pleasure in this forbidden perspective, but we also feel some guilt as well as some excitement that comes with the potential of being caught, brought into the open, unmasked.

The young man and young woman behind the front door move out of our line of sight, the girl saying "My parents won't be home until 10." This line of dialogue pairs teenage innocence with guilt (a guilt both on the part of the characters as well as on the part of the audience, watching this private moment as a voyeur). The camera shifts to the right and maneuvers around the side of the house to get a better look at what is going on. The camera stops in front of a window and the audience sees the young couple seated on a rose-patterned couch, making out (figure 1.2). The shot is partially obstructed, on the left by a bush and on the right by the window's frame, reminding us that we are situated alongside the voyeur here, hidden from the characters' views. The teenage boy stops for a moment and asks the girl, "We are alone, aren't we?" The young man has an inkling that something may be wrong and perhaps a twinge of guilt but his sexual urges override this anxiety. Here we are aligned with both the watcher and the watched as Carpenter begins to tap into our anxieties about being watched, stalked. While it began a few moments earlier, this is a clear example of free indirect subjectivity as the shot aligns us with characters that are contained in the shot. However, this is a modified free indirect subjectivity as it also aligns us with the character from whose perspective the POV is delivered. We feel both the not-pleasurable paranoia of possibly being watched and the pleasurable (for the voyeur) paranoia of being caught watching. Myers is stalking us. But we are also doing the stalking. So far, the mise-en-scène is pure small-town America paired with middle class rites of passage: quiet nights and teenagers exploring their sexuality, sneaking around behind their parents' backs. The girl responds: "Michael's around someplace." A few moments later, the young man suggests they go upstairs and the girl agrees. They shut off the light and run upstairs, giggling.



Figure 1.2: Gazing through the window: Michael's sister and her boyfriend (*Halloween* 0:02:59). BD still.

The stalker/voyeur, whose perspective the audience shares, now quickly looks to the right and then moves to the left and looks upstairs. A high-pitched note of

Carpenter's score punctuates the light turning off, ratcheting up the anxiety felt by the audience (on the part of the stalked) as well as the excitement at the possibility of being discovered (on the part of the stalker). The stalker moves back around the house to an open back door. Going to Anzieu, we may read this open door as a signifier of vulnerability, an example of the "Penetration of Boundary variable" (31).

The backyard as well as the inside of the house is completely dark. Carpenter's score continues to rise and the score eventually introduces piano notes. The effect of this is an ever-increasing rise of anxiety/excitement. The stalker, now in the kitchen, switches a light on and then pulls a kitchen drawer open. This begins the revelation of the stalker's identity. In this shot, we see a brightly costumed arm open the drawer. The stalker pulls out a large kitchen knife and then continues moving through the house: first through the dining room and then through the living room where the stalker glances over at the rose-patterned couch that the couple was making out on a few moments earlier. This coupling of the brightly costumed arm with the knife links two seemingly opposed things: cheerful costumes and a weapon that will open up the body and kill.

The stalker/voyeur/audience now moves into the entryway but stops when the teenage boy from earlier comes down the stairs, pulling his shirt back on. This implies that some sexual activity has just taken place. After a brief verbal exchange with the girl upstairs, the boy trots out the front door, leaving the girl alone. Once the boy leaves, the stalker/voyeur walks up the staircase. The audience hears footfalls as well as the girl upstairs singing. The sounds of these footfalls, signifying stalking and

evoking anxieties over being followed, will come to be one of the representative features of the slasher film. At the top of the stairs, the stalker glances to the right and sees a clown mask on the ground. The stalker picks up the mask and puts it on, partially blocking the image for the duration of the shot (see figure 1.3 for an example of this blocking). The audience now begins to piece things together: the mask completes the stalker's circus clown costume. Again, the costume is bright, celebratory, but the stalking/voyeurism is menacing. The clown, a figure meant to entertain, becomes a figure that will terrorize. Clowns, however, in their brightlycolored outfits and stylized make-up, also embody the bizarre and the irrational. The figure of the clown also taps into an often-discussed (in pop culture) "fear of clowns."

While the mask that the young Myers wears hides his identity, it also representationally hides the emotion/arousal of the voyeur. Following Anzieu, the mask here functions as a secondary skin for Myers, holding him together and compensating for the lack of a healthy Skin Ego. This mask is another representative feature of the slasher film. Although a literal mask, as we have here, is not a required feature of later slasher films, the obscuring of the killer's identity is a major feature (with the notable exception of Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, who wears another sort of mask, a horrifically burned skin, to be explored in more detail in Chapter Three of this dissertation).

The shot is now partially blocked by the mask that the stalker (along with the spectator) has put on. The audience, seeing the action through this lengthy POV shot, continues to see the scene as the stalker does, only through the small eye-slits in the

clown mask. Here, with the shot from Myers' perspective, the mask doubly functions to hide his identity and to obscure a portion of the frame. A third function of the mask is the unification of Myers' sense of self through a stand-in for a well-developed Skin Ego. Now the audience/stalker sees clothes strewn on the ground. The spectator/stalker walks through this small room then looks into the next room. The spectator then sees the source of the singing: the girl from earlier, topless, looking into a mirror (effectively drawing our attention to her gaze/look), combing her hair. This appearance of the nude body certainly makes the violence to come more shocking and sexually sadistic, but this nudity does not particularly mark later scenes of violence in *Halloween*.

The audience/stalker glances to the right and sees an unmade bed again implying that sexual activity has just taken place (and this urge to protect but also to punish may be what initially sets off the young Myers, an urge that the audience is encouraged to feel as well). The gaze returns to the partially nude girl again tugging on the sexually-sadistic side of the voyeur/viewer and, partially following Mulvey's work in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," situating the viewer as sadistic/controlling/male. However, we do not stop here. The viewer is not simply situated as sadistic/controlling/male. Instead, the viewer is simultaneously situated as sadistic *and* masochistic, within the same shot.

After a moment, the girl realizes that she is not alone. She turns around, partially covering herself, and exclaiming: "Michael!?" The stalker is now revealed: it is Michael Myers, her younger brother. Her surprise also gestures to the fact that he has invaded the intimate space of her bedroom. While the shot participates in the sexual sadism of the viewer, it also indulges in the viewer's masochism, simultaneously aligning us with Michael's position as villain/watcher as well as his sister's position as victim/watched.

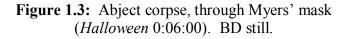
Then the graphic violence begins and with it, the film's explicit engagement with representations of the abject. The score turns ominous and the audience hears the fleshy sounds of a knife making contact with a body. Michael's sister covers up defensively and screams, yelling "Oh God!" Michael glances up and looks at his arm raising and lowering the large kitchen knife. The audience hears Myers' heavy breathing, another element of *Halloween* that will become a representative feature of many slasher films. The girl falls onto the floor, bloodied, naked. Michael looks down at her and the audience sees her body through his eyes (see figure 1.3).⁹

This shot is still partially obscured by the mask but in this shot the audience does see nudity and blood as the girl dies. While this plainly stirs the sexual-sadistic side of the viewer, its image of a violent death, preceded by stalking, also taps into

⁹ It should be pointed out that this dissertation, in providing stills from the films that it analyzes may, by virtue of freezing the frame on some of the more graphically violent and sexually explicit shots from these films, actually give the impression that these films are more graphically violent and/or sexually explicit than they actually are. While some of these stills contain graphic violence and/or sexuality, we would like to point out, at the risk of sounding pedantic, that the still image is of a profoundly different sort than the moving image and that several of the stills included in this dissertation were taken from shots of short duration (to say nothing of other filmic elements that might mitigate or aggravate the perception of the intensity of violent or sexual content). The stills included here have been specifically selected to illustrate certain aspects of the films and not to give false impressions about the levels of violence and sexuality in these films. We certainly wish to avoid giving such false impressions as such (strategic) overstatement of the amount and quality of this sort of "objectionable" content has often been successfully employed as a tactic by cultural crusaders in morality campaigns (in ways that reach far beyond the slasher film). We will return to the use of this tactic in protests against "objectionable" content in Chapter Two.

fears of our own annihilation. In its abject-ness, this image of the corpse of Myers' sister reminds us of our own tenuous grasp on our sense of self by showing the easy destruction of the "container" of the skin (and this sort of representational abjectness will be more fully exploited in later slasher films, particularly *Friday the 13th*) (Anzieu 31).





Key to our experience of the action thus far is the activity of stalking. As Bran

Nicol notes in Stalking:

In the case of stalking, the underlying desire is to be loved or accepted, the fantasy is of an intimate relationship with the person who might function as the object of this desire – one which usually modulates into a fantasy of revenge or punishment, once the possibility of the desired relationship is closed off – and the symptom is the actual stalking, the compulsive pattern of escalating behaviour. (29)

Thus far, in this shot, we have both a "fantasy of revenge or punishment" (possibly, as numerous critics have noted, at least partially a societal fantasy rooted in a desire to punish sexual promiscuity), but we also have guilt from multiple sources: guilt originating both from watching what we should not see, guilt from potentially being caught as a voyeur, and guilt from harming (and simultaneously desiring to harm) the victim. The activity of stalking also directly connects to Anzieu's understanding of the Skin Ego as something that develops very early and differentiates the self/child from the not-self/mother. As Nicol notes, "at its most basic, stalking is rooted in a problematic experience of relationships" (29). Here stalking "is the result of one person's inability to accept the reality about a relationship with another" (29). Going to Anzieu and applying a combination of Nicol's and Anzieu's frameworks, we might argue that Myers' violent stalking is the result of an ill- or un- formed Skin Ego, rooted in the earliest moments of differentiation with the mother. Going to Mulvey, we might add that the voyeurism inherent in stalking here is a way to possess or control the non-reciprocating object. Connecting Nicol, Anzieu, and Mulvey to the spectator in the process of viewing *Halloween*, this stalking not only taps into fantasies of control but also a combination of excitement and guilt informed by profound anxieties about the lack of differentiation of the self.

The graphic on-screen violence of this opening shot seems to promise a level of gore that the film actually fails to deliver (and the same can actually be said for most of the murder sequences in *Friday the 13th*, to be discussed in the next chapter). In fact (and here we agree with Nowell's assessment of the violence in *Halloween*), *Halloween*'s later killings do not approach the brutality of this first killing. This first killing brutalizes the victim on screen in a manner that the later killings do not. However, this killing, in line with killings later in the film, brutalizes the victim and simultaneously brutalizes the spectator. Furthermore, in terms of masochism, as Freud

notes in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, one main type of "resistance," one which comes from the super-ego, "[originates] from the sense of guilt or the need for punishment" (*SE XX* 160). Here the masochistic side of the viewer emerges through the guilt that comes from inflicting pain and the need for punishment for that infliction of pain. In a sense, the rest of *Halloween* will be dedicated to punishing the spectator for his/her sadistic desires.

After the murder, the young Myers, still breathing heavily, quickly flees the room and heads down the stairs that he climbed a few moments previous. The breathing here, rather than being anticipatory, more closely approximates some kind of release. Myers' flight from the scene of the crime seems to gesture to some sort of guilt he may be feeling (although Dr. Loomis later insists that Myers feels no emotion). This also certainly references the guilt that the audience feels at witnessing this brutality and taking some pleasure in it. Myers exits the house as a car pulls up. An older couple exits the car and meets him. The man asks, "Michael?"

Carpenter's opening POV shot finally ends. It has lasted just over four minutes, an extremely long and extremely painful shot. The audience then gets, in medium shot, an image of Myers, a child, in a clown costume. This shot pairs childhood innocence with horrific guilt. This is an abject pairing that, following Kristeva, throws accepted boundaries into question: Myers, a child, here at once signifies innocence and embodies guilt. As gestured to earlier, the costume here functions as a sort of secondary skin, standing in for a poorly-developed Skin Ego. The man standing next to Myers, presumably Myers' father, pulls the mask off of his head (figure 1.4). This unmasking of Myers representationally deprives Myers of his secondary skin, signifying a collapse of the self that Myers' secondary skin had held together. This destruction of Myers' sense of self appears later in the film as Myers seeks out another secondary skin after his escape from a mental hospital, this time in the form of a black jumpsuit and white mask. As an adult, Myers' secondary skin is not the colorful regalia of a clown. Instead, his body, clad in a jumpsuit, is blackened, devoid of color while his face, covered in an iconic all-white mask, is an overload of color that obliterates the individual characteristics that he possesses as a child, albeit only for a moment.



Figure 1.4: Unmasked: Revealing the child killer (*Halloween* 0:06:32). BD still.

The shot slowly tracks back and up. Myers clutches the kitchen knife, blood visible on the lower half of its blade, evidence of his guilt. Before Myers' face becomes entirely expressionless, he briefly wears a look of resignation, perhaps suggesting the inevitability of the horror that has just occurred and that will occur throughout the film. After this backwards/up tracking shot that lasts approximately thirty seconds, Myers and his parents are held in an extreme long shot. We see the action from a distance here and from a third-person narrative shot, allowing us to

briefly reflect on the violence that we just witnessed and participated in. The light gleams off of Myers' blade and Carpenter cuts to another title card. In all, this opening sequence lasts four minutes and thirty-five seconds and is comprised of only two shots, both long takes. However, these two shots begin the process of creating the monster that is Michael Myers, a monster that both positions the spectator as an aggressor and participant in violence and violates and aggresses the spectator. From here on out, Myers is a sadistically voyeuristic monster, but so is the audience. At the same time, the audience is also the monster's (and Carpenter's and its own) victim.

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE AND HORROR

A much shorter sequence, although one that feels rather lengthy, is the death scene of Laurie's friend Annie. This scene, which takes up less than a minute of screen time, shows Myers, after stalking Annie and hiding in her car, choke her and cut her throat. This short sequence begins with Annie getting in her car, whistling to herself. She notices the front window is fogged up and only then begins to perceive the threat that Myers poses. Myers immediately grabs her neck and begins choking her. She screams an open-mouthed choking scream as synthetic notes of Carpenter's score pierce the soundtrack. Myers continues to choke Annie and the score disappears after a few seconds and only returns when Myers cuts her throat.

This scene, while brief, is notable for its use of on-screen graphic violence that is not particularly bloody/gory. While the sequence lasts for less than one minute, Carpenter shows Myers choking Annie for just under thirty seconds in medium closeup and medium shot. During these shots, the audience is positioned alongside both the killer and the victim inside the car (with the exception of three shots from outside the car) (figure 1.5). Additionally, as in the early scene in which Myers escapes from the mental hospital (analyzed below; Figure 1.6), this sequence contains a series of frames within frames, or spaces within spaces. In the shots from within the car, the spectator sees the ghastly results of this penetration of the spaces of the small American town: horrifying, sadistic violence in which the spectator is positioned alongside both the killer and the killed. In the three shots from outside the car, the audience sees the space penetrated by Myers (in the form of the suburban middle-class secondary skin of the car) and is reminded of its own voyeuristic status.



Figure 1.5: Myers choking Annie (Halloween 0:53:41). BD still.

Contrary to the ways in which many horror films deal with violent content (including later iterations of the slasher film), this sequence refuses to cut away from its violent action. Instead, Carpenter shows Annie's choking in violent detail. When Myers finally cuts Annie's throat, while there is no blood, the camera continues to focus on Annie. The cutting of her throat provides a representation of the destruction of her Skin Ego. The audience sees her death and hears her honk the car's horn as she struggles with Myers. This sequence is more reliant on the actress' facial performance of horror than on blood or gore. The experience of viewing this sequence is one of discomfort, as the sequence feels much longer than it actually is, particularly due to the focus on the violent content and the lack of cutting away from it. The audience is left with an image of Annie's abject corpse: slumped over, eyes wide open.

About ten minutes further into the film, after a brief sex scene, there is another killing, but this time the victim is male. Again, the murder is committed through choking and then stabbing. This scene is shot in extremely low, bluish light. A handheld shot follows the young man into the kitchen, referencing our position as voyeurs. No lights are on in the kitchen, the only light comes through the window, simulating moonlight. The young man opens the refrigerator and takes out two cans of beer. He walks a few steps further and opens a cabinet. He then looks to his right and sees that the French doors at the end of the kitchen are open. Again, this is a series of frames within frames, gesturing to the abject penetration of boundaries that Myers brings to both the characters and the audience. The young man walks toward the open doors and the camera follows him. He calls for his friends, thinking they are playing a joke on him then pulls the door shut, looks at and then shakes another pair of doors, another set of boundaries on his left, and then looks to his right and opens up another door. Up to this point, this scene has been wholly focused on Anzieu's "Barrier variable" and the potential occurrence of his "Penetration of Boundary variable" (31).

The "Penetration of Boundary variable" takes center stage as Myers pushes through the door and grabs the young man's neck. Carpenter's score kicks on full-blast, aurally penetrating the ambient sound of nighttime in Haddonfield. As Myers chokes the young man, the audience gets the first of several close-ups of the young man's struggling face. The shots of the young man focus on the performance of a violent abjection in a similar way to the previous sequence: Carpenter shows the audience graphic violence, gives the audiences cues for how to reaction to that graphic violence, but does not deliver gore. Carpenter also shows the audience a medium close-up of Myers as he chokes the young man. Any expression Myers might have on his face is blocked by the mask that he wears. As noted earlier, this mask effectively functions as a "Barrier variable" and stands in for an ill-formed Skin Ego on the part of Myers. After this medium close-up, Myers shows off one of his monstrous traits: seemingly superhuman strength. Not only is he able to hold back the struggling young man, he is able to easily lift him up with one arm. This incredible physical ability clearly marks Myers as uncanny.

As Freud argues, "[we] can . . . speak of a living person as uncanny, and we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him" (*SE XVII* 243). However, a person must be more than simply evil. According to Freud, "in addition to [being evil] we must feel that his intentions to harm us are going to be carried out with the help of special powers" (243). This marker of the uncanny fits Myers' physical prowess perfectly. His otherworldly strength, his seemingly supernatural ability to appear and disappear, and his ability to survive what would kill a normal human being all indicate that he is an uncanny monster. In a medium close-up, Myers raises a large kitchen knife (an object similar to the one he used to kill his sister as a child and that will become a recursive image in the slasher film). Carpenter shows the young man struggling in medium close-up and then quickly cuts back to Myers before cutting back to the young man. Myers stabs the blade into the young man's body, penetrating it and literally piercing the young man's protective, containing skin. The audience does not see the blade go in but does hear it, along with sounds of choking, which quickly cease as he dies. The young man's face performs agony: his eyes stop moving and he stops struggling with Myers. Myers pulls his hand away from the young man's throat. Carpenter then gives the audience a second shot of the young man's feet elevated off of the ground. The feet go limp and the audience can hear Myers' breathing. Carpenter then gives the audience a long shot of the scene: Myers stares at his lifeless victim. The young man's corpse is elevated off of the ground and has the large knife protruding from his abdomen.

After a few seconds, Myers tilts his head and then tilts it back as if contemplating the death of his victim. In this brief, odd moment of reflection, the audience is left with Myers. The corpse is abject but Myers' reaction to it is not one of abjection. Instead, it seems to be one of morbid curiosity. This last shot of Myers moving his head from side-to-side lasts an extremely painful thirteen seconds. While the audience may have been able to identify with the terror the young man experienced by being stalked and ambushed by Myers, they are now left with the pure sadism of Myers and the pure aggressiveness of their own psyches. At the same time, however, they are pulled back from the action spatially and given thirteen seconds to experience some sort of abjection, some sort of turning away from the radical destruction of meaning that Myers brings to Haddonfield.

A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MONSTER

Carpenter does not construct Myers as a monster solely through graphic violence. For instance, when Carpenter introduces the adult Myers to the audience, the audience is given an image of a physically violent monster that is also a psychologically violent monster. The second scene of the film takes place almost fifteen years after the opening scene, in which Myers kills his sister, during a stormy night on the grounds surrounding the Illinois State Hospital, a high security mental hospital in a place called Smith's Grove, Illinois. On the drive to the hospital, the audience gets a bit more characterization of Myers as Carpenter introduces Dr. Loomis along with a nurse who plays a bit part. The audience learns that, fifteen years after the events of the opening scene, Myers is housed in the high security hospital that the doctor and nurse are on their way to visit, that "he hasn't spoken a word in fifteen years," and that he must be sedated in order to appear before a judge. Notably, Dr. Loomis refers to Myers as "it" rather than "him," presumably in reference to the threat/evil that he embodies (and this seems to parallel the closing credits' reference to "The Shape" rather than "Michael Myers"). As Dr. Loomis and the nurse approach the entrance to the hospital, they see several patients milling around. It is immediately apparent that something is very wrong at this mental hospital.

The next thing the audience learns about Myers mostly has to do with his physical strength and the violence he is willing to do to others. When Dr. Loomis exits the car to further investigate the situation, he leaves the nurse in the driver's seat of the station wagon. In a shaky handheld shot from inside the cabin of the station wagon the audience sees a man, presumably Myers, bathed in red brake lights, leap onto the roof of the car. Again, the audience is positioned in this space within a space, alongside a (potential) victim of Myers.

The audience then hears, amidst Carpenter's score and the sounds of the storm outside, Myers' footsteps on the top of the car. The audience sees the nurse's startled reaction to the sounds of footsteps in medium close-up. Again, the face functions as an extremely important place for the performance of fear. In a medium close-up, the audience gets its first glimpse of graphic violence in this scene, as Myers reaches down from the roof of the car and grabs the nurse's face. In an extreme close-up of her foot, the audience sees her gun the gas. In the shots that follow, Carpenter returns several times to the image of Myers grabbing her face, pulling at her hair. During this the audience is positioned alongside the nurse with her fear of Myers and urge for survival. However, the audience, knowing that Myers' escape is a necessary condition for the continuation of the film is also aligned with Myers and his desire to escape.

The car eventually drives down a hill and comes to a stop. Then, in a medium long-shot, the audience sees the nurse sprawled across the front seat of the station wagon, frightened and disheveled. Carpenter punches in closer. Now, the nurse's face is in close-up, but takes up only the lower right portion of the screen. Behind her, the audience sees Myers' hand creep into the frame. He slams his palm into the passenger's side window behind the nurse, cracking it from the outside (figure 1.6). Again the space of the car becomes a space to be penetrated by Myers. In this shot, the shattered glass symbolizes a major beach in the protection provided by the secondary skin of the car.



Figure 1.6: Shattering a secondary skin: Myers attacks the nurse (*Halloween* 0:10:32). BD still.

In an extreme long shot the audience sees the nurse flee the car and Myers hop into the driver's seat. The audience only gets a glimpse of him here (although in this shot Myers only wears a hospital gown and not a mask, the first of two times that the audience briefly sees him without a mask in this film). In this shot, as in Myers' eventual unmasking in the climax of the film, Myers lacks the secondary skin that could representationally stand in for a well-developed Skin Ego (a secondary skin that he later finds in a black jumpsuit and white mask). The car speeds away. After Dr. Loomis asks the nurse if she is alright, he says: "He's gone. He's gone from here. The evil is gone."

AN UNCANNY VILLAIN

Through the warnings of Dr. Loomis, *Halloween* constantly reminds the audience of Myers' monstrous nature. As noted above, when the audience first meets Dr. Loomis, he refers to Myers (or to the evil that he embodies) as "it." Dr. Loomis repeats his understanding of Myers as a thing that is simply a vessel for evil almost every time he appears in the film. One of the most telling discussions of Myers occurs when Dr. Loomis is watching the Myers house and Haddonfield's sheriff approaches him. As Dr. Loomis puts it, Myers has been waiting for fifteen years, "sitting in a room, staring at a wall, not seeing the wall, looking past the wall, looking at this night, inhumanely patient, waiting for some secret silent alarm to trigger him off."

In this exchange, Dr. Loomis also refers to Myers directly as "death," famously warning the sheriff: "death has come to your little town, sheriff, you can either ignore it or you can help me to stop it." Myers as death incarnate directly references Freud's understanding of the uncanny as that which makes the familiar unfamiliar. As Freud notes, "[apparent] death and the re-animation of the dead" are "uncanny themes" (*SE XVII* 246). Myers as a human (familiar) that is also death (unfamiliar) points to "the feeling of uncanniness" (247). Additionally, *Halloween*'s open ending, in which Myers seems to be killed but then escapes also gestures to "the re-animation of the dead" as a source of "uncanniness" (246-47).

As Freud notes, insanity can also produce an "uncanny effect" by threatening us with our own (potential) insanity (*SE XVII* 243). According to Freud, the figure of the insane person causes us to become "dimly aware" of the potential for insanity "in remote corners of [our] own being" (243). As it appears through Myers, insanity taps into repressed anxieties over our own potential insanity, our own psychic annihilation, the threat of the abject collapse of our psyches.

On this note, Dr. Loomis constantly reminds the viewer that Myers lacks human qualities. For instance, while going through the Myers house, Dr. Loomis bluntly says of Myers, "This isn't a man." According to Dr. Loomis, with Myers there is "no reason, no conscience, no understanding, in even the most rudimentary sense, of life or death, of good or evil right or wrong." Myers, in other words, provides an uncanny, threatened destruction of that which makes us human. Here Myers threatens a fundamental, abject collapse of binary categories.

HAUNTING, STALKING, AND VOYEURISM

Carpenter also constructs Myers' monstrosity through his stalking of his potential victims. In fact, after his escape from the hospital, Myers' main activity in the film is stalking. In these stalking sequences, Myers is more a presence than a character. Ghostly, uncanny apparitions of Myers haunt the backgrounds and foregrounds of many of Carpenter's shots and sequences. Myers often simply watches the action before him, in a manner not dissimilar from way the film's audience is watching Carpenter's film.

Myers is referred to as the "bogeyman," a sort of nightmarish, fantastical figure, at multiple points in the film. And, in *Halloween*, the rules of reality and rationality often do not apply to him. As Freud notes, the appearance of something

like the bogeyman, or "something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary," produces "an uncanny effect" as it "[effaces] the distinction between imagination and reality" (*SE XVII* 244). Myers, as an uncanny haunting, blurs the boundary between fantasy and reality. Myers' supernatural qualities, discussed briefly above in reference to Myers' extreme physical strength, manifest themselves here in Myers unnatural/irrational ability to appear and disappear at will (and this quality, possessed by the monsters of the slasher film, will come to be a representative feature of the cycle).

Carpenter showcases Myers' supernatural/uncanny abilities at multiple points in the film. So, while Myers is a sadistically violent monster, he is also, in many ways, a haunting (although he is a haunting with which our perspectives align). For instance, he appears and disappears when Laurie is in class, he appears and disappears on her way home, and he appears and disappears in Mr. Riddle's yard as Laurie watches him (in addition to his extremely significant disappearance in the film's open ending). Being a haunting, Myers is an unperceived (and unperceivable) threat until he begins to kill Laurie's friends (with the exception of the first two scenes). As Freud notes, when something is "kept from sight" or "withheld from others," a feeling of uncanniness can begin to emerge (*SE XVII 223*). Likewise, a feeling of uncanniness can emerge from "something hidden and dangerous" (226). So, as we voyeuristically stalk, alongside Myers, a feeling of uncanniness may begin to be produced as we know that Myers watches and that this (and our) watching is unperceived by his (and our) victims. By invoking something along the lines of free indirect subjectivity, we partially understand these scenes of watching as anxiety-producing because they tap into our own anxieties about being watched by a threatening presence. Additionally, in many (but certainly not all) of these stalking scenes, Carpenter gives the audience voyeuristic shots from roughly Myers' perspective. At different points, these images are shot from inside Myers' car, from behind his body, and directly from his perspective.

Carpenter first brings stalking into the film when Laurie drops a key off at the Myers house at her father's request. In this scene, Michael appears as an unseen, unperceived threat to Laurie and Tommy (or at least a threat not perceived by the characters in the film). His presence hovers over the sequence and he finally appears to the audience (but not to the characters) in two of the shots, confirming that he does represent some sort of threat to Laurie. Here *Halloween* presents action from the perspective of both the stalker and the stalked. As viewers, this forces us into the position of being a sort of accomplice to Myers' sadistic voyeurism. It also, however, taps into our own anxieties about being threatened by something that we do not see.

In the classroom scene, Laurie begins to notice Myers' monstrous presence. In this scene, Michael's stalking and killing, the stuff of nightmares, begins to be perceived as a threat as Laurie sits in class, listening to a lecture on the concept of fate in literature. This lecture signals the inevitability of the violence that Myers (and us) will commit on Haddonfield. The camera tracks into a medium long shot of Laurie sitting at her desk in the back of the classroom. This begins our alignment with Laurie's perspective. She turns and gazes out the window next to her (figure 1.7). Our attention is immediately drawn to the look that Laurie possesses. The piano notes of Carpenter's score come up signaling the threat that Myers presents to Laurie. Carpenter gives the audience a shot from Laurie's perspective: through the blinds on the classroom window, the audience sees Myers in an extreme long shot, across the street, standing behind the stolen station wagon, staring into the classroom, his gaze fixed, it seems, on Laurie (figure 1.8).



Figure 1.7: Laurie watches Myers watch her (*Halloween* 0:15:54). BD still.

This shot provides a series of frames within the cinematic frame. It also references the protective secondary skin of the school/classroom as the window's blinds partially obscure Laurie's view of Myers. Laurie is, for the moment, protected by the boundaries of the windows and the blinds that block her view of Myers. However, this protection will not last. There is a strict temporal limit on how long Laurie can be protected by the school day (and we will be protected for even less time). Myers begins to intrude, to infect, to penetrate the boundaries/skins that protect Laurie and her friends. From this point on, although Laurie might doubt herself, she perceives Myers (meanwhile, Myers remains largely unperceived, at least until it is too late, by the characters that he kills). This is the first time that we see Myers in his white mask (to be analyzed in more detail below), itself a secondary skin that both hides Myers' identity and creates a sort of identity for him where one does not really exist.¹⁰



Figure 1.8: From inside the school: Protective framing from Laurie's point-of-view as Myers stalks her (*Halloween* 0:15:56). BD still.

The shot lingers on Myers for a few seconds then cuts to a medium close-up of Laurie looking out the window. She pulls her gaze away from Myers and glances around the classroom. Then she quickly looks outside again. Michael is still there. It seems he wants to make his presence known. He wants to be seen, perceived as a threat, and potentially caught (and we will see Myers express this desire to be seen at multiple points in the film). This excitement at potentially being caught is a fundamental part of Myers' sadistic voyeurism. Carpenter cuts back to the medium long shot of Laurie just as the teacher, sensing her attention is elsewhere, calls on her. Laurie answers the teacher's question. The shot lasts about seventeen seconds. Laurie then looks outside again. Michael is gone, without a trace, and Laurie is left to

¹⁰ This sequence bears a striking resemblance to the classroom sequence in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (to be discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation). In that sequence, as Nancy drifts off to sleep (or so it seems), the nightmare world of Freddy drips into the diegetic reality of the film, blurring the distinctions between the two. A similar thing occurs in this sequence as the nightmare bogeyman Myers first makes his presence known to Laurie. From here on, the fantasy/nightmare elements of Myers seem to merge with the diegetic reality that Laurie inhabits.

wonder if he was just an apparition, a fantastical figment of her imagination, or if he was real. The audience, likewise, is left to wonder this. Although the audience knows that Myers is real, and is aware of the violence he is capable of, the audience is still left to wonder if this was an actual appearance of Michael or if Laurie imagined it.

The construction of protective spaces within the space of Haddonfield continues in the following sequence in which Tommy leaves school. Carpenter begins this sequence with a tracking shot along the schoolyard as costumed children stream out of class. The shot tracks to the right and then stops. Carpenter cuts to Tommy leaving school, carrying a large pumpkin. As he leaves school, he is bullied by a group of three larger schoolchildren, who, among other things, taunt Tommy by telling him that the bogeyman is after him. Here the children tap into Tommy's anxieties about the bogeyman in an attempt to frighten him. However, we the audience know that the threat is very real. The group of bullies eventually stops their taunting and runs off, but not before they trip Tommy, causing him to fall and crush his pumpkin. Such taunting/bullying is a bit of the nightmare of suburbia and foreshadows, in some ways, the terror that Myers will inflict on the town of Haddonfield.

This taunting is followed by another one of Myers' appearances. Carpenter's score kicks on full blast, as does Myers' breathing. Myers grabs one of the children who was mocking Tommy. This is an odd moment, one in which Myers seems to be protecting Tommy (and our urge is to protect Tommy as well). And, throughout the film, although Myers does watch Tommy, he does not physically harm him. Instead, Tommy may function as psychologically healthy double for Myers. (And, it should be

73

noted, Tommy is roughly the same age as Myers in the film's opening sequence and physically resembles him in some ways.) Myers lets the bully go after a moment and then follows Tommy, as does the camera, in a slow, voyeuristic tracking shot (figure 1.9). Myers, however, is separated from Tommy by the chain-link fence that surrounds the school. We remain on Myers' side of the fence, watching Tommy, the chain-link fence providing a series of frames within frames reminding us that our perspective is a filtered, obstructed one. In this and in the previous sequence, Myers refuses to penetrate the secondary protective skin of the school. That space retains its protective quality (although again, the protection it affords is temporally bounded by the school day). Again, Myers seems to be protecting Tommy here (although it is a very threatening protection), as if Myers is protecting himself, or himself as a child, or perhaps an ideal version of himself, a version of himself that does not abjectly combine innocence with not-innocence but instead remains innocent.



Figure 1.9: Myers stalks Tommy, refusing to penetrate the secondary skin of the school's chain-link fence (*Halloween* 0:17:33). BD still.

Myers gets into the stolen station wagon and continues to follow Tommy for a few moments before driving off. The camera, like a prisoner, is positioned in the back seat, behind a cage dividing the front seat from the back seat (figure 1.10). We are

forced into the position of an accomplice. This shot, partially obscured by a cage that separates the front seat from the backseat and further obscured by the chain-link fence that surrounds the school, further references our incarcerated gaze. In all of this, Myers remains unperceived by Tommy. The threat that Myers poses to the inhabitants of small-town America remains unseen and unperceived by the characters. It does, however, exist and appears again and again to the audience before it is made apparent to the characters that are being terrorized.



Figure 1.10: Frames within frames within frames: Tommy leaves the schoolyard and we are trapped (*Halloween* 0:18:13). BD still.

Later in the film, when Laurie and Annie talk on the phone about going to a school dance, a German shepherd at the house where Annie is babysitting perceives danger in some way, barking while Annie talks on the phone in the kitchen. The audience, again aligned with both Annie's oblivious perspective as well as Myers' threatening gaze, is given access to the threat that Myers poses while Annie and Laurie are not. This scene cuts between medium close-ups of the girls talking to one another. But it also cuts to Myers standing outside the house, stalking Annie. This over-the-shoulder shot from behind Myers as he gazes up into the house in which Annie is babysitting doubles and re-doubles our perspective, destabilizing our

understanding of the film's action. In knowing of the danger that Myers poses, we are also left with a feeling of uncanniness: we see the girls as they might see themselves and we see them as Myers sees them (in his sadistic voyeurism), and we see Myers seeing them. This shot is extremely lowly lit and Carpenter's score again functions as an audible cue to the danger posed by Myers.

Carpenter then delivers a medium close-up of Annie calling for the little girl that she is babysitting, Lindsey, to get the dog out of the kitchen. Carpenter cuts to an image of Lindsey, looking rather apprehensive in front of a scary movie on television. This scare within a scare, involving both intertextuality and intermediality, further draws our attention to the processes of looking at work as well as the frames within frames that filter/limit/direct our perception of the film's action. The soundtrack of the scary movie that Lindsey is watching layers into Carpenter's soundtrack as Carpenter inserts his score into the history of horror film scores. Carpenter then cuts back to the shot of Annie before returning to the exterior shot of Myers staring at the house. Myers ducks out of the shot, remaining unperceived by the characters in the film, perhaps playing with the audience's expectation of harm and creating suspense and a feeling of uncanniness as we know that the girls do not know they are being stalked. The girls continue their conversation.

A few shots later, Carpenter gives the audience an interior of the house in which Laurie is babysitting. In this shot, sounds of children laughing come from outside, and Tommy walks over to a window. Tommy opens the blinds and looks outside. From roughly Tommy's point of view the audience sees the house across the street (where Annie is babysitting). Again our perspective is filtered through the secondary skin of the house and here we continue to understand the space of the suburban house as a protective, containing one, although we sense that the penetration of this space is not far off. Myers stands in front of the house across the street, staring at the house that Laurie and Tommy are in, stalking. He is completely backlit, so his presence in this shot is more of an absence of light. A group of costumed children runs through the foreground of the shot. Carpenter cuts back to Tommy who appears stunned. Tommy's face bears witness to an explosion of uncanniness: while he might have had some anxiety about the figure of the bogeyman, he now sees that the bogeyman is real, directly referencing what Freud describes as a common source of the uncanny. Tommy runs to Laurie and tells her that "the bogeyman is outside." He gets her to look outside but Myers is gone. Again Myers demonstrates his near supernatural ability to appear and disappear.

After Tommy looks out the window again and verifies that Myers is gone, Carpenter cuts back to the house across the street and the audience gets another shot of Annie. This time the camera is outside, looking in at Annie through a set of French doors. After a few moments, Myers rocks into the right half of the frame. In this shot, the sound of Annie's voice, still talking to Laurie on the phone, is muffled (as it is inside and the audience is positioned outside with Myers). In this extremely voyeuristic shot, the audience hears Myers' heavy breathing again as Carpenter aligns the audience, to some extent, with the threat (and not with the possible victim).

However, this aligning with Myers is quickly complicated as our perspective moves inside the house. The boundary of the suburban home here is extremely porous and Myers will exploit this apparent porousness in the scenes that follow. The audience sees Annie spill something on herself in the kitchen. She gets off the phone with Laurie, calls for Lindsey to bring her a robe, and pulls off her flannel and then her t-shirt, leaving herself shirtless, facing away from the camera. Carpenter then gives us a shot of Lindsey, still staring at the television. The audience again hears the soundtrack of the scary movie that she is watching. This is followed by another shot from outside the French doors. Our perspective shifts back and forth, from outside to inside to outside. Myers watches Annie undress through these French doors, as the series of frames that divides Annie's body into two pieces previews the abject bodily destruction that will be inflicted upon her (figure 1.11). Here, and in numerous other shots in the film, we watch Myers watch. In forcing us to watch Myers watch, Carpenter at once makes us an accomplice in Myers' sadistic voyeurism and draws our attention to the voyeurism inherent in the cinematic medium.

This shot, in which Laurie strips down to her underwear and socks then pulls on a white dress shirt to cover herself, although it contains no graphic nudity, is sexually voyeuristic in a way that this film, as a whole, is not. Carpenter then cuts back inside the house as Annie turns around then he cuts back to Myers outside the house. A hanging pot falls and breaks. Annie looks outside but quickly dismisses the sound. The sound of this breaking pot is extremely important as it is unclear whether Myers intends to pull down the hanging pot or does so inadvertently. If he does this on purpose, it amounts to an attempt, on his part, to physically speak, to make his presence known to his future victim and to terrorize her. At this point he is so unperceived that he must make himself perceived.



Figure 1.11: Annie changing, the threat that Myers poses totally unperceived (*Halloween* 0:43:09). BD still.

Carpenter then cuts to a medium close-up of Annie before cutting back outside to another shot of Myers. Again the audience hears Myers' heavy breathing. Starting with an over-the-shoulder shot in which Myers' head takes up the lower left portion of the screen, Carpenter tracks down Myers' body and to the left. The camera comes to rest as the German shepherd from inside approaches Myers, growls, and then barks loudly several times. The dog here functions as a representational extension of the protecting and containing boundary of the house. Myers turns to face the dog and Carpenter cuts back inside to a medium shot of Annie. Annie tells Lindsey that the dog is barking and annoying her. In the background the audience hears the dog's bark shift to a pained yelp.

A few moments later, Carpenter cuts back outside. A piercing note of the film's score bursts into the soundtrack. In an extremely lowly-lit shot, the audience watches Myers kill the dog. This is a monstrous action, certainly, but it is also an

action that is hard to make out visually. Here Myers commits violence on-screen but that on-screen space is obscured by a lack of light. While the audience sees Myers hoist the dog into the air, it is extremely difficult to make anything else out of these shots. The relaying of this monstrous action then is almost completely done through the soundtrack (first the dog's yelp and then Carpenter's score). After this shot, Carpenter immediately reminds the audience that it is only watching a horror film and also draws attention to Michael's seemingly supernatural origins by cutting inside to a shot of the television: an RKO Radio Pictures title card and the soundtrack comes on the screen. Again Carpenter inserts his film into the history of horror/sci-fi film both through the visual and the aural. The credit sequence from *The Thing from Another World* rolls for a few moments before Carpenter cuts to Laurie and Tommy, transfixed, watching the film, escaping momentarily from the threat that Myers presents.

SMALL-TOWN SPACES AND THE MYTHS OF AMERICA

Halloween, in addition to tapping into desires and anxieties related to being watched, spatializes its horror in an explosion of the myth of small-town America. In his reading of the history of the slasher film, Nowell notes that one of the major "shifts" between *Black Christmas* in 1974 and *Halloween* in 1978 was the move from a college campus to a small-town/suburban American location (84). According to Nowell:

[This] shift represented an attempt to stimulate attendance by increasing the number of similarities between on-screen protagonists and prime target audience, if not in terms of behavior then in terms of demographic characteristics, by locating young people within, what Dika described as, "fictionalized American town[s] that can be everywhere and nowhere, a place 'just like' the film viewer's home (as an American ideal, if not a lived fact)." (84)

We might add, in addition to being a marketing tool, the location of the anonymous small American town provides a perfect space through which Carpenter can turn the familiar into the unfamiliar. Here the concepts of the uncanny and the abject provide extremely fruitful ways to understand the invasion of the "safe" (or at least "safer") white middle-class spaces of small-town and suburban America (as well as, in other films, particularly *Friday the 13th*, the safe/safer white middle-class spaces of the summer camp). In the slasher film, the villain constantly violates and destroys the skins/boundaries of these safer spaces as well as the skins/boundaries of the victims. In this, ordinary, everyday safer spaces become horrific/fantastic spaces of destruction. Through these spaces, the story of the American Dream turns into an uncanny American nightmare.

In *Halloween* and later slasher films (including to some extent *Friday the 13th*, to be analyzed in Chapter Two, and to a greater extent, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, to be analyzed in Chapter Three), the small American town becomes a place important not only to generate ticket sales but also a space to tap into repressed aggressions and anxieties of annihilation hidden in the unconscious of the audience. In *Halloween*, the cinematic construction of the space of the small town is vitally important to the film's production of terror. Over the course of the film (excluding the opening murder scene in which the violence to come is explicitly foreshadowed), the space of Haddonfield,

Illinois, shifts from one of safe, white, middle-class living to one of terror at the hands of a largely faceless, largely emotionless killer. While small-town America begins as a safe space, a space that defends against intruders of all sorts (and particularly to ward off intrusions by racial and economic others), the small-town space of Haddonfield becomes a space susceptible to invasion by a violent outsider. This outsider, however, is really one of Haddonfield's children and not an intruder at all. In *Halloween*, Myers is returning to the town that raised him (at least until his institutionalization). He is simultaneously a part of Haddonfield and an intruder; he is both an outsider and an insider. Similarly, in our understanding of the action of the film, we are simultaneously aligned with perspectives that are outside our own (be they victim or villain) and we are simultaneously in our own minds. The violence of *Halloween* is at once a violence that originates from outside but also originates from inside ourselves (tapping into our repressed aggressions and anxieties and turning them outward into sadism and masochism).

In its reflection on the American small town, *Halloween* shatters American small-town and suburban life. While the use of small-town America as a shooting location relates to production costs as well as to the marketing of the film to a specific segment of American youth (as noted by Nowell), the mise-en-scène of the small American town also comes to be one of the spaces through which *Halloween* and other slasher films explode elements of suburban middle-class American (and Canadian) society. *Halloween* arrives at its destruction of small-town America by transforming small-town American from reality to fantasy and from a utopian space to a nightmare space. Ultimately, *Halloween* opens up a space of critique aimed at the institutions of the American suburb including, for instance, the family, the neighborhood, the school, and the police. In doing so, *Halloween* probes a space/idea that is often "sold" as utopia. And while the American small town was never really a utopia, it was (and is), at the very least, a story, a myth. Ultimately, *Halloween* interrogates this story, interrogates the myth of small-town America, and reveals the story of small-town American life to be something closer to what Louis Marin, in *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, calls a "story" of "degenerate utopia" (239).

According to Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, the "function" of myth, "a system of communication," "is to distort" (109, 121). For Barthes, myth "makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" and "transforms history into nature" (117, 129). Myth is, ultimately, a "transformation" of "reality" (129, 141). Furthermore, "[myth] does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact" (143). In other words, myth retells things through ideology.

Halloween, in its interrogation of the myth of the suburbs, starts to unravel the story that the suburb tells about itself (including but not limited to the ideologies of bootstraps individualism). Haddonfield is a space of myth, ideology, and above all, deception. It is a space where reality is clouded, where myth reigns. In its critique of

the "degenerate utopia" of small-town America, Carpenter's film at least partially reveals the small town/suburb as a place that speaks myth through those that view it as utopian (Marin 239). *Halloween*, at least partially, deconstructs this utopian space, revealing it to be its opposite. Rather than protecting, it confines and endangers, in an appearance of the uncanny.

Marin largely defines the idea of the "degenerate utopia" through a reading of Disneyland. Small-town America, in making its residents speak a mythic version of the present and the past, functions as a degenerate utopia in a similar way. The degenerate utopia is quite distinct from the utopia (and, for that matter, the "dystopia") (239). Marin writes: "Disneyland is the representation realized in a geographical space of the imaginary relationship that the dominant groups of American society maintain with their real conditions of existence, with the real history of the United States, and with the space outside of its borders" (240). In Disneyland, the visitor, temporally located in the present moment, finds "a fascinating image of the past and the future," as well as an exploration, to some degree, of "comfort, welfare, consumption, scientific and technological progress, superpower, and morality" (239). Disneyland, however, "projects" these "values obtained by violence and exploitation . . . under the auspices of law and order" (240). Disneyland, then, resolves ideological contradictions through myth. It does not open up a place to understand these contradictions. Instead, it engages myth and thus provides "a narrative that resolves formally a fundamental social contradiction" (239).

Due to the participatory structure of the park, Marin argues that the visitor to Disneyland is, in effect, forced to speak a particular mythic representation of reality. According to Marin:

visitors to Disneyland are put in the place of the ceremonial storyteller. ... Their path through the park is the narrative, recounted umpteen times, of the deceptive harmonization of contrary elements, of the fictional solution to conflicting tensions. By "acting out" Disney's utopia, the visitor "realizes" the ideology of America's dominant groups as the mythic founding narrative for their own society. (240-41)

In a similar way, the inhabitant of the suburb is forced to speak a particular version of American history, one based on (racial/economic) security and the ideologies of bootstraps individualism.

There are two classes of small-town spaces in *Halloween* through which Carpenter builds his critique. The first class includes those spaces of everyday (daytime) life in small-town America. These are the living rooms, laundry rooms, kitchens, garages, and lawns of suburban Haddonfield. This space is a populated with middle-class white families. This class of peaceful suburban spaces sharply contrasts with the nightmare/nighttime spaces in which Myers kills (most of) his victims. This second class of spaces includes the decrepit Myers house, a run-down, uninhabited structure standing out in an otherwise cheery suburban neighborhood, as well as all of the previously-mentioned everyday spaces when they are transformed into their uncanny opposites through Myers' sadistic violence. Ultimately, the explosion of small-town America in *Halloween* contends that these spaces are intimately connected as they produce and double one another: the daytime/"degenerate utopia" of Haddonfield not only produces the nighttime/nightmare space of Haddonfield, it is itself a nightmare space.

The fictional town of Haddonfield provides a mise-en-scène that looks like a rather generic version of small-town America: calm streets in relatively good repair, cars parked in carports, sidewalks lined by pleasant trees, many with leaves tinged with the orange-yellow of autumn, ivy climbing up oak trees, and well-kept front lawns with hedges separating different plots of land. These images of Haddonfield construct an ideal image of middle-class suburbia as a space of white middle-class utopia, or at least something approaching or "sold as" utopia. This is the space through which the myth of the "American Dream" speaks and is spoken.

Over the course of the film, this space will be turned inside out and will become a space of American nightmare (or perhaps more accurately, a white middleclass suburban nightmare), as Myers comes home as the return of Haddonfield's repressed, intruding further and further into the "safer" space of the white middle-class suburb. Myers, when viewed as the return of Haddonfield's repressed, signifies the sadistic and masochistic violence of these individualistic suburban spaces, as well as aggressiveness that is directed toward the self. Here Myers, originally from Haddonfield, returns to do violence in and to the spaces from which he was expelled as a child after the murder of his sister. In this, Myers figures as a contagion which must be removed (Douglas 3). He is a figure that embodies the abject and, through his contaminating presence, calls into question the spectator's very status as a unique, separate individual (Kristeva 3).



Figure 1.12: An intersection in utopian Haddonfield (*Halloween* 0:11:20). BD still.

After the opening murder sequence, during the daylight hours of the film, shots of suburban Haddonfield play prominently as background in numerous shots. The suburbs are not the focus of these shots, but through Carpenter's use of long and extreme long shots of his characters, these images of the suburbs occupy large amounts of screen space and are absolutely fundamental to the ways in which this film constructs its diegetic reality and sets the stage for the horror to come. The first time that the audience sees Haddonfield in daylight hours is immediately after Myers' violent escape from the state hospital. This first shot of Haddonfield is an extreme long shot of a calm suburban landscape. The camera is placed on the asphalt in the middle of an intersection. Reddish-brown leaves adorn the street, gesturing to the fall season. Birds chirp in the background. A leaf falls to the street as the word "Haddonfield," in bright white letters, fades onto the screen. Another leaf falls as these letters crossfade into the word "Halloween." Carpenter's ominously minimalistic piano score begins (figure 1.12). These peaceful, somewhat bucolic daylight images contrast sharply with the nighttime scene of violence that the audience has just witnessed. Through this double contrast, Carpenter previews the violence that will befall the peaceful location seen in the title card shot.

The title card "Halloween" fades off the screen and Carpenter cuts to another extreme long shot of Haddonfield: small houses face a wide street that rings a large, empty park (figure 1.13). Large oak trees line the street. These spaces point to security (both economic security and security from intrusions by outsiders) as well as individualism. There is some sort of community in this small-town America, at least on the surface (as signified by the large park that all of these houses open up to), but this small town is also a segmented community, made up several individualistic spaces within the larger space of Haddonfield (individual houses, individual yards, all separated from one another).

The camera then pans to the left until it reaches the Strode house and then begins to track right, very slowly along the street. Synthesized elements of the score appear in the soundtrack. The Strode house is a pleasant white two-story house. A coupe is parked in the front drive with a "Strode Realty" decal on it (the same advertisement that will appear later in the front yard of the Myers house). This reference to "Strode Realty" gestures to the ideal of bootstraps individualism that small-town America is, to some extent, an expression of: Laurie Strode's family has succeeded, at least partially, on their own (her father owns his company and they live in a well-to-do neighborhood as a result of his individual labors). A few moments into this pan, Laurie exits the house, bound for school, a typical activity for a suburban teenager in this "safe" (or at least "safer") space of small-town America.

88



Figure 1.13: The park across from the Strode house (*Halloween* 0:11:25). BD still.

In the brief verbal exchange with her father that follows, the audience gets another glimpse of the neighborhood in which the Strode family lives: pavement, trees, grass, ivy, sidewalks, a telephone pole, cars parked on the street. Laurie's father departs for work and Laurie continues on to the Myers house to drop a key off before heading to school. On this walk, the audience gets a more complete view of her neighborhood: wide, pleasant, rather empty, middle-class streets. In these early glimpses of Haddonfield, the town appears to be rather sparsely populated. This aspect of the town becomes more and more pronounced over the course of the film as Haddonfield transforms into an almost completely depopulated space. In a lengthy pan then track shot, Tommy, the boy that Laurie will babysit that night, approaches her. He is young, excited, and on his way to school. He is also approximately the age of Myers when Myers killed his sister in the film's opening scene (while Laurie approximates the age of Myers' first victim, his sister Judith).

Tommy asks if they will be able to do typical Halloween activities like carving jack-o-lanterns, watching "monster movies," and making popcorn. Carpenter's score continues throughout this shot. This gesture to the Halloween tradition illuminates

another key aspect of the violence that Myers inflicts on his victims as Halloween, a playful tradition, also brings with it the threat of violence. For instance, the tradition of "trick-or-treating," benign on the surface, carries with it the threat of the "trick," a threat of violence. In this way, the Halloween tradition is both playful and menacing (and it is perhaps this menacing "trick" aspect of the Halloween tradition that sets Myers off as a young child, fulfilling the threat inherent in "trick-or-treating").

Laurie and Tommy soon arrive at the Myers house. After the opening sequence, this is the first time the audience sees the Myers house. However, instead of being the handsome middle-class suburban home that it was in that sequence, the house is now aged, decrepit, and decaying. The audience initially sees the Myers house in a low angle tracking shot (figure 1.14). Carpenter's score drops away and all the audience hears is Tommy asking "The Myers house?" over the idyllic sounds of birds chirping, leaves rustling, and Laurie and Tommy's footfalls. This shot, and other shots of the dilapidated Myers house are early indicators that small-town America is not what it advertises itself as.

The Myers house, deep inside the mythical small-town space of Haddonfield, is the flip-side of modern suburban convenience: instead of being inhabited, it is abandoned; instead of being well-kept, it is disheveled, with peeling grey paint and broken and missing windows. The protective skin of the Myers house is in tatters. To extend Anzieu's terms, as the skins of Myers' victims function as a "barriers" or "boundaries" (to-be-penetrated by Myers), so also the suburb functions as a protective skin, containing and protecting individual houses and families within it. Since the initial murder committed by a young Michael Myers, the Myers house has shifted from the "Barrier variable" to the "Penetration of Boundary variable" (Anzieu 31). Instead of protecting, the suburban house, understood metaphorically as a skin that protects the individuals that inhabit it, has shifted from serving as a barrier to being a thing that is "permeable and fragile" (31). Through the horrific violence that Myers commits over the course of the film, this radical shift from "Barrier" to "Penetration of Boundary" extends to the entire space of Haddonfield, turning it into its uncanny opposite.



Figure 1.14: The Myers house, present day (*Halloween* 0:13:19). BD still.

The Myers house is at the heart of small-town America, the rotting core of contradiction that the myth of suburbia aims to obscure. The Myers house haunts the suburb of Haddonfield, much like its progeny, Michael haunts Haddonfield's inhabitants. Contrasting sharply with the houses that surround the Strode residence, the Myers house is a form of contagion, threating to infect the space that surrounds it (and infect it does, in a spectacularly vicious fashion). The Myers house, a separate space within the space of small-town Haddonfield, also figures as different and unearthly as it is the space that produced Myers, a horrifically otherworldly and

uncanny being. At another point in the film, Carpenter specifically gestures to this aspect of the Myers house by superimposing an image of it with an image of another planet from Nyby's *The Thing from Another World*.

The audience gets one more warning about the Myers house while Laurie and Tommy stop in front of the house and Laurie approaches it to hide a key under the doormat. Tommy warns Laurie that the Myers house is a "spook house." Directly referencing the figure of the haunted house (a recursive location in the horror genre), the Myers house also functions as an example of something that Freud specifically names as a source of the uncanny (*SE XVII* 241). The Myers house is a structure that at once should contain and protect a family but, being haunted, it is specifically *not* (just) a protective space. It is the "familiar" (the white, middle-class home) turned "unfamiliar" (the threatening, decrepit, haunted not-home) (220).

After the warning from Tommy, Laurie approaches the house and the audience gets one shot from inside the house. The audience, from inside the house, briefly watches Laurie approach through a broken window pane in the front door. Instantly, the audience sees action from a perspective that is aligned with neither Laurie nor Tommy. Rather than experiencing the action alongside Laurie and Tommy, we watch them from a position that remains unseen to them. Watching Laurie from a position that remains unseen by her also begins to tap into anxieties about being watched, anxieties about unperceived threats. Interestingly, while this shot on the surface seems to align us with Myers (who is hiding in the house), we would argue that, by invoking the anxiety that Laurie should be feeling, this shot engages in something akin to

92

Pasolini's "free indirect subjectivity" and actually aligns the audience closer with Laurie: we the audience feel anxiety and feel an urge to protect or warn Laurie. This is, in a sense, a bit of aggression that we direct inward. However, in literally aligning us with Myers as he hides inside the house, this sequence also, to some degree tugs on our sadistic tendencies.

This shift from a shot outside the Myers house to one inside the Myers house also references Anzieu's "Penetration of Boundary variable" (31). Here Anzieu notes that a common representation of the variable may be found in representations of "modes or channels for getting inside a thing or expelling something from inside to the outside" (31). As named earlier, examples of this include "an open mouth, an orifice of the body or the doorway of a house" (31). Not only have we seen that the house's windows are shattered, another representation of penetrated boundaries, but we also now, in a frame within a frame, see the house's doorway, which also representationally figures as a site of penetration/violation.

The next shot is brief extreme long shot of the Myers house with Tommy in the foreground and Laurie on the porch in the middle-ground of the shot. This is followed by a medium shot of Tommy looking extremely worried. Again, our perspective aligns with Laurie and Tommy, feeling the anxiety that Tommy feels and feeling a bit of an urge to protect them from whatever threat they fail to perceive. The next shot returns the audience to the interior of the house to watch Laurie walk down the walkway back to Tommy. This time, however, heavy breathing occupies a large part of the soundtrack and this is the first time after the attack on his sister as a child that

Myers poses a direct threat to anyone inside Haddonfield. A piercing note of Carpenter's score punctuates the shot as Laurie strolls down the sidewalk and Myers rocks into the frame, watching her, with the audience positioned, however briefly, alongside the voyeuristic monster.

Here again, while we are technically aligned with a perspective that does not belong to either Tommy or Laurie (and in fact belongs to Myers), we do feel some twinges of something approximating fear from knowing that a definite threat remains unseen by Laurie and Tommy. While we are briefly aligned with the sadistic voyeurism of Myers' gaze, our anxiety more closely approximates what should be felt by the characters other than Myers (rather than the urge to sadistic violence that characterizes Myers). In this scene, Myers haunts Haddonfield and threatens it and its inhabitants. The threat, however, is not immediately perceived by the characters in the film although Tommy's reaction gestures to a more generalized anxiety over what he perceives to be a threat. It is however, a threat from an unseen source and thus aligns closely with "anxiety" rather than "fear" (which, as noted above, requires a definite object) as Freud uses these terms in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (SE XVIII 12). Here the audience knows the threat exists and is, in many ways, positioned alongside both the threat and the threatened. Using Freud, the audience's reaction to this threat could be classified more properly as "fear" as they are aware of the source of the threat. In this, Carpenter makes the audience both an accomplice to the sadism of Michael Myers as well as a potential victim, through the invocation of Tommy's anxiety and the fear of Myers as an inflictor of sadistic violence.

The ominous score abruptly vanishes from the soundtrack and Carpenter returns to a medium two-shot of Laurie and Tommy. This return to a sound bed of ambient noise free of score implies a bit of a return to normality although the threat posed by Myers is still not far off. Tommy continues to tell Laurie what he has heard about the house. In the next shot, Tommy leaves Laurie to continue on to his school and Laurie slowly walks away from the camera, singing to herself. She seems relaxed, still unaware of any threat. Her carefree singing implies that she is easily able to dismiss Tommy's anxieties connected to Myers house. However, Carpenter positions the audience behind Laurie. We stay in front of the Myers house and watch Laurie. Myers rocks into the frame. This emphasizes Myers' sadistic voyeurism and, at least partially, aligns the audience with that perspective. As Myers rocks into the frame, he takes up/infects a large portion of it. The audience continues to watch Laurie walk away, with much of the right portion of the screen obscured by Myers' left shoulder, clad in a stolen black jumpsuit (figure 1.15). Even in only seeing a portion of his body, Myers appears physically imposing. Myers also imposes on/infects the soundtrack as his heavy breathing overpowers Laurie's singing. Her singing eventually fades out altogether and Myers' breathing becomes the loudest sound in the soundtrack (and this breathing will become one of the principle markers of the slasher subgenre). Here, Myers as an impurity, as a contagion, has been unleashed. While in the film's opening sequence he may have been set off by the "trick" of "trick-or-treat," in this sequence he has been (a)roused by the appearance of Laurie dropping a key off at his former home.



Figure 1.15: Myers, an unperceived threat (*Halloween* 0:14:10). BD still.

From this point forward, Myers slowly begins to make his violent, sadistic presence more known, particularly through his stalking of Laurie and his eventual killing of her friends (and his attempted killing of her). The key that Laurie drops off can be read as tool for breaking open the already tattered skin of the Myers house (and, along with it, Michael Myers' psyche). Again, this connects to Anzieu's "Penetration of Boundary variable," although this time the boundary that is threatened is a boundary that surrounds and protects Myers, a boundary constructed out of the memory of his childhood and symbolized by his childhood home. The key here, as a threat to Myers, sets his stalking of Laurie and Tommy in motion (as they had not previously been his targets). Had this key not been dropped off, not threatened the psychic destruction of Myers, it is possible that his evil could have remained dormant, haunting only his former home.

While the "Penetration of Boundary variable" is at work in Laurie's (unwitting) symbolic attack on Myers, Anzieu's "Barrier variable" is also at work here and in nearly every other shot that features Myers. In this shot, we see Myers' large body clad in a black jumpsuit. This black jumpsuit has replaced the colorful clown

costume that he wore as a secondary skin in the film's opening sequence (figure 1.4). Now his costume is darkened. Rather than being colorful, it is the absence of color. This black jumpsuit functions as another barrier, an artificial, protective coating that Myers uses to hold together his ego in response to a presumed lack of well-developed Skin Ego. The second part of Myers' artificial skin barrier is his iconic white mask. This mask also replaces a colorful mask that Myers wore as a child, this time with white. This white mask both hides Myers and protects him and, as gestured to earlier, covers his face throughout the film with three notable exceptions: 1) during the part of the film that takes place when Myers is a child, 2) during his escape from the mental hospital in which he wears only a hospital gown and consequently lacks the containing and protecting barriers that he will acquire after his escape and, 3) during the film's climax, when he is unmasked and his protective secondary skin is ripped away, exposing for a brief moment both Myers' face and, by extension, his ego which lacks a properly-developed Skin Ego.

Later, in the film's first nighttime sequence in the diegetic present, Carpenter further explores this disquieting alliance of Myers' perspective with the perspective of the audience as Myers continues to remain unperceived (although by this point he has already allowed several of the characters, including Laurie and Tommy, to see him). In this sequence, the audience sees the threat that remains unseen by the characters as part of the action as Carpenter delivers shots from roughly Myers' point of view. These shots are undeniably sadistically voyeuristic. They tap into a certain pleasure of watching on the audience's part and offer the excitement of the possibility of being caught and punished. However, they also tap into anxieties, on the part of the audience, related to the unseen. These shots, although roughly from Myers' perspective, surely tug on our sadism on the one hand, but also, and in equal measure, tug on our masochism as we sympathize with those being watched. We at once want to protect those characters that are being threatened but also participate (and want to participate) in Myers' threatening gaze. This double, disordered perspective marks much of *Halloween*'s violent action.

In the sequence that transitions the film from daytime/twilight to nighttime, the audience sees Laurie and Annie drive to their babysitting jobs. The last daylight/twilight shot is a handheld pan of Annie's car driving. In a long/extreme-long shot, Carpenter shows Annie's red Cadillac being followed by the station wagon that Myers has been driving. The camera pans as the cars drive past. We know that Laurie and Annie are being followed but they remain unaware of this fact. This provides another reference to the uncanny and our knowledge of the threat that trails them again tugs on both our sadistic/voyeuristic side. Meanwhile, as Clover might argue, in identifying with the girls, the film tugs on our masochistic side. The score kicks up and, when the pan shot ends, Carpenter cuts forward in time. This shift forward in time also abruptly shifts our perspective from a third-person perspective to something closer to a first-person perspective. Once we jump from twilight to night, our location jumps from being largely alongside the girls, inside their car, to being inside Myers' car as he stalks the girls.

In the shots that follow, Annie drops Laurie off and then pulls her car into a driveway across the street. The audience sees all of this action from roughly Myers' perspective. While the shot from within Myers' car is not strictly a POV, it is handheld and roughly approximates Myers' point of view, making the audience, in some sense, Myers' accomplice. Carpenter focuses on Myers and his point of view throughout this sequence as he shows, in medium shot, Myers stepping out of his station wagon. Carpenter tracks up and then follows Myers, who hides behind a tree, stalking Annie. Myers stands in the foreground of the shot, his upper body visible in the foreground. In all of this, we watch Myers watching his prey. Carpenter thus constantly reminds us of the processes of looking at work in consumption of narrative cinema. However, positioned alongside Myers, we also act as voyeurs. The rest of the shot is taken up by the oak tree in the middle ground of the shot and a two-story white house in the background of the shot. This is small-town America turning into its own nightmare: the carefree sounds of children trick-or-treating give way to Carpenter's ominous score as the audience, positioned alongside Myers, watches Annie greet the couple that has hired her to watch their child (figure 1.16).



Figure 1.16: Watching Myers watch Annie greet her employers (*Halloween* 0:36:01). BD still.

The camera tracks to the right behind Myers as he hides himself (and us) a bit more effectively behind an oak tree. The source of fear, Myers, is unseen and undetected by those that he stalks. Carpenter emphasizes this by both positioning us alongside Myers but also by tapping into our own anxieties about being watched, stalked, and attacked. However, our perspective does not align here with any of the characters besides Myers (as the threat he poses remains undetected). Instead, we experience a combination/blurring of his sadism and our own anxieties and urges to protect. Here we have the central paradox of *Halloween*'s violence: as spectators we both want to protect and also to punish.

TEENAGERS: REBELLION AND PUNISHMENT

Nowell's reading of early slasher films argues that one of the most important differences between *Halloween* and *Black Christmas* was the "shift" to teenagers (specifically teenage girls) as the main characters in film (while the characters in *Black Christmas* had been college students). In Nowell's reading, this "shift" from "the careerist university students that had [been] featured in *Black Christmas* to small-town teenage girls preoccupied with their social lives" was primarily due to marketing concerns (84). For Nowell, this move, which was certainly picked up in the slasher films produced after *Halloween*, was designed "to make films that would appeal equally to young males and young females through the positioning of groups of high school or college-age characters of one sex within film-types considered to appeal more to the other sex" (84). In other words, *Halloween*, in featuring teenage girls as

the main characters aimed to fill theater seats by enticing girls to see a film that was part of a genre that was often thought of as male-oriented. While we take Nowell's arguments about the history of the marketing of the slasher as extremely informative, we aim to begin to unpack the spatial and psychological effects of the use of teenagers as main characters. We might also add that while not all of the protagonists in these films are high school students (as they are in *Halloween*), they are certainly young, often of an indeterminate age somewhere between the late teens and early twenties (as we see in *Friday the 13th*). At the end of the day, the relatively innocent concerns and activities of the white, middle-class, small-town teenagers that populate *Halloween* certainly construct small-town American spaces in particularly telling ways and inform our own contradictory reactions to *Halloween*'s violence.

For instance, on their rather leisurely stroll home though small-town American utopia, Laurie, Lynda, and Annie discuss stereotypically teenage issues. Their conversation bounces between boredom, an upcoming dance, babysitting, studying, cheerleading, pranks and grounding, and sex (in a rather roundabout way). Acting like teenagers, Lynda and Annie share a cigarette on the walk home. This is an example of a small rebellion, of which there are several in this film (other small rebellions include a scene of Annie and Laurie smoking marijuana as well some sexual permissiveness on the parts of Annie and Lynda).

In this sequence, the audience sees and hears the streets of Haddonfield. By day, the small town of Haddonfield is peaceful both in terms of visuals and in terms of sounds. The girls' voices are carefree and so is the setting (although Laurie's voice is certainly more serious than Lynda's). The audience hears birds chirping and the calm peacefulness of a small town. The sounds of the streets are not even punctuated by automobiles (except for a brief moment when Laurie and Lynda walk past a Haddonfield High School sign and a car cruises through the background of the shot). The audience only hears the sounds of the girls' shoes striking the asphalt of the street and the concrete of the sidewalk. The sounds of these footsteps, innocent and carefree here, preview the isolation (and attendant anxieties and fears) that will come to characterize Haddonfield at night. Everything is rather noiseless except for the sounds of the girls gossiping on their way home from a day at high school. This carefree soundtrack is only broken up when Myers intrudes into it.

As the girls walk home, they encounter the station wagon stolen from Dr. Loomis. The car enters the frame in an extreme long shot from roughly Laurie's point of view. While station wagons (often a signifier of the nuclear suburban family) are certainly a common sight in the suburbs, the appearance of this one is sinister given Carpenter's score. The station wagon creeps down the street as Laurie stares at it. A tracking shot, again from roughly Laurie's perspective, shows Myers, in long shot, driving the station wagon. He is wearing his iconic white mask but is mostly hidden in shadow. He slows the car and stares at the girls. He watches but here our viewing position is essentially alongside the girls (although, gesturing to the uncanny, we know what that they do not know).

Myers begins to drive off only to have Annie yell, "Hey jerk! Speed kills!" The elevated volume of the Annie's voice is disrupted by the high-pitched sound of

102

tires squealing as Myers slams on the brakes. Here Annie functions as a sort of superegoic figure, albeit a rather reckless teenage one, calling on Myers to conform to society's laws regarding speeding. However, his immediate response is to violate another driving rule and stop in the middle of the street. He immediately becomes a threat.



Figure 1.17: Myers slams on the brakes (0:21:48). BD still.

Myers' intrusion into the small town of Haddonfield is of several types. On the surface, in terms of sound, the high-pitched sound of the squealing tires rips into the (seeming) peacefulness of Haddonfield. In terms of image, the bright red of Myers' brake lights, seen in extreme long shot, provides a surprising color intrusion into the earthy palate of the shot (figure 1.17). Likewise, the car itself is a sort of intrusion on the empty streets and, as it remains stopped in the middle of street, it violates the normal order of the road. Meanwhile, for the audience, the score takes on an atypical tone, further marking this occurrence as out of the ordinary. This event importantly marks a continuation of Myers' stalking of the girls, or rather it guarantees that his stalking will continue (and perhaps gives him another excuse to do violence to this group of girls). While Myers had been stalking Laurie and Tommy after they showed up at his childhood home, new targets are added to his list now: Annie and Lynda (figure 1.18). Annie, in essence, by calling on Myers to abide by the laws of society has ensured that she will be punished by Myers, she will become a victim. Our impulse as viewers is to warn or protect. However, this is complicated by the knowledge that we are watching a film that promises to victimize (itself a rather sadistic exercise).



Figure 1.18: The girls look at Myers' stopped car (*Halloween* 0:21:59). BD still.

A bit later, Laurie encounters Myers face-to-face and, having previously seen him watching her at school, immediately perceives him as a threat. These shots clearly mark Myers as an intruder into the space of small-town Haddonfield and reference his uncanny ability to move his body, appearing and disappearing at will. This encounter also furthers the evolution of Laurie's understanding of Myers as he changes from unperceived threat (at the Myers house) to perceived voyeur (at the school) to perceived threat (here) and eventually to violent, criminal assailant that inverts the security offered by Haddonfield. In this scene, as Laurie and Annie continue home, Annie riffles through her purse while Laurie sees Myers again. In an extreme long shot that tracks forward from roughly Laurie's point of view, the audience sees Myers standing in the sidewalk ahead, the right side of his body partially obstructed by a hedge (figure 1.19). As in the classroom scene, Myers expresses a voyeur's desire to be seen, caught, perceived as a threat. He is clad in the same stolen black jumpsuit and white mask that he wore in the classroom scene and which again functions as a stand-in for a healthy Skin Ego. Carpenter's score emphasizes the eeriness of his appearance.



Figure 1.19: Myers appears from behind a hedge (*Halloween* 0:23:42). BD still.

Myers steps behind the hedge and Carpenter cuts back to a back-tracking medium shot of Laurie and Annie. Laurie identifies Myers as the man that Annie yelled at a few moments earlier and asks Annie to look at him hiding behind the bush. Annie then approaches the bush and pretends to talk to the man, playing a joke on Laurie (and drawing attention to Laurie's sexual naïveté), pretending that the man is asking to take Laurie out on a date. Laurie approaches but Myers has vanished, seemingly without a trace, referencing the uncanny. Laurie insists that "He was standing right there," a feeling of uncanniness briefly consuming her.

A bit later, once Laurie arrives home, Myers invades the safe space of small-town America once again, this time physically invading the yard of the house next door and physically and psychologically threatening Laurie. The audience sees Laurie, in close-up, approach the window in her second-floor bedroom and look outside. Following her gaze, the next shot is of Myers outside the window. Along with Laurie, we see Myers stalking her and, in true voyeuristic fashion, begging to be seen. In this, Myers' stalking activity refers to our own voyeuristic activity in watching the film. The moment Myers appears, the audience is thrust into Carpenter's score. Myers is positioned directly in the middle of hung-up laundry in the yard of Laurie's neighbor Mr. Riddle (figure 1.20). The laundry, white bedding, implies how deeply Myers has and will intrude into the intimate confines of the suburban house (the bedroom being a key site of terror and invasion in many slasher films).



Figure 1.20: Myers appears in Mr. Riddle's yard (*Halloween* 0:26:39). BD still.

In this appearance of Myers, in contrast to his earlier appearances, it is totally unclear whether Myers is actually watching Laurie from Mr. Riddle's yard or if he is a figment of her imagination. Carpenter cuts back to the close-up of Laurie staring at Myers then immediately cuts to the shot of the garden from roughly Laurie's point of view. Myers has vanished (figure 1.21). It is unclear whether he was even there to begin with as Laurie did not look away and her eyeline did not indicate any movement on his part. This series of cuts, in line with our use of the concept of free indirect subjectivity, approximates Laurie's subjectivity as she has come to doubt her own perception of the world around her. Meanwhile, as we see the action from Laurie's perspective, and her subjectivity directly filters our understanding of the action, our position as voyeuristic audience also doubles Myers' perspective. Carpenter cuts back to the shot of Laurie inside her bedroom. She is visibly shaken up and retreats from the window, causing it to slam shut. Carpenter cuts back to the shot of the yard again. Myers is still not there.



Figure 1.21: Myers has vanished (Halloween 0:26:41). BD still.

HADDONFIELD AT NIGHT: TURNING SMALL-TOWN AMERICA INSIDE OUT

Almost two-thirds of *Halloween* takes place during darkness. While the film's runtime is approximately 91 minutes, at the 34:45 mark the film's shift from twilight into darkness, with Carpenter's score running over this move from day to night. The action of the film never returns to daylight hours. Here the white, middle-class small American town turns into its uncanny opposite. When darkness falls, the insulated small town no longer protects, it hunts, terrorizes, and kills. Instead of cloistering, sealing off, and effectively functioning as a protective boundary or skin, it opens up and exposes. Instead of a space of community, it is a space of isolation. It traps and

locks in. At night, the small town of Haddonfield becomes a space of abject terror, a space that exposes the myth of the protecting, community-oriented small town.

In his remarks on the "uncanny," Freud notes an "uncanny effect of silence, darkness and solitude" (*SE XVII* 246). Of these potential beginnings of a feeling of uncanniness, Freud argues that "[concerning] the factors of silence, solitude and darkness, we can only say that they are actually elements in the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free" (252). *Halloween* (as well as later slasher films), in setting the majority of its action at night, taps into this profound, infantile anxieties that concern early separations from the mother as well as anxieties concerning annihilation.

Halloween's exterior nighttime shots are characterized by large amounts of the frame being covered in black darkness. These shots are frequently delivered to the audience through handheld shots which are not necessarily from any character's perspective. At night, the space of Haddonfield is a largely depopulated space: the shots are largely emptied of people, with the exceptions of some children trick-or-treating as well as the presence of those main characters that are featured in a given sequence. These shots, in their heavy emphasis on shadow and lack of light, continually stress the unseen/uncanny as a source of fear. Here, at night, the space of small-town America conceals threats rather than protects against them. This is small-town America morphing into its uncanny opposite.

The nighttime terror that suburbia morphs into is most obvious later in the film when Laurie flees Myers' attacks, escaping the house that Annie had been babysitting

108

in, looking for help, and then running back to house of Tommy's family, where she is supposed to be babysitting. After Laurie finds the bodies of three of her friends, Myers attacks her and she attempts to flee. After Laurie falls over a railing, she immediately runs to the front door in order to escape Myers. The front door, however, is locked and apparently cannot be easily unlocked from the inside. The single-family house has turned into its opposite. Rather than functioning as a protective skin, the house, claustrophobic and suffocating, traps and kills. The boundary of the house essentially turns in on itself and functions as an extension of Myers' abject violence.

Myers, chasing Laurie, descends the stairs. Laurie runs to the back of the house. The French doors at the back of the house, through which Myers watched Annie earlier, are wedged closed by a rake. Again, the boundary of the house, an enclosure of private property, traps inside (rather than keeping others outside). Laurie eventually breaks a small window in the French doors, tearing at the oppressive secondary skin of house, knocks the rake over, and narrowly escapes the slowly approaching Myers. Myers here is robotic, deliberate, and determined. The collapse of meaning that his abject violence brings to the town of Haddonfield is inevitable.

The next series of shots, a continuation of this chase sequence, is incredibly central to Carpenter's construction of a nightmare suburban space. The brief glimpse of the nighttime streets of Haddonfield that these shots provide shows the safe space of small-town America as the uncanny opposite of the myth of safety and community that it speaks. As Laurie flees the house, Carpenter delivers the action to the audience in a rather chaotic handheld long take. This shot begins with the house Laurie has just escaped from taking up a large portion of the shot. Laurie is in the background in extreme long shot. Visibly in pain, she limps into the front yard screaming desperately for help. Now small-town America is a dark place characterized by fear and isolation. Laurie looks to a neighbor's house. The house is dark except for a porch light. No one is home. The shaky, handheld chaos of this shot at once references the film's opening handheld (though not as chaotic) shot. It also reflects Laurie's frightened mental state. At the same time it mirrors our destabilized, disordered subjectivity: at once taking cues from Laurie's fear and pleasurably experiencing the suspense that comes with Myers' pursuit of her.

Laurie then runs toward the camera and falls directly in front of it, both drawing us closer to the action and reminding us of our positions as spectators. Her sprawled body takes up the majority of the frame. She continues to scream for help and Carpenter's score lingers, haunting the scene. She stumbles up the walkway to another neighbor's house. Pleading for help, she bangs on the neighbor's front door with the palms of both of her hands, screaming "Hello! Hello!" The neighbors turn on their porch light and look through their blinds, clearly seeing the young woman in distress, in the pale yellow of the porch light (figure 1.22). Carpenter delivers this image through a wide angle lens, warping and distorting the edges of the frame and emphasizing, through something like a free indirect subjectivity, the instability, irrationality, and fear that Laurie feels. This shot also provides us with a series of frames within frames that functions as another appearance of a secondary skin, this time one that does protect but also isolates.



Figure 1.22: Neighbors ignore Laurie's screams for help (*Halloween* 1:18:20). BD still.

The hands close the blinds, turning away from the pain and terror outside in a way that we, as spectators, cannot. This reaction on the part of the neighbors seems to directly reflect a sort of abjection: they cannot fathom the threat of bodily and psychological destruction that Laurie signifies. Laurie screams, "Can't you hear me?" The neighbors shut the porch light off and Laurie is once again bathed in darkness. She screams in a mixture of frustration and fear and leaves the porch. In Haddonfield, neighbors are no longer a source of community or aid. Instead, Carpenter exposes the "safer" space of small-town America as a failed community, a degenerate utopia, characterized by seclusion and abandonment (something that will come up again and again in later slasher films). This is a terrifying space where doors remain locked and screams for help are ignored as people keep to themselves and their individual pursuits. These suburban houses do not protect you. They are not a refuge. Carpenter finally cuts as Laurie runs back across the street.

Laurie eventually makes it back to Tommy's house and, after encountering another locked door, gets let into the house moments before Myers reaches her. Just as the outdoor space of small-town America becomes a claustrophobic nightmare, so the inside of the house becomes one as well (as the house across the street already has). Once inside, Laurie instructs Tommy to go upstairs. She shuts off the lights and tries the phone: there is no dial tone. They are isolated. Laurie then notices a breeze ruffling a curtain: a window is open. The secondary skin provided by Tommy's house (and by the space of the suburban home more generally) has (always) already been penetrated. In many ways, the always already penetrated space of the suburban home is a spatialization of our own horrific, abject subjectivities, subjectivities that simultaneously and contradictorily align masochistically with the anxiety and terror felt by Laurie and sadistically with the pleasure felt by Myers.

This transformation of small-town America into an uncanny nightmare version of itself is recapped in the film's final series of images. Immediately before this final montage, the audience sees the place in the yard onto which Myers fell (after being shot by Dr. Loomis), then gets a medium close-up of Dr. Loomis looking at where Myers should be. Although for a moment we hoped (and dreaded) that Haddonfield had been cleansed of the impurity presented by Myers, we soon realize that, in an open ending that comes to be a major representative feature of the slasher film, Myers has escaped into the concealing night(mare) space of small-town America. Carpenter's score kicks on at full volume. Myers' apparent death, followed by his revival, directly points to an emergence of the uncanny (and this is an uncanniness from which Haddonfield cannot escape). The effect of this is one final reminder of our radically disordered, abject relationship to and understanding of the events on screen. Carpenter follows this shot of Dr. Loomis with a medium close-up of Laurie, slumped against a wall. She covers her face with her hands and sobs: a continuing threat of a collapse of meaning is inescapable. Carpenter then cuts back to the medium close-up of Dr. Loomis as his eyeline shifts from the ground to the small town into which Myers has fled. The film then closes with a montage of the spaces that have been transformed, over the course of the film, from benign, idyllic spaces into violent, uncanny, nightmare spaces. Carpenter's score remains heavy as the audience sees a hallway bathed in darkness. Myers' heavy breathing begins to layer into the sequence's soundtrack as if coming from within us (and leaving us with a major marker of the slasher film).

The audience then sees an image of a living room, also bathed in darkness. A swath of light, however, shows Myers' knife on the ground. The image approximates a crime scene photograph. This is followed by two more interiors, all lit very lowly: first a hallway, then a staircase. Carpenter then moves the audience outside with an exterior of Tommy's house. All of the lights are off, no one is in sight. It looks deserted, isolated. We then see an image of the house in which Michael killed Laurie's friends. Only the porch light is on. A jack-o-lantern burns on the porch railing, reminding us both of the rituals of Halloween and of the threat inherent in its celebration. This is followed by the final shot of the film: an image of the Myers house. This is a return to originary site of carnage from the film's opening. In contrast to the pleasant Myers home of the opening sequence (figure 1.23), this is the present-day, decaying version of the Myers house, the origin of evil (figure 1.24).

113

Carpenter lingers on this final exterior longer than the other images in his final montage. His score continues to pound and Myers' breathing grows heavier and heavier. This is the aroused breathing of an anticipation of sadistic violence. The evil that this structure once housed has now spread throughout this small town, contaminating it, collapsing it, and turning it inside out. The film itself has come full circle, ending where it began, at the Myers house. The idyllic Myers house, however, like Haddonfield as a whole, is now its opposite: a space of abject horror.



Figure 1.23: The opening shot of the film, 1963: The Myers house, 1963 (*Halloween* 0:02:30). BD still.



Figure 1.24: The final shot of the film (Halloween 1:28:36). BD still.

CONCLUSION: SADISM, MASOCHISM, AND CLAUSTROPHOBIA

The space of small-town America, a sort of "degenerate utopia," is also a claustrophobic, enclosed space in *Halloween*. In its well-kept landscape and white

middle-class serenity, the small town is an enclosed, insulated space, meant to protect those inside it from the threats posed by those others on the outside. In Carpenter's film, the small town begins by conforming to this ideal (at least in the diegetic present): Haddonfield is insulated, its psychological borders secure, and it is at least partially protected from outside threats. However, when Myers returns he signifies the return of Haddonfield's repressed aggressions and anxieties. He also tugs on our own repressed aggressions and anxieties and forces them outward.

Ultimately, *Halloween* produces horror in the construction of a fractured, radically disordered subjectivity through which the spectator witnesses and participates in the destruction of the bodies of Myers' victims (bodies that are shown to be very destroy-able), as well as the contamination/destruction of small-town America (which, turned into its opposite, is shown to be already contaminated). In the end, this destruction of the "safer" space of the suburbs doubles back on itself and parallels the obliteration of distinctions between our own subjectivity, Myers' subjectivity, and his victims' subjectivities.

In *Halloween*, Myers is a sadistic monster that embodies the spectator's sadism. However, the spectator is not a pure sadist. Or rather, the spectator is both a pure sadistic and a pure masochist. So, the spectator, in viewing the film, simultaneously aggresses the characters on screen and aggresses her/himself. Here *Halloween* opens up multiple subjectivities and identifications and forces the viewer to identify not only with the stalking, murderous, sadistic monster, but also with the monster's victims (and here the film opens up a masochistic spectator position). The

result is a viewing subjectivity that, like the monster Michael Myers, is abject. It takes the spectator into the realm of the "abject," up to the brink of meaninglessness, and collapses distinctions between self/other, human/monster, ultimately tapping into profound anxieties over the threatened annihilation of the self.

In the end, the suspense and anxiety produced in the slasher film, particularly *Halloween*, is primarily an anxiety related to the threat of annihilation produced by the appearance of the monster. This is ultimately an anxiety related to our lack of differentiation from him. Representationally, these anxieties are spatialized in the destruction of a series of boundaries, including the literal boundaries of the skins Myers' victims as well as the metaphorical boundaries of the suburban house (along with a number of smaller boundaries including the windows, doorways, and blinds, of these suburban spaces). As we will see in the next chapter, this spatialized horror, in which familiar, white middle-class spaces are upended, comes to be one of the primary ways through which the slasher film assaults its audience.

Works Cited

- Anzieu, Didier. *The Skin Ego*. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Print.
- Black Christmas. Dir. Bob Clark. 1974. Critical Mass, 2008. BD.
- Clover, Carol J. Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- Cohen, Alain J.-J. "Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Aggressivity and Sublimation in Film and Painting." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 15.2 (2010): 135-62. Print.
- ---. "*Twelve Monkeys, Vertigo* and *La Jetée*: Postmodern Mythologies and Cult Films." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1.1 (2003): 146-63. *InformaWorld*. Web. 8 June 2009.
- Creed, Barbara. The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Metropolitan, 1998. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Trans. Jean McNeil. *Masochism*. New York: Zone, 1991. 9-138. Print.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 2001. PDF.
- Edelstein, David. "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn." *New York Magazine* 26 Jan. 2006: n. pag. Web. 22 Aug. 2011.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*. 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-64. Print.

- ---. "Civilizations and Its Discontents." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 57-146. Print.
- ---. "The Ego and the Id." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-66. Print.
- ---. "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX (1925-1926): An Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, The Question of Lay Analysis and Other Works.* 1959. London: Hogarth, 1975. 75-176. Print.
- ---. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.* 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.
- Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.
- Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. Print.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print.
- Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.
- Hostel. Dir. Eli Roth. 2005. Lionsgate. Film.
- Kernberg, Otto F. Aggression in Personality Disorders and Perversions. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992. Print.
- Klein, Amanda Ann. American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures. Austin: U of Texas P, 2011.

- Klein, Melanie. "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States." *The Selected Melanie Klein*. Ed. Juliet Mitchell. New York: Free, 1986. 116-45. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Laplanche, Jean. "Aggressiveness and Sadomasochism." Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. Life and Death in Psychoanalysis. 1976. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. 85-102. Print.
- Marin, Louis. *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*. Trans. Robert A. Vollrath. 1984. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P Intl., 1990. Print.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Screen 16 (1975): 6-18. Oxford. Web. 6 Nov. 2009.
- Nicol, Bran. Stalking. London: Reaktion, 2006. PDF.
- A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.
- Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle.* New York: Continuum, 2011. PDF.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry." *Movies and Methods*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 542-58. Print. Trans. of "Le cinéma de poésie." Trans. Marianne de Vettimo and Jacques Bontemps. *Cahiers du cinéma* 171 (1965): 35-44.
- Peeping Tom. Dir. Michael Powell. 1960. Criterion, 1999. DVD.
- Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997. Print.
- Saw. Dir. James Wan. Lion Gate, 2004. Film.

CHAPTER TWO.

SPACES OF HORROR:

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE, THE "CULTURE WARS," AND SEAN S. CUNNINGHAM'S *FRIDAY THE 13TH* (1980)

INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 1980, Paramount Pictures released Sean S. Cunningham's Friday *the 13th* in American theaters. The film tells the story of a group of young people starting work at a summer camp. The audience quickly learns that something is wrong at the summer camp, Camp Crystal Lake. The camp counselors are then killed off, one-by-one, by a killer whose identity remains a mystery. During the film's climax, however, the audience learns that the killer is a woman named Mrs. Pamela Voorhees. She is seeking vengeance for her son, Jason Voorhees, who drowned at the camp at least partially due to distracted counselors (the character of Jason will go on to become a cult horror icon in the 1980s and the focus of most of the sequels to Friday the 13th). Mrs. Voorhees eventually meets her match in the character of Alice Hardy, who battles with her and eventually beheads her. Shortly thereafter, however, while Alice floats in a boat on Camp Crystal Lake, Jason unbelievably emerges from the lake and attacks Alice, leaving us with the "open ending" characteristic of the slasher film (and gesturing to the fantastical open ending that we will later see in A Nightmare on Elm Street).

As Nowell notes, independent filmmakers were not particularly quick to base films on *Halloween*. This was partially due to the state of horror films outlined above and partially due to the difficulties that *Halloween* had finding a distributor. As *Halloween* was turned down by "every major studio in Hollywood," "[it] seemed fairly likely that films modeled on *Halloween* would struggle to attract the MPAA member distribution deals upon which independent filmmakers relied to generate swift profits" (119). As Nowell points out, "[by] July 1980, only three films had been produced to capitalize on *Halloween*: *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night*, and *Terror Train* (all 1980), and only one of those films, *Friday the 13th*, was American" (108).

Friday the 13th was independently produced with a budget of \$500,000 and was picked up for domestic distribution by Paramount (Nowell 133). At the box office, "[relative] to Paramount's investment, *Friday the 13th* became a solid commercial success" (138). As Nowell notes, "[following] a \$5.8m opening three-day gross, the film rapidly earned the majority of the \$16.5m that it would generate by year's end to place twentieth in the annual rentals chart" (138). In terms of horror films in 1980, "*The Shining* was the solitary horror film to generate higher rentals than *Friday the 13th*" (138). Furthermore, "*Friday the 13th*'s rentals were bettered by only five of the 20 films that MPAA-members angled primarily or exclusively to youth" (138). As an impressive box-office success, "*Friday the 13th* sent a clear message to the American independent sector" (145).

Friday the 13th furthers and solidifies several representative features of the slasher film, in particular a focus on vulnerable teens engaging in recreational

121

activities in authority-free spaces (and then becoming receivers of horror), as well as the furtherance of the sadistic-masochistic subjectivity of the viewer (Nowell 126). Although, following the work of Gaylyn Studlar, we argue that *Friday the 13th* marks a forceful shift toward a more masochistic viewing position that encourages "bisexual" identification to a greater degree than does *Halloween* (Studlar 32). *Friday the 13th* also introduces some new features that would come to mark the slasher film (and that will be deconstructed in the film that we analyze in our next chapter, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*). These include the use of the summer camp as a setting (which, along with the white middle-class small town/suburb, as we saw in *Halloween*, comes to be the key location of nearly every slasher film as it is turned from an everyday relatively safe space into its uncanny opposite), as well as a ratcheting-up of on-screen graphic violence (although much of the pleasure of this and other slashers may be found in "*not seeing*" the monster and the violence that the monster commits (Giles 39).

Directly related to this pleasure in not seeing, *Friday the 13th* also relies more heavily on POV shots than does *Halloween* as, until the film's climax, the monster that terrorizes Camp Crystal Lake is an unseen mystery. Therefore, one important difference between *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* concerns the villain. While Carpenter's villain, Michael Myers, is a largely faceless villain who is almost entirely devoid of emotion, the audience does see Myers throughout the film. As noted in the previous chapter, much of Carpenter's film is spent watching Myers watch his prey. His identity is not at all a mystery and he is wholly motivated by "evil." In sharp contrast to this sort of villain, the identity of the villain of *Friday the 13th*, Mrs. Voorhees, remains a mystery until very late in the film. When Mrs. Voorhees' identity is finally revealed, her motive is shown to be revenge for the death of her son. Finally, while the audience sees Myers at many points in the film, *Halloween* does use POV and rough-POV shots, but *Friday the 13th* makes much more extensive use of the POV shot. Similar to *Halloween* and other slasher films, however, the monster of *Friday the 13th* comes from within.

Friday the 13th's sadism-masochism is also more related to special make-up effects than was *Halloween's* sadism-masochism (as *Friday the 13th*, through the special make-up effects work of Tom Savini, at once pushed special make-up effects to the fore of the slasher genre and brought a lot of negative attention to the slasher film). Friday the 13th, released during a time of crisis for CARA (the Classification and Rating Administration) and the MPAA (the Motion Picture Association of America), was sandwiched between uproars over the releases of William Friedkin's Cruising on February 8, 1980, and Brian De Palma's Dressed to Kill on June 23, 1980. These two other films functioned as what Kevin S. Sandler calls "limit texts" in their "violation of the standards of responsible entertainment" (65). As limit texts, these two films pushed the boundaries of CARA's R rating. *Friday the 13th*, while not testing the R rating in the ways that these films did, was certainly not free from controversy. Interestingly, it was the POV that many critics, including Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, fixated upon as the most dangerous element of the slasher film as some critics argued that the POV shot essentially positions the film as a villain relative to the victims in the film. So, through its use of the POV and its special make-up

effects, *Friday the 13th* marks the beginning of a time in which the slasher film functioned as a central site of struggle in the more broad "culture wars" of the 1980s, coming under sustained attack from a diverse coalition of protestors of "family values" conservatives and anti-pornography and anti-violence critics (in the popular and academic presses) that Andrew Sullivan would later call the "far-left-theocon alliance."

In the early 1980s, the slasher film began to fit neatly into a recurring narrative in which "American" culture was under attack from malevolent forces that sought to, among other things, destroy the heteronormative nuclear family. The detractors of these films often spoke of them in the language of moral panic. However, a closer examination of the actual films reveals that they contain far less graphic violence and sex (and the combination of these two elements) than cultural crusaders like Tipper Gore would have one believe. In a lot of ways, the protests around these films reveal much more about the individuals that protested them than about the actual films. These films, or rather the press accounts and protests surrounding them, became repositories for cultural anxieties. While the films are certainly violent and do contain representations of sexuality as well as some brief moments of nudity, the popular discussions of them at the time (and to this day) overemphasize the amount of this sort of content in these films.

As in *Halloween*, the bodies of *Friday the 13th*'s teenage characters become literally permeable. In line with our discussion of Anzieu and *Halloween*, we see a similar destruction of boundaries at work in this film. As the skins of Mrs. Voorhees'

124

victims break, the audience experiences the beginning of a dissolution of a sense of self that is representationally identified with the body. In this destruction, distinctions between self/subject and other/object begin to fall apart. *Friday the 13th*, however, also presents us with an urge to cross-gender identification and fusion with the mother, an urge that references "the sensual pleasures of polymorphous sexuality," pleasures that *Friday the 13th* constantly plays with, questions, and disrupts (Studlar 192).

While on-screen breaking of the skin is largely avoided in *Halloween*, this marker of the abject becomes a hallmark of the on-screen violence in *Friday the 13th*. The film, however, while rejoicing in its special make-up effects, does not linger on them for large amounts of time, particularly when compared to the sequences of violence in many contemporary R-rated horror films. As several critics point out (including Nowell and Kendrick), receiving an R rating was still a major imperative for a film, particularly one that aimed for distribution by an MPAA member, as *Friday the 13th* certainly did (Nowell 133; Kendrick 138).

This graphic breaking of the body, the protective "boundary" of the skin, is integral to the sadistic and masochistic fantasies offered by the slasher film. While we certainly agree that Studlar's focus on the masochistic elements of the cinematic spectatorship is extremely important, we are not so quick to dismiss sadistic/controlling aspects of cinematic looking. Instead, we argue that the slasher film's identificatory structures are at once sadistic and masochistic and, depending on the film, one may be emphasized over another. Ultimately, *Friday the 13th* is a film about looking, albeit a different sort of looking than the looking we saw in *Halloween*. In *Friday the 13th*, we have a more masochistic looking in which we are (pleasurably) stripped of power. And while, on the surface, the use of the POV from the villain's perspective seems to align us with the sadistic gaze of the monster, the result is actually the opposite as we largely identify with the film and the film's characters masochistically (albeit a masochism that still possesses sadistically controlling elements of the gaze).

In exploring the pleasures offered by the slasher film, particularly *Friday the 13th*, this chapter argues that the pleasures of the slasher film are essentially sadistic-masochistic and operate across genders. In exploring the implications of the pleasurable types of looking made available in *Friday the 13th*, this chapter will first examine the theoretical underpinnings of a doubly-gendered sadistic-masochistic spectator, then explore how this pleasure operates through the film's uncanny spaces and the POV, and will close with an analysis of the cultural outcry over the violence of the slasher film.

A CERTAIN PLEASURE IN VIEWING: THE "BISEXUAL" SPECTATOR

This chapter seeks to expand upon our earlier discussions of the multiple, shifting identifications that the slasher film opens up. On this note, *Friday the 13th* may at once be a more difficult and complicated case as well as a more simple and obvious case due to the use of explicit POV shots. These shots are in contrast to the semi-POV shots from Myers as well as the shots of Myers watching his prey from *Halloween.* In *Friday the 13th*, notably, most of the POV shots are specifically from the killer's perspective (which is not necessarily a representative feature of the slasher film but is instead a feature of this film in particular and some slashers that followed it) that detractors of the genre really latched onto as something to be protested. In the end we might argue that the violence of *Halloween*'s identificatory structures is actually more profound, more disturbing, more "sadistic" than the violence of *Friday the 13th*, despite the latter film being much more graphically violent. That said, the sort of shifting identifications that we argue exist in *Halloween* do recur here, albeit to a lesser degree, as in this film we are much more closely and masochistically aligned with the perspective of Mrs. Voorhees' victims.

One of the most important and most difficult questions that this dissertation addresses is how do viewers, regardless of gender, identify with the action in these films and why do they (or at least some of them) keep coming back for more. Ultimately, as this chapter argues, women do not function merely as spectacle in *Friday the 13th*. Instead, they (at least partially) possess the look and invite viewers, regardless of gender to, following Studlar's work on the "bisexual" spectatorship, masochistically identify with them (32). Following Studlar, this chapter examines the masochistic structures of identification that are at work in *Friday the 13th* and amends her arguments, arguing that while the identificatory structure in *Friday the 13th* is more masochistic than most slasher films, viewer identification in the slasher film is generally sadistic-masochistic. Similar to *Halloween*, this positioning of the viewer is set up partially through a "free indirect subjectivity" that taps into the anxieties of the teenage protagonists (and us). Ultimately, we argue that, partially following Studlar, no one in particular solely owns the gaze in the slasher film (although, in the case of *Friday the 13th*, Alice owns the gaze to a greater extent than does Mrs. Voorhees).

Linda Williams, in Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the *Visible*," a book published in 1989, writes about "sadomasochistic film pornography" and issues of spectatorship, power, and pleasure. However, she does, at times, touch on the viewing positions offered by more mainstream cinema, particularly horror cinema. For instance, her essay "Power, Pleasure, and Perversion," notes that the violence in "violent hard core" pornography as well as the violence in simulated yet realistic (and less plot-driven) horror such as 1976's notorious Snuff, have a much different effect on viewers than "the special-effects violence of the slasher horror film" (201). In Williams' reading of the slasher film, "we know that the actor has not been slashed but the narrative asks us to believe it anyway" (201). For this reason, according to Williams, the violence of the slasher film is not "hard core" in that it does not "attempt to create in the mind of the viewer an impression of reality" (201). In relation to sadomasochistic film pornography, Williams asks an important series of questions: "To what extent is the film or video asking the viewer to take sadistic pleasure in the real suffering of others? Is the suffering real? If it is, is it perversely (masochistically) enjoyed or painfully endured?" (202). These questions also prove particularly useful for understanding the violence of the slasher film.

As we will discuss in more detail below, the slasher film (along with the pornographic film, a type of film that has often been connected to the slasher film) has

often been approached (by culture warriors and detractors of the genre) as every bit as destructive as an actual snuff film, or an actual rape for that matter, might be. On this note, Williams aims her critique at "Anti-pornography feminists," some of whom she dubs "naive realists" (here she specifically references Andrea Dworkin) (201). According to Williams, for this group of feminists, "to see a woman phallically penetrated, bound, gagged, tortured, or (as presumably in *Snuff*) murdered for male sexual pleasure is tantamount to watching a real woman present in the viewer's own space-time continuum being victimized by these outrages" (201). Clover's work is particularly helpful here, as Clover notes that she does not "believe that real-life women and feminist politics have been entirely well served by the astonishingly insistent claim that horror's satisfactions begin and end in sadism" (19). As Clover argues (and we agree): "horror's misogyny is a far more complicated matter than the 'bloodlust' formula would have it" (19).

In her discussion of filmic violence, Williams is careful to separate out representations of performed, consensual suffering from images of actual, nonconsensual suffering. While Williams is discussing "sadomasochistic film pornography," we will extend her view of performed violence to include the violence performed in the slasher film. This separation is instructive and we follow Williams in this as we believe that the conflation of real, nonconsensual suffering with performed, consensual suffering functions only to confuse more fruitful discussions of cinematic violence. Williams' discussion of violence also examines and complicates questions of sadism and masochism in relation to viewer subjectivities. Again, while Williams is discussing sadomasochistic film pornography, we aim to extend her work, at least partially, to help us understand viewer subjectivities in the slasher film. As Williams argues regarding violence, "the mere presence of violence does not mean that the fantasy is essentially sadistic" (216). And while "[the] woman viewer of sadomasochistic pornography may be in closer 'contact' with the suffering of the female victim-hero . . . she is not condemned . . . to lose herself in pure abandonment, pain, or pre-oedipal merger" (216). Instead, according to Williams, the violence in these films "is enjoyed by male and female spectators alike who, for very different reasons owing to their different gendered identifications and object choices, find both power and pleasure in identifying not only with a sadist's control but also with a masochist's abandon" (216-17). It is our argument that a similar play of "control" and "abandon" is at work in the identificatory structures offered by the slasher film.

On this note, Williams points out, through the work of Parveen Adams, that what viewers may experience in these films is a "play of bisexuality at the level of object choice and identification" (216). Through a recounting of Adams, Williams begins to explore the possibility "that male and female subjects [may] experience both a mother identification and a father identification, between which they oscillate" over the course of the film (216). Here Williams argues for a fluid, multifaceted understanding of spectatorship. We take this understanding of spectatorship as a jumping-off point and examine how a more complex understanding of spectatorship can enrich our understandings of films previously understood as simple exercises in male sadistic fantasies.

To further our move away from a strictly sadistic reading of the slasher film, we turn to the work of Studlar in *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic.* One of Studlar's most central claims in this work is "that cinematic pleasure is much closer to masochistic pleasure than to the sadistic, controlling pleasure commonly associated with spectatorship in modern film theory" (9). Studlar's book, first published in 1988, is a Deleuzian intervention into a field of film theory too rigidly controlled, in Studlar's view, by the framework presented in Laura Mulvey's massively influential article "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" from 1975. As Studlar bluntly argues: "all of film may be capable of forming spectatorial pleasures divorced from castration fear and sexual difference defined exclusively as feminine lack" (29). This is really the crux of her critique of contemporary film theory as she forcefully comes out against what she calls "recent theories of sexually differentiated film spectatorship" (30).¹

For Studlar, the cinema's key pleasure is a polymorphously perverse one that is more closely aligned with a (controlled) masochism rather than a (controlling) sadism, as many critics assume. As Studlar argues:

Masochism violates patriarchal society's dictum against polymorphous desire based on infantile, incestuous wishes. More important, it emphasizes the male's identification with the powerful mother and his concurrent disavowal of the father's patriarchal function. In the masochistic ideal, gender identity is transmutative and triumphantly 131

¹ Here Studlar takes direct aim at some of the most influential feminist film critics of her day, specifically naming Laura Mulvey, B. Ruby Rich, Mary Ann Doane, and Judith Mayne (33).

bisexual. As Deleuze remarks, the masochist believes it is possible to become both sexes. Polymorphous, nonprocreative, nongenital sexuality undermines the fixed polarities of male and female as defined by patriarchy's obsession with presence/lack, active/passive, and phallic genitality. (32)

Here Studlar turns the notion of feminine lack on its head (33). While we might not be so radical, her perspective is certainly an important counter-point to film theory derived from Mulvey's work.²

Meanwhile, for Linda Williams' reading of Studlar, a central part of film identification is the contract and its relation to identification. As Williams notes (certainly echoing some of Deleuze's remarks on sadism and masochism): "[like] the person who engages in sadomasochism, the viewer has made a kind of contract with the film to undergo a certain uneasy identification with a character experiencing terror or pain, at the end of which is the great pleasure of its relief" (211).

This "uneasy identification," in Williams' view (through a reading of Studlar, Tania Modleski, Teresa de Lauretis, and Clover), *may* be understood through "a model of bisexuality" in which the identifications of male and female viewers shift over the course of a film (206). Studlar, on the other hand, fully embraces the idea of a "bisexual response" in viewing cinema (Studlar 35). While we will be more limited in

² While Studlar moves away from sadism, we might try to move back toward sadism as part of the viewing experience (while keeping Studlar's critiques in mind) (178). In Studlar's view, sadism, as opposed to masochism, requires actual, real "negation" of an object (27). As Studlar writes: "Sade's work, judged as the prototype of sadistic object relations, demonstrates that sadists are driven to maim, to penetrate, to destroy, in order to bring about the directly experienced pleasure of orgasm and to *negate* their objects in a way that is not possible through the sadistic look emphasized in theories of spectatorship" (27). For Studlar then, sadism is really an impossibility for the cinema. While we do partially follow Studlar here we also argue that the slasher film does tap into sadistic impulses (while not allowing them to be engaged in fully). Following Studlar, we do agree that there is no actual negation of an object in the viewing of the slasher film.

our approach (as we are just looking at the specific pleasures offered by the slasher film), we do find Studlar's arguments regarding a bisexual viewing position to be extremely helpful when looking at the conflicting viewing positions offered by the slasher film.³

This idea of a "bisexual response" to the cinema reminds us of de Lauretis' understanding of film identification as an "alternation" (142). According to de Lauretis' discussion of female subjectivity, "femininity' and 'masculinity' are never fully attained or fully relinquished" (142). While de Lauretis is specifically discussing females here, we might extend this, via Studlar, to males, particularly in the viewing of the slasher film. However, we certainly follow Studlar's Deleuzian take more forcefully than de Lauretis' more strictly Freudian take here. While de Lauretis argues that "alternation conveys the sense of an either/or," that is, either "masculine" or "feminine" subjectivity, we follow Studlar's suggestion that identification is a bit more muddy or contradictory, emphasizing a both/and approach to masculinity or femininity rather than an either/or understanding (de Lauretis 142). That said, de Lauretis' push against identifying the cinematic "look" with masculinity and the "image" with femininity is of particular use to our discussion below (142).

For Studlar, one of the major fantasies that the cinema engages is "[the] fantasy of being both sexes" (34). Here Studlar directly confronts Mulvey's work. In Studlar's understanding, rather than just forcing men to identify with a powerful,

³ One of the main figures that critics have discussed as a potential site of bisexual identification is the female hero, a character that Clover has dubbed the "final girl." Williams, however, argues that while the final girl escapes and eventually kills the monster, in the end this character "becomes monstrous" and, rather than being "both male and female" she instead becomes "*neither* male *nor* female" (208).

controlling, sadistic gaze and forcing women to identify with powerless, controlled women, this "fantasy of being both sexes" allows us to better understand the pleasures made available by the cinema. As Studlar notes, this fantasy functions as "a motivating pleasure" in the cinema (34). According to Studlar:

psychoanalytic film theory has operated on the assumption that the cinema as apparatus and the classical narrative structurally close off the male's possible identification with the represented female or the kind of dialectical viewing experience attributed to women. Male spectatorship has frequently been reduced to a predictable reaction determined by the working of the castration complex, Oedipal desire, and identification with the masculine ideal ego. (34)

Studlar is perhaps more helpful than de Lauretis in her attention to both male and female spectatorship. Studlar argues "that the psychic structures of disavowal, fetishism, or a fetishistic scopophilia might operate beyond sexual difference and allow for the pleasures of opposite-sex identification for male as well as female spectators" (47). She ultimately argues that not only are the pleasures associated with these identificatory structures possible, they are in fact "inevitable" (47). Furthermore, as we will discuss momentarily, Studlar argues that "[scopophilia], like fetishism, originates in precastration complex development and predates Oedipal conflict and genital sexuality" (47).

For Studlar, the most essential thing here is pleasure. And, as Studlar observes, this "shifting identification" – both male and female viewers moving between different viewing positions that are gendered differently than the viewer him/herself – brings with it an experience of "freedom and pleasure" (35). As Studlar argues, her theoretical framework "necessarily confronts some of the assumptions grounding the theories that polarize male and female spectatorial experience" (35). Studlar finds (a negotiated) passivity/masochism in the male as well as the female viewer as well as "activity" in the male and female viewer (48). This certainly brings to mind Clover's understanding of the "final girl" as a figure that encourages male viewers to (at least somewhat transgressively) identify with female characters (Clover 18). However, as we will explore below, this does not tell the entire story of identification in the slasher film (although it is certainly a good start).

Studlar directly connects these "polarities" that situate male/masculine and female/feminine as opposites to "the polarized gender-role stereotypes fostered by a patriarchal society" (35). As Studlar notes, such "patriarchal socialization . . . encourages the division of male/female psychological traits and discourages androgyny" (35). Connecting the multiple, contradictory identifications offered by the cinema to fantasies of gender mobility (whether conscious or unconscious), Studlar writes:

Through the mobility of multiple, fluid identifications, the cinematic apparatus allows the spectator to experience the pleasure of satisfying the 'drive to be both sexes' and of reintegrating opposite-sex identification repressed in everyday life dominated by secondary process. The cinema provides an enunciative apparatus like fantasy or dream which acts as a protective guise permitting the temporary fulfillment of . . . "one of the deepest tendencies in human nature." (35)

What Studlar calls "the cinema's fantasy of gender mobility through identification" is perhaps the most useful aspect of her theory for the discussion of the slasher film (185). This fantasy of being both sexes is a masochistic fantasy while fantasy generally is much more important for the masochist than the sadist as, according to Studlar, fantasy works for the sadist "only as a precursor to destructive action" (24). In this way one could say that the viewing structure of the slasher film (and indeed all film) is more masochistic than sadistic. However, we add to this that the narratives and stylistic choices of the slasher film (such as the POV here in *Friday the 13th* or the watching-Myers-watch shots in *Halloween*), are primarily masochistic but continually tug on our urge to sadism. We argue that there is some sort of tugging on sadism at work here even if, following Studlar, the pleasure of the cinema (including the slasher film) is primarily rooted in masochism. Ultimately, as we argue in the previous chapter, the slasher film contains elements of masochism and sadism (which may be emphasized at different times and in different films in varying intensities), resulting in an identificatory structures that fluctuate and double, resulting in a sadistic-masochistic viewing subject.

The apparatus of the cinema is the most central aspect of Studlar's investigation of how these various identifications operate as, according to Studlar, "[the] cinematic apparatus encourages multiple possibilities of identification and projection that resemble the infantile mechanisms that operate in perversions" (189). Ultimately, for Studlar, "[the] apparatus provides the grounding that permits multiple partial, shifting, ambivalent identifications" (185).

Studlar firmly situates this fantasy of being the other sex within the structure of masochism. As she argues, "[exchanges] of positions are part of the dynamic of pleasure in the masochistic play of pursuit and disappointment" (35). In Studlar's view, these "exchanges" question traditional oppositions (including "[subject/object],

male/female, active/passive, control/acquiescence, rebellion/submission, suspension/anticipation, voyeurism/exhibitionism, pain/pleasure") (35). Here masochism shares something with the "abject," as discussed in the previous chapter. In Studlar's view, this marks masochism as a "perverse pleasure," along the lines of polymorphous perversity (178).⁴

As Studlar notes, "[the] pleasures of cinema are, in many respects, infantile ones" (178). While not the only pleasures offered by the cinema, these infantile pleasures are absolutely central to Studlar's argument as, in her view, the cinema can move viewers back to a pre-sexually-differentiated state. Studlar's connection of these "infantile pleasures" to the "loss of ego boundaries" that one experiences while dreaming as well as "the experience of the nursing child who imagines an undifferentiated sense of 'fusion with the breast'" certainly bring Anzieu's work on the Skin Ego, loss of ego boundaries, and potential fusion with the mother to mind (178-79).

Studlar employs the idea of "Ego Diffusion" to further explore the masochistic elements of the cinema (184). Studlar calls this Ego Diffusion an "artificial regression" to a "more primitive ego structure—in which ego and object are not fully differentiated" (190). Studlar further argues that "[the] loss of ego boundaries

⁴ To avoid confusion, particularly in light of later discussions of cultural and academic outcry against horror films, we use "perversion" in Studlar's (and Freud's) nonjudgmental way unless otherwise noted. This is an important distinction because, as L. Andrew Cooper notes, the academic usage of "perversion," particularly in reference to horror films, has impacted popular discussions of horror films. This essentially strips the term of its psychoanalytic meaning and plays into the hands of cultural conservatives that label horror fans (with the sometimes inadvertent aid of academia) "perverts" (Cooper 65).

experienced through the cinema recalls the loss of ego boundaries in the dual unity of mother/child" (190). Importantly, for Studlar, this "loss of ego boundaries" is "pleasurable" for the spectator (184). We might amend this slightly in light of our discussion of the abject in the previous chapter to argue that while there certainly is some pleasure in these shifting identifications, there is also some unease as identifications become increasingly dangerous and violent, particularly through the use of the POV shot from the villain's perspective. In this, these films do tug on sadistic, violent, aggressive impulses but not to the extent that cultural crusaders have argued. We will explore the complaints of these detractors of the slasher film in greater detail below.

A key aspect of Studlar's approach to masochism, mother/child fusion, and the cinema, is its focus on pre-Oedipal pleasures. As Studlar notes, "[masochism] forces us to reconsider the power of a desire not 'born with language' and the castration complex, as Mulvey asserts, but born out of infantile helplessness and the dangerous bliss of symbiosis" (49). In Studlar's view, this aspect of masochism is central to the viewing experience as the "[pleasurable] looking" involved in the cinema entails "not only an active pleasure" but also "the passive submission to the object-mother, an object who is also a subject and whose actions are beyond the child's control" (48). Ultimately for Studlar, "[masochism] and the spectatorial experience of the cinema duplicate the situation of passive submission to the object" (48).

In the release of control that one finds in this masochistic submission, "the wish for symbiosis" with the mother is absolutely central (25). According to Studlar,

"the fantasy goal of masochism is . . . the 'dual unity and complete symbiosis between child and mother" (26). This fusion, in Studlar's reading, directly connects to sexual difference and gendered viewing positions as "[the] fetishistic denial of sexual difference in masochism appears related to the wish for symbolic fusion, to a denial of separation and sexual difference that protects identification with the mother and union with her" (41). Here the cinema allows for "a safe, pleasurable means of reexperiencing the archaic past, an 'enactive form of remembering'" a moment when child and mother shared a single skin (182).

Anzieu also describes this wish for fusion with the mother as a "phantasy" (42). For Anzieu, part of this "phantasy [is] of a skin surface common to both mother and child (44). However, *Friday the 13th* literalizes this fantasy for (re)fusion with the mother while also reversing it (at least until the end of the film and the sequels to the film). In *Friday the 13th*, it is Mrs. Voorhees that is torn away from her son, not the reverse (although, in the sequels to *Friday the 13th*, it is Mrs. Voorhees' son Jason that is the villain and that seeks fusion with his mother). So *Friday the 13th* really turns this desire for fusion on its head. Rather than featuring a child seeking or fantasizing about fusion, it is the mother. Here the teenagers that Mrs. Voorhees commits violence against stand in for those that, in her view, allowed her son to drown. For Mrs. Voorhees and her young son Jason together (43). The violence that Mrs. Voorhees commits is a form of punishment for misbehavior, even if it is a fantasied misbehavior, or a projection of misbehavior as it is really Mrs. Voorhees that left her

son to be watched by inexperienced teenagers. Here Mrs. Voorhees becomes a standin for authority, a too-strong superego, reigning down punishment even when it is undeserved. And, in the film's climax, it is ultimately Mrs. Voorhees (and, by extension, the parental, societal authority) that is destroyed.

The punishments that Mrs. Voorhees exacts on the teenage camp counselors at Camp Crystal Lake are localized on the skin. In this, she has essentially become a "persecuting mother" (Anzieu 60). The skin here becomes a site of punishment. While the teens certainly do not masochistically desire or enjoy this punishment, we, as the audience simultaneously do and do not desire this punishment (for ourselves and for the characters).

Following Anzieu's understanding of the role of the mother, we understand the mother's function as "the baby's original protective shield against aggression from the outside world" (43). However, Jason is no longer a baby (and was not a baby when he drowned). Instead, Mrs. Voorhees' protection of Jason (or at least the idea of him) has approached the level of "excess" (43). It has become unhealthy as she tries to make up for her shortcomings as a mother and her desire to have Jason be an infant again. It has also become unhealthy as Mrs. Voorhees projects her shortcomings onto those around here.

Ultimately for Studlar, "[the] fundamental identification generated by the cinema is not with the self as masterful likeness or . . . with 'the body as a limited form,' but with the fragmented self" (185). Furthermore, this "act of identification [depends] upon the loss of body-ego boundaries and abandonment of the sense of the

unified/individualized self" (185). In this way, the masochism of the cinema points to Anzieu's understanding of the fantasy of the "flayed' body" (41). This fantasy masochistically taps into both anxieties of annihilation, experienced from a distance (41). *Friday the 13th* literalizes this fantasy and its attendant anxieties at a number of points.

Friday the 13th invites us to experience some pleasure in the stalking and destruction of its teen protagonists. While this pleasure is certainly related to the POV, it is not wholly determined, or even mostly determined, by the POV. Rather than being a sadistic pleasure, this is much more of a masochistic pleasure (albeit one with some sadistic, controlling aspects). According to Anzieu:

Leaving a mark, the film references this visually: "The masochist's *jouissance* reaches the maximum degree of horror when corporal punishment applied to the surface of the skin (spanking, flagellation, pricking) is pushed to a point where pieces of skin are ripped, pierced or torn away. To attain masochistic pleasure, the subject needs, as we know, to be able to represent the blows as having left a mark on the surface of his body. (41)

In *Friday the 13th*, this sort of masochistic pleasure is represented visually through the on-screen destruction of the human body (something largely avoided in *Halloween* and, as detailed below, largely avoided after *Friday the 13th* due largely to concerns over distribution related to ratings). Additionally, the structures of identification that *Friday the 13th* engages in constantly point to more masochistic identifications.

While *Friday the 13th* literalizes this masochistic fantasy, it further taps into these primordial desires by pointing to an abject loss of ego boundaries. As Studlar notes, "[any] diffusion of ego identity, whether experienced by the masochist, fetishist,

scopophiliac, or cinematic spectator, can be accompanied by a frightening loss of control" (185). And while Studlar argues that the apparatus of the cinema turns this potential un-pleasure into a pleasurable experience, we argue that, at least as far as the slasher film is concerned, this experience is never entirely pleasurable. Instead, the slasher film seeks out this "frightening loss of control," this potential abjectness, and plays on it in order to produce suspense. The slasher film does this primarily through identifications that shift between male and female as well as hero and villain.

However, in Studlar's view, our potential symbiosis with someone or something else, dependent on the loss of ego boundaries, is pleasurable, particularly when touched upon in the cinema. According to Studlar:

By restoring the original ego/ego-ideal dual unity of infant/mother, the cinematic dream screen pleasurably fulfills what Loewald suggests is one of the primary, universal goals of psychic life, that is, the struggle for "unity, symbiosis, fusion, merging, or identification—whatever name we wish to give to this sense of longing for nonseparateness and nondifferentiation." (191)

Ultimately, the apparatus of the cinema is the most central thing for Studlar. While we do not fully share her rather utopian view of its potential for temporary, pleasurable ego diffusion as we maintain that the cinema (at least as far as the slasher film is concerned) mixes pleasure and (at least potential) un-pleasure, we do find her observations to be particularly useful for understanding potential cross-gender identifications in the slasher film.

THE POV AND VIEWER IDENTIFICATION

Friday the 13th provides an interesting counter-example to *Halloween* in terms of how the slasher film deals with viewer identification. Viewer identification still shifts between villain and victim, but this identification comes down much more forcefully on the side of the villain despite, or perhaps because of, the use of POV shots from the villain's perspective. This is particularly interesting in light of how much critical attention these POV shots received in the press. At the time (and up to today) it seems these shots have been read in an extremely simplistic fashion as simply seeking to align the viewer with the sadistic, controlling gaze of the villain/monster. This chapter pushes back against these simplistic readings and, following the analysis begun in the previous chapter, examines how structures of identification emerge in *Friday the 13th* as well as the revolutionary and reactionary implications of these structures.

In *Friday the 13th*, the POV presents us with the following questions: other than through framing and camera position, are we as viewers at all invited or compelled to see the action from Mrs. Voorhees' perspective? Are we invited to share in her pleasures as she stalks and kills teenagers at Camp Crystal Lake? If so, how does the film open up this identification? We argue that while, on the surface, *Friday the 13th* seems to invite some identification with the villain (in a manner similar to *Halloween*), we are ultimately more fully aligned with the perspectives and subjectivities of Mrs. Voorhees' victim. Contrary to what many popular and some academic critics have suggested, it is far too simplistic to simply say that because there are POV shots from the villain's perspective that the whole structure of identification tilts toward identifying with the villain. To suggest this would reduce the entire range of effects of the cinema to the simple mounting and positioning of the mechanical device of the motion picture camera.

While, in a sense the POV does, on its surface, point to the monster being us (as viewers), the film as a whole pushes against this. In *Friday the 13th*, the POV is, however, key to the construction of the monster, although this construction of the monster is achieved largely through an absence. One of the major absences in *Friday the 13th* (at least until the film's climax) is a definitive image of the monster (although we do see parts of the monster's body before the climax of the film).⁵ *Halloween* played with this same absence in its opening minutes (until the revelation that the killer is Myers as a child) but quickly abandoned the absence in favor of the presence of the monster, his imposing figure, his black jumpsuit, and his mask. While there is a similar unmasking during the climax of *Friday the 13th*, the film largely avoids images of the killer until the moment that the identity of the killer is revealed.

The recurrence of the POV points to what Dennis Giles calls "the pleasure in *not seeing*" that is a key aspect of the horror film generally and a representative feature of the slasher film (particularly after *Friday the 13th*) (39). As Giles notes, there is not

⁵ Friday the 13th (particularly in its R-rated theatrical cut) is marked by another notable absence: the absence of long, intense death/torture scenes. Although the film is certainly more graphically violent than Halloween and is arguably more graphically violent than the more fantastically-violent A Nightmare on Elm Street, the majority of Friday the 13th's deaths are very quick affairs. While they do showcase the special make-up effects work of Savini, these sequences are often extremely brief. For more detail on each of the deaths in Friday the 13th, see Nowell's work on Friday the 13th, off-screen violence, and the R rating (131).

always a large amount of on-screen violence in cinematic horror. Instead, off-screen space is absolutely central to the production of suspense (40). Following Giles and extending his work to *Friday the 13th* in particular we see that *Friday the 13th* engages in a "frustrated" desire to see (40). As Giles notes in his discussion of *Friday the 13th Part 2*, this is a frustrated desire to see the monster that involves "[teasing] the viewer" with the present yet unseen monster (41).

As discussed in greater detail below (in reference to the cultural outery over the release of *Friday the 13th*), one of the major things that perturbed critics about *Friday the 13th* was its use of subjective camerawork that approximated the point-ofview of the killer (Vaughn 101). This technique, used in a similar way, was certainly not new to horror cinema, as it dated back to at least Michael Powell's use of the technique in *Peeping Tom* (1960) and appeared again in *Halloween*. *Halloween*, however, as noted in the previous chapter, contains some POV shots, but also, more frequently, contains following shots and rough or approximate POV shots. *Friday the 13th*, however, employs the technique to a far greater extent than *Halloween*, and this, in particular, seemed to trouble critics like Siskel and Ebert (discussed in more detail below).

According to Stephen Vaughn's *Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media*, numerous slasher films built off of *Halloween*'s use of the point-of-view technique in order "to give viewers the illusion that they were seeing the scene through the eyes of a stalker as he chased his victim" (101). Vaughn continues, noting that "[the] camera seemed to invite viewers to accompany the murderers and to participate in their elaborate rituals" (101). Meanwhile, "[critics] argued that this technique aroused those viewers already prone to sadism and was morally inexcusable" (101). Vaughn however, taking these shots at face-value, unfortunately falls into the same trap that many critics of the slasher film do.

Friday the 13th's opening sequence, a murder sequence, is extremely reliant on the POV shot from the villain's perspective (while the murders of Jack and Marcie, analyzed below, are not). Both, however, contribute to the construction of a sadistic-masochistic viewing position (with the opening sequence registering as slightly more sadistic than the murders of Jack and Marcie). This sequence, through the POV shot from the villain's perspective, points on its surface to a sadistic subjectivity (one that is aligned with the killer). Ultimately however, our subjectivities are also aligned with the victims and the film purposely fails to live up to the promise of a sadistically voyeuristic gaze that the opening sequence (and the second murder sequence) offers.

Through the POV, this opening sequence draws particular attention to our positions as spectators who possess a sadistic power to look. In this way, Cunningham begins his film with an emphasis on voyeurism. The film as a whole follows through on this promise of voyeurism. However, where it does not fulfill its promise is in the promise of a sadistic voyeurism. As in *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*'s opening sequence takes place in the past. The violence of this opening sequence relates the originary horror (or at least a reaction to the originary horror) that will propel the monster's violent actions throughout the film.



Figure 2.1: POV: Voyeuristically watching two counselors at Camp Crystal Lake (*Friday the 13th* 0:02:55 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:02:59). BD still.⁶

This first sequence pairs sex with death, at least to some extent. However, while slasher films have been accused of pairing more explicit depictions of sex/nudity with violence, the sex in this sequence is anything but explicit. In fact, it is hardly even implied. In this sequence, which takes place in 1958 at Camp Crystal Lake, before the majority of the film's action, two youngish camp counselors slip away from a larger group of young people who are singing around a fireplace in a cabin. These two camp counselors, a young man and a young woman, run into what

⁶ Although this chapter analyzes the U.S. theatrical R-rated cut of *Friday the 13th* that is available on DVD (except where noted), in the interest of including the highest resolution images possible, the stills included as figures in this chapter are from the "uncut"/unrated Blu-ray copy of the film (as of writing, an R-rated theatrical cut of the film is not currently available in this higher resolution format). When there are differences between R-rated and unrated/"uncut" sequences from the film, we have noted them. We have also taken care to only reproduce shots that appear in both the R-rated and unrated versions of the film (unless otherwise noted) and to provide timecode information for both the R-rated (Friday the 13th) and unrated (Friday the 13th Uncut) cuts of the film (with the exception of those frames from the unrated copy of the film that are not included in the R-rated copy of the film). Additionally, it should be noted that the unrated version of the film seems to have a slightly different aspect ratio when compared with the R-rated copy of the film (the frames of the unrated copy of the film being cropped slightly). While this chapter does not fully explore every difference between the Rrated and unrated cuts of the film, it should also be noted that the stills included here, taken from the unrated copy of the film, are slightly more cropped than are stills from the R-rated DVD version of the film. Additionally, the stills from the unrated copy of the film seem to be slightly brighter than the frames from the R-rated copy of the film.

appears to be a barn, stop, briefly kiss, then make their way up into a loft (figure 2.1). This shot, a handheld POV, however, certainly gestures to the audience's position as voyeur as the camera's view of the scene is partially obstructed, signaling the audience's being hidden as they watch the couple alongside the killer. This shot at once evokes something of the anxiety over being watched that we saw so much in *Halloween* and points to the guilt involved in voyeurism.



Figure 2.2: POV: Voyeurism and teenage sexuality at camp (*Friday the 13th* 0:04:30 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:04:15). BD still.

In this sequence, the audience gets its first experience of the subjective handheld camerawork that this film uses at multiple points. This subjective camerawork also sets the stage for the mystery around the identity of the villain by allowing Cunningham to not show the audience who is responsible for the violence. As the couple starts to make out more heavily, Cunningham cuts to another handheld shot, this time from below the loft looking up at the loft's supporting beams. This shot will last for roughly one minute and nine seconds, an incredibly long POV shot that certainly seems to reference *Halloween*'s incredibly long opening shot. In this POV shot, the audience hears the girl moan and the couple giggle and whisper. We also hear the crunch of the villain's footsteps (a major marker of the slasher film) as well as the sounds of the woods (frogs, crickets, owls, etc.), amplified to uncomfortable volumes. An eerie score begins to layer into the soundtrack. Cunningham punctuates this with *Friday the 13th*'s "signature" sound effect.⁷ Meanwhile, the handheld shot, announcing itself more and more clearly as a POV shot, moves toward the staircase that leads up to the loft and slowly hobbles up to the loft.



Figure 2.3: POV: Interrupting and getting dressed (*Friday the 13th* 0:04:47 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:04:30). BD still.

In terms of graphic sexual content/nudity, the most explicit shot of this sequence is a long shot of the couple's bare legs intertwined. Their upper bodies are blocked from view but they are at least partially clothed. The POV shot lingers on the couple. Again, the shot is partially obscured as the camera, the villain, and us, remain partially out of the couple's line of sight (figure 2.2). The sexual contact stops

⁷ *Friday the 13th*'s "signature" sound effect is two strongly aspirated phonemes (/k/ and /h/), each repeated three times and echoed heavily. While it varies in volume and tempo throughout the film, it could perhaps be represented as such: $[k^h] [k^h] [h^h] [h^h] [h^h]$.

abruptly when they realize that someone is in the loft with them. As the camera (and the villain) moves closer, the audience sees the couple quickly redressing themselves, the boy tucks his shirt into his shorts and the girl hurriedly buttons her blouse (figure 2.3).



Figure 2.4: POV: "We weren't doing anything" (*Friday the 13th* 0:04:56 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:04:37). BD still.

This first sequence also provides the first glimpse of on-screen graphic violence and special make-up effects in the film as the young man is stabbed in the torso. After he fumbles with his shirt, he stands up and the camera/villain/spectator moves closer, eventually framing him in a medium close-up. He seems embarrassed and tries to explain that they "weren't doing anything." Here he is addressing the villain but he is also addressing the spectator (figure 2.4). His explanation is interrupted by a sharp, grating, metallic sound similar to the sound of a large blade being quickly pulled out of a metallic sheath. This sound layers into the piercing sound of the young woman screaming as she leaps to her feet. The wound is not inflicted on-screen but Cunningham briefly shows the aftermath of the wound. Cunningham momentarily breaks away from the POV shot to show the young man fall

to his knees and then onto his back, clutching his stomach. There is a fair amount of blood on his shirt and a bit of blood spurts from his mouth. This shot lasts for approximately seven seconds (and is therefore one of the most lengthy gore/special make-up effects shots in the film) (figure 2.5).



Figure 2.5: On-screen graphic violence: The audience's first glimpse of blood (*Friday the 13th* 0:05:05 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:04:43). BD still.

Cunningham quickly cuts back to the POV from the killer's perspective (and remains in this POV for the duration of this sequence which lasts for approximately 28 more seconds). The death of the young man is followed by the attack and presumed killing of the young woman. Cunningham shows the girl trying to get away, a look of abject terror on her face. She is trapped and begs the assailant to "Please stop!" As she begins to throw boxes in the path of the assailant, the frame rate increases to a slow motion shot. Amid the heavy score, the audience hears screams of protest and fear from the young girl, as well as *Friday the 13th*'s signature sound effect. Suddenly the frame freezes completely, although the scream continues. The camera zooms into the girl's face. Her face is frozen in terror (figure 2.6). When Cunningham brings his

zoom close enough, however, the girl's frozen face is in close-up. The shot, however, is extremely lowly lit. Suddenly, Cunningham quickly over-exposes the shot (figure 2.7). The audience then sees an image of the abject terror on the girl's face, but the exposure of the shot goes from totally under-lit to completely blown-out.

Cunningham then overexposes the shot entirely so that the screen is completely white.



Figure 2.6: A scream, frozen in terror (*Friday the 13th* 0:05:33 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:05:11). BD still.

The screen then quickly fades to black and the *Friday the 13th* logo appears in the lower right hand corner of the frame, coming at the audience until it takes up most of the frame and shatters a pane of glass between the letters and the audience (figure 2.8). This shattering of the glass, paired with the sound of glass shattering, is presumably the shattering of the camera lens (or perhaps the television screen, anticipating the viewing of the film on television). This last shot of the opening sequence (as well as the opening graphics of the credit sequence) certainly draws attention to vision, the act of looking (and the power structures that looking implies), the artificial/mechanical nature of the cinema, as well as *Friday the 13th*'s status as an artificial representation of performed violence. These are things that the film will play

on throughout its duration. The glass falls away, the copyright quickly fades in below the large number "13" and the film's logo stays on the screen for five seconds as the score plays. The logo then comes further out at the audience and fades away. The credits roll.



Figure 2.7: Frozen and over-exposed (*Friday the 13th* 0:05:35 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:05:13). BD still.

Ultimately, this sequence, with its POV shots and close-ups of terror align the viewer primarily with the sadistic killer. During this opening sequence it is the killer (whose gender remains unknown at this point and for the majority of the film) who possesses the look. However, the seemingly unmotivated violence of the killer also begins to point to a subjectivity that is not aligned with the killer. *Friday the 13th* will continually exploit this contradictory viewer position and while this opening sequence seems to promise a violent, sadistic subjectivity, the film as a whole actually refuses to fully embrace this violent, sadistic subjectivity, ultimately positioning the viewer alongside the attacked while still tugging on the viewer's sadistic desire for violence. The result is a sadistic-masochistic subjectivity, similar to the sadistic-masochistic subjectivity created in *Halloween* (although, as this chapter argues, the viewing

subject created through *Friday the 13th* is more masochistic, on the whole, than is the viewing subject created through *Halloween*).



Figure 2.8: Cunningham's reflexive cinema: The film's title card shattering the camera lens (*Friday the 13th* 0:05:40 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:05:20). BD still.

A SPATIALIZED HORROR: PARENTS, TEENS, AND MONSTERS

Friday the 13th's opening sequence also begins the film's play on spatialized horror, attacking the "safer," utopian-esque space of the summer camp from within and touching on the uncanny in the process. It also plays on fantasies and anxieties related to teenage separation from the family/mother and the destruction of the re-fused mother/child. In line with *Halloween* and the slasher film more generally, *Friday the 13th* constructs spaces that draw considerable attention to this separation.

Friday the 13th's action takes place in two general locations: a small American town and a summer camp, Camp Crystal Lake. Both of these spaces are absolutely fundamental for both the construction of horror and the marketing of the film. Additionally, the lake on which Camp Crystal Lake resides provides a third important

space, a fantastical one in which the rules of reality seem to not apply. All of these locations are extremely isolated. The town, much like Haddonfield, seems to be in the middle of a rural, depopulated area. Meanwhile, the summer camp and lake, both fantastical spaces, are isolated from the town. Meanwhile, Camp Crystal Lake's numerous cabins function as separate, rather unconnected spaces, each with their own characteristics and boundary-testing activities.

In *Friday the 13th*, the space of small-town America is certainly secondary to the space of the summer camp. However, the appearance of the summer camp as a setting for horror is certainly solidified in *Friday the 13th*. While *Halloween* makes the everyday spaces of the American white middle class a representative feature of the genre, *Friday the 13th* pushes this a bit further: while *Halloween* locates isolation within the small American town, *Friday the 13th* finds this isolation in a more obvious place, the already-isolated space of the summer camp.

Nowell convincingly argues that the setting of the summer camp is fundamentally tied to the development and marketing of *Friday the 13th*. As Nowell argues, "[in] the months leading up to the production of *Friday the 13th*, youth-oriented films set at summer camps had, relative to their conditions of distribution, generated strong ticket sales, first for independent distributors and then, crucially, for an MPAA-member" (125). In Nowell's investigation, the summer camp began to play a fundamental role with Joe Dante's *Piranha* (1978) and Chuck Vincent's *Summer Camp* (1979), two films that were designed to cash in on Jeannot Szwarc's *Jaws 2* (1978). However, in film production, the summer camp "craze" got into full swing with the huge success that Ivan Reitman found with *Meatballs* (1979) (125). As Nowell notes, "*Meatballs*, like its contemporary *Summer Camp*, and like *Gorp!* and *Caddyshack* — two more summer camp-set projects in production at the same time as *Friday the 13th* — [was] part of the larger boom in films about groups of pleasure-seeking middle-class youths that were being made primarily to capitalize on Universal's blockbuster hit *Animal House*" (125). As Nowell astutely points out, the "mildly transgressive behavior" and freedom from authority in these films come to be representative features of the slasher film (126). However, we would add that this freedom, which we are also invited to participate in vicariously, possesses an uncanny quality as it eventually turns into a violent oppression from the authority figures that were initially absent.

In our view, the space of Camp Crystal Lake functions as a sort of utopian space for the camp counselors that work there (at least until violence befalls them). The space of Camp Crystal Lake is certainly a sort of utopian space for the teenagers that populate the diegesis (at least until Mrs. Voorhees' violent monstrosity attacks them) as it is a space of leisure that is largely emptied of authority figures and completely emptied of parents. For the slasher film, teens function both as a market as well as an indicator of cultural strife. While teens and their place within the family will be further explored in the next chapter (as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is extremely focused on the suburban teen and white, middle class nuclear family), this chapter lays the groundwork for that examination of the assault of "teenage" spaces (spaces packed with fantasies of independence shared by the target audiences of the film) as well as

the absence/ineptitude of authority structures (another representative feature of the slasher film).

Extending *Halloween*'s deconstruction and destruction of "safer" spaces, *Friday the 13th* destroys a space previously thought of as safe. In *Halloween*, the small town of Haddonfield is a safe, white, middle-class space which is attacked from within. Similarly, in *Friday the 13th*, Camp Crystal Lake is a safe, white, middle-class space usually associated with pleasure. The camp itself is outside of small-town America. Like Haddonfield itself, it is surrounded by rural America. It is a safe, isolated space until it comes under siege. Furthermore, while *Friday the 13th* is not as clear about the origins of its evil, Mrs. Voorhees is, nonetheless, connected to the space of Camp Crystal Lake. She is not an outsider. The siege of safer middle class spaces continues from within. As in *Halloween*, these familiar, safer spaces turn into their opposites (marking an emergence of the uncanny).

Over the course of *Friday the 13th*, the already-isolated space of the summer camp itself undergoes a sort of circular (d)evolution as Cunningham opens the film at Camp Crystal Lake, a utopian, somewhat communal space then quickly turns the summer camp into a space of horror and violence. After the opening sequence, Camp Crystal Lake again returns to its utopian aspects (albeit a utopia that is haunted by the horror of the opening sequence). This utopian space is characterized by youthful pleasure pursuits (lounging around the lake, flirting and having sex, smoking marijuana, and drinking alcohol). It is also, notably, largely free of authority figures, or at least the image of authority figures. However, over the course of the film this

157

pleasure space, a space characterized by freedom from parental authority, is turned on its head and becomes a space of horror as the mothering authority that is Mrs. Voorhees violently asserts her power over (most of) the teens.



Figure 2.9: At the lake: Largely free from adult authority, the camp counselors relax (*Friday the 13th* 0:22:43 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:23:06). BD still.

We see Mrs. Voorhees' haunting presence/absence in the first scene of teenage lounging, recreation, and freedom. This scene occurs immediately after the chasing, stalking, and killing of a young counselor on her way to Camp Crystal Lake. We initially get an image of the counselors lounging on a dock in the lake (figure 2.9). They flirt with one another, enjoying being in a space free from authority. Cunningham cuts from this shot to a POV shot from across the lake. A hand comes into the frame and moves a branch out of the way (figure 2.10). Being a POV, the presence of the villain/stalker is signified through its absence (although we do see the villain's hand). We hear the sound of the branch creaking and leaves ruffling, the equivalent of the sound of the stalker's footfalls, a major representative feature of the slasher film. *Friday the 13th*'s eerie score layers into the soundtrack as does the film's signature sound effect. In this shot, while we are watching the teens, we are also reminded that we are being watched alongside them. While this touches on our urge to look, it also reminds us that this is a dangerous look that we do not possess or control. This also touches upon the uncanny, turning a space of authority-free abandon into a place of violently-asserted authority.



Figure 2.10: POV: Mrs. Voorhees stalks the camp counselors (*Friday the 13th* 0:22:51 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:23:13). BD still.

Cunningham cuts back to a series of medium close-ups of the teens talking, reminding us that we are primarily masochistically identified with their perspective (as stalked, as watched, etc.). One of the teens thinks she sees something moving in the woods and Cunningham cuts to an extreme long-shot of the opposite shore of the lake. The counselor effectively motivates this shot and it is given to us from roughly her perspective. Here we identify with the teens being watched even though we are also the ones doing the watching. Our perspective is essentially sadistic-masochistic, powerful and controlling yet powerless and controlled.

Cunningham then cuts back to the POV from the villain's perspective as the villain watches the teens and retreats slightly, partially hiding behind a tree (figure

2.11). We hear the footsteps of the villain and are essentially positioned alongside (or inside) the villain as she stalks the young counselors. Cunningham then cuts back to close-ups of the teens. After a short series of shots in which the counselors are asked to return to work and one of them pretends to drown, Cunningham returns to the POV one last time, letting us know that Mrs. Voorhees has watched this entire sequence unfold. The POV is again punctuated by the sounds of Mrs. Voorhees' footfalls, the film's score, and its signature sound effect. While no violence is committed against the teens in this sequence, a threat is presented to them. The threat is from the sadistically violent voyeur Mrs. Voorhees. We, the audience, participate in this sadistic violence to some extent, certainly voyeuristically indulging Mrs. Voorhees' perspective (but also voyeuristically watching the teens as they lounge around the lake, free from authority). However, in the end, the threat comes less from us than from the violently-asserted authority of Mrs. Voorhees.



Figure 2.11: POV: Mrs. Voorhees retreats slightly (*Friday the 13th* 0:23:39 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:23:58). BD still.

While *Friday the 13th* certainly assaults the idea of the parent as a source of protection, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* provides the most direct lampooning of the

American white middle class suburban family. While the (failing) institution of the family is center-stage in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, in *Friday the 13th* the representatives of the family have already failed and the family is essentially absent. In *Friday the 13th*, the family functions as, following Anzieu, a sort of secondary skin. In the diegetic world of *Friday the 13th*, this secondary skin is an unhealthy, failed, and absent one as the main parental figure is the villain, Mrs. Voorhees, herself an absent/failed parent who enacts the most ferocious superegoic violence upon the teenage counselors at Camp Crystal Lake, characters that function as stand-ins for herself and her own failed parenthood as well as stand-ins for those characters that she sees as responsible for the death of her son Jason.

Tony Williams, in *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in American Horror Film* also focuses his analysis on the family, examining a genre that he calls "family horror" (14). While we do not follow his arguments regarding this proposed subgenre of the "family horror film," we do agree with him that the family (or the absence of the family), is extremely important in the horror film, including the slasher film (17). For Williams, the family is the key institution through which the "family horror film" offers its critiques. As Williams notes, perhaps a bit broadly: "[films] from *Psycho* onward often present the monster as originating within the family, a dysfunctional and traumatic product of internal tension" (15). For Williams observes, "[the family] has a specific social and psychic function, policing desire, social relationships, and artistic expression" (15). This is certainly a useful observation, at least when applied

to the slasher film. However, where Williams falls short (along with many other critics, both academic and popular, including Siskel and Ebert) is specifically in regard to the slasher film. As Williams argues, "The very virulent nature of slasher films reveals an unconscious patriarchal hysteria trying to hold back contradictory tensions, especially those involving changing gender roles" (20). We believe that this tired take on the slasher film severely misses the mark and will explore that sort of response to the slasher film in more detail below.

Teenage protagonists and the parents of the teenage protagonists are really the primary representatives of authority and structure in these films. As Pat Gill writes in her discussion of "familial horror" and the slasher film (17):

In films following *Halloween*, suburban and small town teenagers are put in danger time and again, at home, at school, at camp, and on holiday. These films seem to mock white flight to gated communities, in particular the attempts of parents to shield their children from the dangerous influences represented by the city: widespread crime, easy access to drugs, unsupervised friendships. The danger is within, the films seem to say; the horror derives from the family and from the troubling ordeal of being a late-twentieth-century teenager. (16)

Gill's analysis of these films really focuses on the absence of "traditional" white middle class families from these films. Accordingly, for Gill, it is the "absent" family that is the most striking aspect of these films (17).

Gill's argument about what these films say about the "family" is extremely thought-provoking and also, in our view, extremely misguided. According to Gill, "[teen] slasher films both resolutely mock and yearn for the middleclass American dream, the promised comfort and contentment of a loving, supportive bourgeois family" (17). Gill seems to make an unnecessarily broad argument here (although her argument certainly does apply to some slasher films, particularly *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, as we will see in the next chapter). A seemingly obvious shortcoming to this argument may be found in *Friday the 13th*'s villain, a person who is or was, in fact, a parent. And while Mrs. Voorhees certainly "yearns" for "the promised comfort and contentment of a loving, supportive bourgeois family," her yearning is a horrifically violent and monstrous one. Her abject yearning is ultimately stopped by Alice who, acting quite independently from any parental structure, kills Mrs. Voorhees. Ultimately, in *Friday the 13th*, it is the family structure that assails, that murders.

The end of Gill's critique is that "[slasher] films covertly engage an odd nostalgic yearning for a traditional family and traditional family values" (20). For Gill, these films function as an "indictment of and longing for the bourgeois American family" (21). At the end of the day for Gill, "[these] films offer a sustained conservative critique of family life, mourning the middle class dream while mocking it" (29). While this is not how most scholars approach the family in the slasher film (and we should give Gill some credit for originality here), it ultimately seems that Gill may be painting with too wide of a brush here. We do not agree with her take on this matter. While we do argue that these films question the institution of the family we do not believe that the slasher film necessarily craves the institution of the white middleclass family.

Gill's analysis, in many ways, reflects some of the same concerns as Tipper Gore's book (to be examined in more detail below), focusing on divorce and "absent home life" as aggravating factors for antisocial teenager behavior. As Gill argues, the slasher film presents "a world emptied of the family as a resource for coping with growing up" (20). By and large, this seems to be true enough, although in *Friday the 13th* this absence is much less important than it is in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. As Gill writes:

The self-absorbed parents of these films, whether divorced or together, provide no useful knowledge, no understanding of their children's needs or fears, no viable models for negotiating the world. Even the most well-adjusted protagonists, the good girls and boys whose moral integrity marks them as special and valuable, feel alienated and different, dissatisfied and lonely. Homes in these films do not provide a haven from a world gone bad, or even a place of safe retreat. The boundaries of these homes are entirely permeable to evil. (19)

While we disagree with Gill's overbroad emphasis on the parental figure, particularly

as it appears in Friday the 13th, we do find her discussion of the space of the home (or,

in this case, the summer camp), to be helpful, as we will explore below.

Gill directly relates the roles of parents and teens to the monster in the slasher

film, arguing:

The monsters haunting the streets, dormitories, and dreams of the protagonists are less figures of patriarchal control and punishment than the ogres of childhood nightmares and the social hell of adolescence, which remain undiminished because no parent comes round to dispel them. If the monsters are the products of the parents, it is as the residue of their absence, indifference, and failure to understand. (23)

With this, particularly regarding *Friday the 13th*, we certainly disagree, instead favoring Cooper's extremely perceptive argument that "[in] slasher films the monster punishes people who, like teenagers who indulge in premarital sex and illegal drugs, defy the demands of 'traditional' normativity" (68). In this "[the] monster is no longer the disrupter of norms in the slasher film: it is the enforcer" (68). Cooper, however,

makes the wise observation that while the transgressing teens are punished, so is the monster. Furthermore, Cooper reminds us that "slasher films represent the enforcers of norms as monstrous" and "[while] murderous acts of enforcement may provide many of the films' sadistic and/or masochistic pleasures, the telos of these films, and arguably their greatest pleasure, is still the destruction of the monster" (even if this destruction is only temporary) (68). *Friday the 13th*, in fact, provides a fantastic example of this "pleasure" in the climax of the film in which Mrs. Voorhees confronts Alice, explains her motive, pursues Alice, and is then killed in a spectacular slow-motion sequence. *Friday the 13th*, a film so invested in special make-up effects, saves its most spectacular effect for last as Alice decapitates Mrs. Voorhees (and, although the "uncut" version of this sequence appears to be slightly longer and edited differently, the effect is certainly still very bloody in the R-rated cut of the film).

ON-SCREEN GRAPHIC VIOLENCE: SPECIAL MAKE-UP EFFECTS IN FRIDAY THE 13TH

As noted above, a major transition between *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* concerns how the films deal with violence. While *Halloween* certainly contains on-screen graphic violence, it is held to a minimum (particularly when compared to *Friday the 13th*, although, again, the violence that Cunningham's film contains has been largely overstated by critics). *Friday the 13th* celebrates its graphic violence and special make-up effects in ways that *Halloween* does not. *Halloween* is a much more vicious film in many ways and is not the brightly-colored funfest that *Friday the 13th* is. In fact, much of the fun of *Friday the 13th*, for both horror and non-horror

audiences alike, was derived from the special make-up effects work of Savini, fresh off of working on two of George A. Romero's films, *Martin* (1976) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) (a film that had originally been rated X and was eventually released unrated) (Nowell 129).

The sadistic-masochistic subjectivity generated in *Friday the 13th* is achieved primarily within our relationship to on-screen graphic violence. Sometimes this graphic violence is relayed through POV shots (primarily from the villain's perspective) while at other times it is relayed through third-person narrative shots. As noted above, *Friday the 13th* is certainly more graphically violent than *Halloween*. It is also, in many ways, more graphically violent than *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (at least as far as "realistic" special make-up effects go). *Friday the 13th*'s on-screen graphic violence, while still only a handful of brief shots sprinkled throughout the film, nevertheless tugs on the viewer's controlling, sadistic impulses, situates the viewer as a masochist, provokes what Studlar calls a "bisexual response" to the film and, by visually representing the breaking of the skin, taps into anxieties over annihilation (as discussed in the previous chapter). These anxieties are further emphasized by the uncertain/shifting subjectivities offered by the film.

Jack and Marcie's death sequences, free of any POV shots, examined in close detail below, provide excellent examples of the abject imagery that makes *Friday the* 13th so important to the slasher film. Through the effects work of Savini, this film also pushed special make-up effects to the forefront of the horror genre (where it would remain throughout the 1980s). This increased emphasis on special make-up effects

came to profoundly mark the slasher film (and this emphasis continues today in the socalled "torture porn" genre). As Kendrick notes, this emphasis on special effects, which found its expression on the pages of the magazine *Fangoria*, at once made the violence in these films more spectacular but also "less dangerous" as the violence can be understood as operating in the realm of fantasy rather than in the real world (Kendrick 164). Ultimately, the effect of this increased attention to special make-up effects (and *Fangoria*'s focus on Savini and other effects artists as "auteurs") had the effect of making the violence in the slasher film *less* abject, more safe, and more marketable (165, 164).

Absolutely essential to the development of on-screen graphic violence, and fundamental to the way that the MPAA and CARA looked at on-screen graphic violence, particularly in the horror film, was the rapidly increasing sophistication of special make-up effects. Perhaps the most key figure to the evolution of cinematic violence, both inside and outside of the horror genre, was an effects artist named Savini (129). Before doing the special make-up effects for *Friday the 13th*, Savini had worked on Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, producing special make-up effects that had caught the attention of CARA and earning the film a tentative X, although it was later released without an official CARA/MPAA rating (Nowell 129).

Along with Savini, another force that was absolutely essential to the evolution of on-screen graphic violence, particularly through special make-up effects, was the horror movie magazine *Fangoria*. *Fangoria* was also responsible for a healthy amount of the fanfare that accompanied (and continues to accompany) Savini's work.⁸ *Fangoria*, founded in 1979, is a magazine that, rather quickly, began to dedicate many of its pages to reprinting, discussing, and otherwise examining the most graphically violent elements of the horror film. It also featured interviews with the most prominent special make-up effects artists working in film. By concentrating on the special make-up effects of horror films, *Fangoria* contributed to the focus on the special make-up effects artist as a sort of auteur, particularly amplifying the career of effects artists like Savini (Nowell 129; Kendrick 155).

This emphasis on special make-up effects participates in what Noël Carroll calls the "fetishization of effects" (233). Discussing films of the late 1970s and early 1980s (particularly, but not exclusively, horror films), Carroll notes a "taste for the spectacular" as well as a "proclivity toward escalating the spectacle," observing that many horror films "supply obviously convenient pretexts for dazzling effects and feats of cinema" in this "drift toward spectacle" (233). Discussing the "increasingly ornate scenes of death and destruction" that Carroll finds in horror cinema, he notes that "*The Omen,* like many horror films in the present horror cycle, orchestrates a series of cinematically spectacular deaths" that amount to "grand guignols for the delectation of

⁸ No other special make-up effects artist in the 1970s and 1980s achieved the sort rarefied status among dedicated horror fans that Savini did in the 1980s. And this reputation has not left Savini, even though he works as an effects artist less and less. Savini remains an important figure in special make-up effects (as well as in the history of cinematic violence) and his presence in films, as recently as 2012, has offered a "wink" to more hardcore horror/effects audiences and instantly lends projects more credibility, particularly among dedicated horror genre fans (Kendrick 155). This sort of brief cameo appeared recently in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012), a film with a huge emphasis on the sort of bloody special make-up effects that Savini helped develop. In this cameo, Tarantino, by giving Savini the brief role of a vicious slave tracker (in a particularly vicious scene), in an instant (and for those educated genre fans with a knowledge of the history of special make-up effects), provides a reference to the whole history of Savini-esque on-screen graphic violence.

the audience" (233). Carroll goes on to specifically name *Halloween* and *Friday the* 13^{th} as engaging in this sort of filmmaking.

Ultimately, in Kendrick's view, this emphasis on effects, which one sees in the pages of *Fangoria* for instance, emphasized "the artificiality of gore" in order "to celebrate something socially subversive without being *too* subversive in the process" (163). In terms of the way that it treated its subject, "*Fangoria* took a lighthearted tone toward its depiction of grisly mayhem, constantly prodding its readers to see the humor in all the excess" (164). The end result being that, for *Fangoria* readers, on-screen violence in horror films was "[removed] from any association with 'genuine trauma' or anything 'disturbing'" (164). *Fangoria* then, according to Kendrick, "played a barely disguised conservative role in the 1980s by disavowing the ideological in favor of the mechanical" (168). Kendrick further elaborates, noting that "in celebrating the behind-the-scenes work that brought the gory images of the horror genre to life in the name of harmless 'fun,' *Fangoria* provided an alternate lens that stressed horror films' gory achievements as illusion" (168).

Kendrick, however, may be slightly missing the boat here. While promoting the idea of the make-up effects artist as an auteur, *Fangoria*, in making the graphic violence of horror films "fun," worked to produce a space, both through its pages and through viewings of the films that it focused on, that functions to allow spectators to approach the violence of slasher films spectacle rather than actual horror. However, it was not really *Fangoria* that aimed to make the violence of horror films "fun." Instead, this is precisely the way that the slasher film itself encourages viewers to approach its violence. That is, the slasher film encourages viewers to understand its violence not as actual representations of bodies in pain but as exercises in suspense and special effects. This way of consuming and working through on-screen graphic violence (particularly special make-up effects), while perhaps "conservative" (in Kendrick's words) in that it refuses to directly link on-screen violence with real world trauma, also refuses to play into the hands of a strange coalition of cultural conservatives that aims to not only curb but outright censor violent and other objectionable content from films, television shows, video games, and music.

Central to the culture war controversies of the 1980s (at least insofar as they were concerned with film) were ratings controversies, of which there were several in the 1980s (and a couple near the release of *Friday the 13th*). At the time, Richard D. Heffner was head of CARA, the organization responsible for movie ratings. Heffner presided over CARA's ratings board from 1974 to 1994 (Vaughn 15, 27). As Vaughn notes, "[unlike] his predecessors" at CARA, "Heffner was more interested in restraining violence than sex or profanity" (52). This move towards restricting graphic violence hit horror films particularly hard. According to Kendrick, "while CARA had been allowing greater and greater levels of graphic screen violence into R-rated films throughout the 1970s, in the 1980s it began to consciously tighten the restrictions on allowable screen gore, particularly in horror films" (145).

As noted earlier, when *Friday the 13th* went into production, there seemed to be a "period of relative calm" regarding cultural responses to on-screen violence (Nowell 130). According to Nowell, "[in] the absence of prominent ratings scandals,

170

and in the context of the favorable reception of some violent films, several filmmakers, including those behind *Cruising*, *Dressed to Kill* and, indeed, *Friday the 13th*, saw an opportunity to highlight the depiction of bloodshed" (130). These two films, while not horror films, demanded a lot of negative attention (and after the rating controversies around these films died down, the horror genre found itself on the receiving end of much of this negative attention) (130). So, while *Friday the 13th* went into production during a more accepting time as regards on-screen graphic violence, its release date was effectively sandwiched between these two films and the highly visible and highly vocal protests that they inspired, bringing a lot of attention to the violence in the slasher film. While its violence was not as offensive as the violence in *Cruising* or *Dressed to Kill*, *Friday the 13th* certainly aimed to sell graphic violence to its audience. In this way, one may reasonably argue that *Friday the 13th* actually contains more abjectly graphic violence than both *Halloween*, an earlier film, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, a film produced several years later.

As Nowell keenly points out, the textual origins of *Friday the 13th*'s graphically violent death scenes can be found in the "excessive and outlandish death scenes" of Italian giallo films, most notably in the works of Dario Argento and Mario Bava, as well as in the extravagant "set-piece killings" found in Richard Donner's *The Omen* and Don Taylor's *Damien: Omen II* (130). As Nowell notes, in "*The Omen* (1976) and *Damien: Omen II* (1978) characters died swiftly and painlessly but in a variety of dazzling and improbable ways" (130). The financial success (and tolerance of the violence by distributors as well as CARA) of these two films showed that this

sort of graphic violence could be tolerated in terms of ratings and could be profitable at the box office (131).

Friday the 13th is, in fact, an important stage in the evolution of on-screen violence as it adds more blood (and more special make-up effects generally), to the sorts of killings found in *The Omen* and its sequel. Importantly, the killings in *Friday the 13th*, while more bloody than the killings in *The Omen* films (or *Halloween* for that matter), do avoid the pure "body horror" that so-called "torture porn" films have been so vocally criticized for featuring.

In the end, despite ratings difficulties in the realm of the horror film (specifically the slasher film), *Friday the 13th* demanded the special make-up effect murder scene be a representative feature of the slasher film. Here *Friday the 13th* had a noticeable impact on the ways in which on-screen graphic violence was treated in film, particularly in the horror genre and the soon-to-explode slasher film subgenre. As Kendrick notes, after *Friday the 13th*'s inventive uses of special make-up effects, "graphic screen violence in the horror genre became a constantly escalating game of one-upmanship, with each film in the genre trying to top the previous one in terms of cleverly presented gruesomeness" (144-45). Kendrick goes on to argue that these films, usually constructed on shoe-string budgets by independent producers, saw on-screen graphic violence as the main way to attract audiences (145).

While the deaths in *Friday the 13th* are not exactly painless, they do largely avoid fixating on pain and suffering for too long. As we will discuss below, the avoidance of graphically violent suffering is likely directly due to the necessity of

172

earning no higher than an R rating as well as the desire to not disturb audiences and distributors (Nowell 131-32). The legacy of this graphic violence may still be observed in the horror genre, although the need for the R rating has gradually become less vital as technology has further penetrated the home (particularly through the internet and video-on-demand). Rather than focusing on the on-screen (and extremely graphic) destruction of the human body (as in, say, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* [2004] or Srđan Spasojević's *Srpski film* [*A Serbian Film*] [2010]), *Friday the 13th* features only extremely brief segments of graphic violence.⁹ In the end, there certainly is graphic violence in *Friday the 13th* but that violence is not nearly as graphic, fixated upon, or sadistically voyeuristic as detractors of the genre would have one believe.

THE MURDERS OF JACK AND MARCIE: TEENAGE REBELLION AND GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

In the murder sequences of Jack and Marcie, *Friday the 13th* does combine sex and death, although it does not do this in the same way or to the same extent as *Cruising* and *Dressed to Kill*. This sequence crosscuts two separate locations and activities: a sex scene involving Jack and Marcie (that eventually leads to their deaths) and a game of "Strip Monopoly" with Alice, Brenda, and Bill. However, *Friday the 13th*'s reputation for sadistically pairing sex and death is more about perception than the actual content of the film (and the same holds true for much of the

⁹ David Edelstein, in an extremely misguided article on contemporary horror, coins the unfortunate term "torture porn" to describe contemporary films that offer large amounts of special make-up effects. It is from Edelstein's article that we borrow the linking of Gibson's film to this group of (primarily horror) films (a group of films every bit as marginalized in popular and academic discourse as the slasher film).

slasher genre as, by and large, they aimed to secure R ratings and distribution deals). In the end, it seems that in *Friday the 13th*, with the exception of two scenes (one of which was analyzed above and the other will be analyzed below) there is actually very little pairing of graphic violence with sexuality. This may be partially explained by the MPAA's (through CARA) aversion to the on-screen combination of graphic violence with sex/nudity (Vaughn 59). It may also be explained through the sadistic-masochistic structures of viewing that the film sets up. As noted above, the film is markedly more masochistic in its content and viewing subjectivities. While certainly related to ratings, constructing the viewer as sadistic-masochistic (with an emphasis on the masochism of the viewer) remains key to the ways in which *Friday the 13th* (along with other slasher films) produces horror in the viewer.

The pairing of sex and other teenage transgressions (such as drinking and smoking marijuana) and death that one often finds in slasher films has led many critics to offer the rather hackneyed suggestion that slasher films are merely conservative morality plays. That reading of the slasher film, however, amounts to an extremely flimsy dismissal of the slasher film and the viewing pleasures it offers. These pleasures, this chapter argues, have much more to do with fantasies of escaping superegoic societal, parental, and patriarchal control than they do with teaching moral lessons. While punishment can be doled out to those who transgress, as noted above, slasher films like *Friday the 13th* foreground this too-harsh punishment and in the process question, lampoon, and ultimately destroy those who do the punishing (Cooper 68).

This scene, set at night, takes place during a storm. Setting aside the film's opening scene, this is the first nighttime scene in the film. It is preceded by a scene set during twilight. While the daytime shots feature peaceful weather, the sunset sequence features a brief montage of shots depicting rough weather rolling into Camp Crystal Lake, foreshadowing the violence that will descend on the summer camp (as does the dream that Marcie relays to Jack). Like *Halloween*, the majority of this film (and nearly all of its violence) takes place during the nighttime hours (52:50 of *Friday the 13th*'s 1:35:05 runtime, including credits, takes place at nighttime), although, unlike *Halloween*, at its close the film does return to daylight.

After the opening sequence, the first nighttime shot that Cunningham delivers is an interior of a cabin. This long shot shows Marcie and Jack enter the cabin. Shortly after they enter the room, the soundtrack is penetrated by a thunderclap as the storm increases in intensity outside. The image is also pierced by flashes of lightning, casting bright light over Jack and Marcie as they embrace. After they kiss for a moment, Marcie begins to undress and sits down on the lower level of a bunk bed as Jack lights a candle, sets it next to the bed, and then begins to undress. Marcie stretches out on the bed and Jack hovers over her. They kiss again and she pulls his shirt off.

Immediately following this shot, Cunningham gives us an exterior of the cabin in which Alice, Brenda, and Bill are hanging out. Rain pours down. The shadows/darkness and the sounds of heavy rain falling isolate these two cabins from one another (two spaces that are, geographically speaking, presumably very close to one another). Positioned outside of the cabin, this shot again foregrounds our voyeuristic status. However, immediately after this shot, we are granted access to the cabin and placed inside it with Alice, Brenda, and Bill. Inside, they lounge by a fireplace, the girls listening to Bill play the guitar. Brenda suggests that they play a modified version of Monopoly called Strip Monopoly. This game essentially turns an innocent game into something more "adult," and, in some ways, pushes the boundaries of acceptability, or at least acceptable teenage behavior (and this, along with the graphic violence that will shortly follow, is precisely the sort of thing that garners the attention of the "family values" morality police).

As noted above, this game of Strip Monopoly intercuts with a sex scene that involves Jack and Marcie. The sex scene, for its part, is pretty tame. It does, however, immediately link this later moment in the film with the film's opening sequence, in which a mixed-sex couple breaks away from the larger group. That scene, like this scene, ends in carnage (although this one ends with much more graphic violence and special make-up effects than the opening sequence). Both of these scenes, and the film more generally, draw a lot of attention to the voyeurism of the viewer and the monster.

In this scene, as in the opening scene, there is no particularly graphic nudity (although, in this scene but not in the opening scene, there are some glimpses of both male and female nudity in heavy shadows). The sex scene is also punctuated by a fair amount of moaning from Marcie. During this sex scene, there is a focus on visual representations of heterosexual female pleasure through lengthy close-ups although the female appears rather passive/to-be-pleased and the male functions as an incredible deliverer-of-pleasure.

Furthermore, the male body (in addition to the female body) is eroticized through soft lighting designed to mimic candlelight and framing and this sequence largely privileges eroticized images of the male's body over those of the female body. In the end, Marcie presents a slightly different image of female agency than does Brenda (as the instigator of transgression), but it is an image of female agency nonetheless (albeit one more dependent on male validation than the more independent agency that Brenda demonstrates).

The theatrical R-rated cut of the sequence is notably different from the "uncut"/unrated version of the film circulating on DVD and BD. For instance, the sex scene in the unrated cut contains slightly longer takes than the R-rated version of the same sequence. In reference to the sex scene, these differences are rather slight (although they do likely gesture to some of CARA's anxieties around sexual content, particularly when included in horror films). These differences between the theatrical cut and the home media cut become much more pronounced in the deaths of Jack and Marcie with, in the case of Jack's death, an entire graphically-violent four-second shot taken out of the R-rated cut and, in the case of Marcie's death, a graphically-violent shot notably shortened by a couple of seconds. These cuts most certainly gesture to ratings difficulties that *Friday the 13th* encountered in securing its R rating (as well as the ever-decreasing importance of CARA ratings for home media).



Figure 2.12: Pairing sex and death: Savini's special make-up effects and the abject corpse (*Friday the 13th* 0:39:55 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:40:14). BD still.

This scene does, as referenced above, explicitly pair sex with death, or at least sex with the threat of death. In intercutting Strip Monopoly with sex and then murder, this scene links seemingly harmless teenage fun to the threat of an extremely violent punishment. This pairing of sex and death happens first through images presented to the spectator and then through narrative (as Jack is murdered and then Marcie is murdered). The first explicit visual pairing of sex and death in this sequence comes through a wobbly handheld shot of Jack and Marcie having sex that cranes up from an image of them lying on the lower level of a bunk bed to an image of a corpse of one of their fellow counselors (on the upper level of the bunk bed), his eyes wide and fixed, his throat brutally slashed (figure 2.12). This wobbly handheld shot, while not a POV shot, reminds us of earlier POV shots from Mrs. Voorhees' perspective. Special make-up effects make this image particularly disturbing. This image of an abject corpse foreshadows the violence that will befall Jack and Marcie in short order (and other teenagers over the duration of the film). Cunningham immediately cuts back to a close-up of Marcie in the throes of sexual pleasure (figure 2.13). Here the film very explicitly pairs sex and death, essentially turns sex on its head. Here sex, rather than being a source of pleasure, is a source of death (or at least distraction that might result in one's death). Pleasure is on the verge of being turned into the threat of unpleasure. Here, pleasure approaches the uncanny. Meanwhile, the threat remains unperceived by the characters and instead works masochistically on the viewer of the film.



Figure 2.13: Pairing sex and death: A close-up of Marcie's face (*Friday the 13th* 0:39:57 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:40:15). BD still.

Cunningham then cuts back to the Strip Monopoly game. Here Cunningham cuts between two separate interior spaces that are both on the surface safe, somewhat isolated spaces. However, they are also spaces that have already been penetrated twice-over by a monster whose identity remains hidden from the audience (the first penetration occurring in the past, in the opening sequence, and the second penetration occurring in the present of the film).

The game has progressed a bit but the teens are still clothed. This cut provides an extremely layered teasing: we are sadistically teased with the potential and impending violence that will befall the teens as well as with the sexuality inherent in the game of Strip Monopoly (which never gets particularly explicit), and the teens tease one another. They are also drinking beer and smoking marijuana. Here Alice, Brenda, and Bill are playing with the transgression of boundaries (albeit in much more tame ways than the ways Jack and Marcie are).

Cunningham then cuts back to a low-lit image of Jack and Marcie, post-coital, lying on their bunk. A candle burns in the background. Jack is positioned behind Marcie, cupping her breast, her hand on his. This is actually a rather tender shot, albeit an extremely stereotypical one in terms of how it represents sexual romance. We hear rain falling hard and some thunder in the background, further isolating these two interior spaces through sound. Lighting lights up the scene several times. After a moment, Marcie turns around to kiss Jack and exposes her breast once more before she announces that she has to go to the bathroom, gets up, and leaves the cabin.

Cunningham cuts back to an exterior of the cabin in which Alice, Brenda, and Bill are playing strip monopoly then cuts back inside Alice, Brenda, and Bill's cabin. The teens are debating the importance of Baltic Avenue. In short order, Cunningham cuts back into Jack and Marcie's cabin. We get an overhead medium shot of Jack lying on the bunk, waiting for Marcie to return. He grabs a joint off of the ground and lights it with a match, again playing with transgression. A drop of blood drips onto Jack's brow from the upper bunk, punctuated by an exaggerated dull thud as it lands on his face. Jack touches his brow and then examines the blood on his fingers. An arm quickly juts out from under the bed and grabs Jack's forehead, pinning his head to the pillow it was resting on (figure 2.14). *Friday the 13th*'s score kicks on full blast, layering into and overpowering the sounds of the storm outside. This shot lasts approximately 29 seconds and taps into childhood anxieties over someone or something hiding under the bed. Here this childhood anxiety becomes a very real and very destructive threat.



Figure 2.14: A violent assault from an unseen threat (*Friday the 13th* 0:42:36 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:42:53). BD still.

Cunningham then cuts to a close-up of Jack's head from the side. The shot pans down to show Jack's neck as an arrow is forced through his neck from below. Blood spills from the wound and then spurts out of it (figure 2.15).¹⁰ This shot, heavily reliant on special make-up effects, lasts for approximately six seconds. The elastic quality of the skin before it breaks, certainly a novel special make-up effect

¹⁰ Kendrick specifically argues that in the eyes of CARA's chief, Heffner, the violence of this film and this shot in particular (even after being trimmed down), "still warranted an X rating" although "[Heffner] couldn't convince the majority of the [ratings] board" to assign *Friday the 13th* that rating (150). Kendrick goes on to note that "Heffner's regret over allowing *Friday the 13th* into the theatrical marketplace with an R rating was central to his renewed efforts to take a harder stand on screen violence" (150). *Friday the 13th* then "became a source of both controversy and criticism for Paramount" and "for CARA, it became a source of complaint for other filmmakers who wanted to include the same levels of graphic gore in their films and still have a market-friendly R rating" (150). One of those filmmakers with a legitimate gripe against CARA, as we will see in the next chapter, was Wes Craven.

from Savini, also reminds us of Anzieu and connects to the annihilation anxieties discussed in the previous chapter. In the R-rated theatrical cut of the film, Cunningham quickly cuts outside to an extremely low-lit shot of a scantily-clad Marcie, carrying a flashlight, rushing to the restroom/outhouse. The score drops away.



Figure 2.15: Potentially X-rated violence: An arrow through the neck (*Friday the 13th* 0:42:42 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:42:58). BD still.

In the "uncut"/unrated version of the film, Jack's death is much more graphic, presumably due to the lack of ratings constraints. Although it only features one additional shot, the additional shot cut lasts for approximately five seconds and is entirely focused on special make-up effects and the performance of horror on Jack's face (figure 2.16). Instead of immediately cutting outside after the image of the arrow penetrating Jack's neck, Cunningham instead cuts to a head-on medium-close-up of Jack's head and neck. For five seconds, Cunningham lingers on Jack's face. Blood pours from Jack's neck and spurts from his neck to his lips. His eyes widen and his mouth remains open as he gasps in horror and pain. This shot is, without a doubt, the

most graphically violent of this sequence and makes the death scene much more brutal and much more fixated on special make-up effects.

Another important change separates the R-rated from the unrated cut of the film in the next series of shots (in which Marcie is killed). While there is only a difference of a couple of seconds between the R-rated and unrated cuts of the film, the unrated cut of the film is notably more disconcerting than the R-rated cut of the film. This attests to the actual impact that the MPAA and CARA had in policing/limiting potentially objectionable violent content.



Figure 2.16: Jack and the ("uncut") performance of suffering and death (*Friday the 13th Uncut* 0:42:59). BD still.

This death is also notably different from Jack's death as it forces the audience to experience stalking, albeit sadistically-masochistically, before Marcie's death. Similar to the previous scene, we know that Marcie is in danger but she clearly does not comprehend this danger until it is far too late (as we have seen the feet of Mrs. Voorhees as she followed Marcie into the restroom in an extremely long and extremely voyeuristic tracking shot). After hearing a door creak open as she is using the restroom and mistakenly thinking it is Jack, Marcie exists the bathroom stall to investigate. We are briefly positioned outside of the cabin looking in at Marcie. Although we know that the danger is already upon Marcie, this shot gestures to our contradictory identifications: while we are at once positioned alongside the stalked Marcie we are also watching and stalking her. This shot also gestures to the masochistic elements of this viewing structure as we have given power in this cinematic contract: we are forced to watch, absolutely powerless. The frames within the frame of this shot (provided by a set of windowpanes) also reminds us that we are watching a film, further emphasizing our powerlessness (figure 2.17).



Figure 2.17: Frames within the frame: Voyeuristically watching Marcie (*Friday the 13th* 0:44:06 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:44:44). BD still.

Cunningham cuts back inside the cabin as Marcie attempts to wash her hands in medium long shot. This take, an extremely slow tracking shot, is also incredibly long, clocking in at approximately 69 seconds. She stares into a mirror and does an impression of Katharine Hepburn from *The Rainmaker* (1956), saying: "When I looked into that mirror, I knew I'd always be ugly. I said: 'Lizzie, you'll always be plain'." This playful, teenage reverie at once reminds us of Marcie's innocence and points to the status of the motion picture image as a peculiar sort of self-aware mirror. Marcie is startled out of her daydream by the sound of a door shutting. Marcie, in her own voice, asks: "Hello?" The camera slowly begins to track in to her. The eerie score layers into the sounds of the storm. This shot is much more voyeuristic than the shots of the sex scene as we are at once aligned with Marcie and aligned with the stalker, or at least aligned with the sadistic voyeurism of the stalker. We are, however, simultaneously and masochistically aligned with Marcie and we are about to be punished alongside her. While the camera tracks in, it is not specifically representative of Mrs. Voorhees' point-of-view. It does, however, remind us that we are voyeurs. Marcie seems to quickly dismiss the sound of the door shutting, reminding us that the space that she inhabits is one that she thinks of as safe. We are also reminded that this villain is far less sadistically voyeuristic than Michael Myers was. While Myers stalks, threatens, and eventually kills most of his victims (and we, as the audience, are along for the ride), Mrs. Voorhees perhaps briefly stalks her victims but ultimately dispatches with them much more quickly.

In an extremely long take, the camera tracks in as Marcie investigates why water is not coming out of the sink. She kneels down, fiddles with something under the sink, and the water begins to flow. She makes an exclamation of delight at this, impressed with her ingenuity. This also amounts to a sort of teasing on the part of the film: this bit of ingenuity perhaps references Clover's "final girl" as we are briefly teased with the possibility that Marcie will be able to outwit the monster. However, this scene is not quite halfway through the film so the promise of violence outweighs any hope we have that Marcie might escape Mrs. Voorhees' abject violence.

Marcie rinses her hands off under the running water, humming to herself. The tracking shot slowly progresses, eventually framing Marcie in a medium close-up. She seems carefree and is not reading the warning signs. However, we the audience are reading these signs. This tracking shot certainly points to someone watching her (although it is not a POV shot and, in fact, this sequence has no POV shots from the villain's perspective). Marcie's carefree playful nature is on display through much of this sequence. In this way, this sequence which threatens and then delivers destruction actually works against the free indirect subjectivity that we saw so much of in *Halloween*. Instead, there is a disjuncture between the character's subjectivity and the way that the sequence is shot. While Marcie is carefree and playful, the sequence is full of anxiety, threat, and violence.



Figure 2.18: Marcie playfully revealing the audience (*Friday the 13th* 0:46:56 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:46:36). BD still.

Marcie begins to pick up on the signs of threat when she hears a clanging sound somewhere in the cabin. After she hears this brief sound, she turns the squeaky faucet off. The camera comes to rest on her face in medium close-up. She asks: "Ned?" In response to her question, Cunningham layers in *Friday the 13th*'s signature sound effect. She says, "Hey, come on you guys," apparently convinced that everything that is occurring is part of a game of hide-and-seek, a childish teasing. However, she does begin to perform a bit of anxiety here as she briefly nibbles at her fingernails and tries to see the source of the clanging sound. Marcie goes to investigate the source of the sound, walking in front of the camera. On this movement, Cunningham finally cuts.



Figure 2.19: An unperceived threat (*Friday the 13th* 0:46:02 / *Friday the 13th Uncut* 0:46:42). BD still.

The camera now tracks behind Marcie as she walks through the cabin in another extremely long take (at approximately 34 seconds). In a medium shot, we voyeuristically follow behind Marcie as she makes her way through the extremely lowly-lit cabin. She opens a creaky door and turns on a light then turns around and throws a glance behind her, at us, the audience. This is a slight nod to our position as viewer then she continues to make her way through the cabin. The low, rumbling bass aspects of the score layer into the soundtrack. Marcie arrives at a curtain that presumably separates one of the showers from the main restroom and, thinking that her friends are hiding behind it, calls out "allee, allee, in free," essentially referencing our unseen position as viewers and beckoning us to come out. This also reminds us that life at Camp Crystal Lake is still a rather childish game for these teens. Camp Crystal Lake still possesses aspects of innocence, although all innocence will be quickly and violently destroyed. Marcie throws open one of the curtains but no one is hiding behind it and her posture lets us know that she is actually disappointed in not finding anyone. She walks to another curtain and pulls it open quickly. The sound of the curtain ruffling open is extremely loud. On this sound, Cunningham cuts from the medium shot from behind Marcie to a head-on medium close-up shot of Marcie. She stares directly at us, catching us in our voyeurism, again drawing attention to our status as voyeuristic audience (figure 2.18).



Figure 2.20: Abject terror, the zoom, and touches of 1970s exploitation cinema (*Friday the 13th* 0:46:08 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:46:49). BD still.

Marcie looks puzzled and, as the shadow of an axe raises above her head says to herself (and to us), that "must be [her] imagination" (figure 2.19). We, however,

seeing Jack's death in the previous sequence and seeing the shadow of the axe raised above her head, know that the threat is not imaginary for Marcie. It is, instead, very real. We know that she is in danger due to the violent actions of the previous sequence and the score. In this way, our perspective is much more omniscient than Marcie's perspective. It is, in a sense, sadistic as well as we know that she will be sacrificed for our viewing pleasure. However, we are not entirely sadistic as we experience suspense and some form of repulsion at what follows.



Figure 2.21: Special make-up effects and on-screen suffering (*Friday the 13th* 0:46:12 / *Friday the 13th* Uncut 0:46:52). BD still.

After saying that it "must be [her] imagination," Marcie pulls the curtain shut. Cunningham then cuts back to the shot from behind Marcie as she turns around. Almost immediately Marcie sees what we do not see: her soon-to-be killer. She also presumably sees the murder weapon that we will see in the next shot: an axe. At the sight of these things, Marcie, confronted with her impending death, emits a fearful gasping sound and an extremely loud strings score, reminiscent of *Psycho*'s score, pierces the soundtrack. We then see a close-up of the axe. A lengthy scream overlays the cut to the next shot: an odd zoom in on Marcie's face as she screams seems to reference the quick zooms of 1970s exploitation cinema (figure 2.20). After this Cunningham cuts back to the close-up of the axe and then to something (presumably the axe) colliding with the lamp that hangs above Marcie and her killer. The lamp flails violently from the impact and in some ways stands in for the violent impact that the axe makes with Marcie's face (an impact that we do not see, only hear). At this point the strings of *Friday the 13th*'s score are extremely loud and high-pitched.

The high-pitched strings score holds on one note as Cunningham cuts to a close-up of Marcie's face, bloodied, with the axe lodged in it (figure 2.21). While we did not see the actual impact of the axe with Marcie's face, we do see the aftermath of that impact and it is particularly bloody, without a doubt a showcase of Savini's special make-up effects artistry. It is also, however, rather cartoonish and not necessarily "realistic." Once the axe collides with Marcie's face, the R-rated version of the film gives us a two-second shot of her face, axe protruding from it, as she begins to slump down, dead, before cutting back to the hanging lamp as its violent swinging back-and-forth stops. The "uncut" version of the film, however, doubles the length of this shot (coming in at approximately four seconds) and fixes our gaze on a dead Marcie, axe protruding from her face, slumping down for an additional two seconds. In some ways, this longer cut draws more attention to the sadistic elements of our viewing (and this could be part of the reason that the cut is shortened in the R-rated version of the film). Cunningham cuts back to the other cabin where Alice, Brenda, and Bill are continuing their game of Strip Monopoly. The score falls away.

Here there is no hint of the horror that befell Jack and Marcie. On the contrary, this space is still carefree. The teens' game plays with transgression, but it is still play.

Home Entertainment, the Multiplex, and "Family Values"

While the slasher film emerged and peaked before the height of the culture wars in the mid-1980s, slasher films and their numerous sequels became key referents for culture warriors throughout the 1980s as these conservative warriors sought to mobilize elements of the political right and political left in opposition to the violence and sexual content of slasher films. In the 1980s, during the so-called "Reagan Revolution," technology was an important site of struggle. As home entertainment systems penetrated the American household after the introduction of Betamax and VHS in the 1970s, conservative culture warriors came to understand the American house as an ever-increasing site of struggle (Vaughn 80).

At the same time, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw the development of the multiplex. As Grainge et al. note, "[in] addition to video, the multiplex also emerged as a new site of exhibition within the period. Instead of inner-city cinemas like the picture palaces, these were located in shopping malls in North America and were therefore part of the everyday world of suburban families" (460). The multiplex, in the view of Grainge et al., "created a renaissance in cinemagoing as a form of family entertainment" (460). It also, however, brought new concerns to cultural crusaders.

Home video, like cinema, did not escape the culture wars of the 1980s. It was, in fact, an important site of struggle. Grainge et al., writing largely of Great Britain, notes that "video had largely become the focus of broader struggles over the family at a time when the right-wing government was opposed to the liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s and calling for a return to 'traditional family values'" (458). Similar struggles were happening in the United States (and Canada) at the same time. These struggles developed hand-in-hand with technological developments in the realm of home entertainment. In the late 1970s and early 1980s (and through the 1980s), the home, specifically the television and the VCR, became a site of cultural struggle.

Meanwhile, as the conservative religious right reached the peak of its political power (in some ways), MPAA-member producers and distributors of film were often at odds with particularly vocal portions of the public. This particularly vocal group interestingly brought together conservative pop culture voices with more academic (and, on the surface, more progressive) voices into an extremely short-lived and extremely conservative coalition opposed to, in part, what they viewed as sadistic violence and the degradation of women in popular culture.

As "color television improved and the number of sets burgeoned" in the 1970s, "[the] realism and visual qualities that color provided, something largely limited to movie theaters during the 1960s, became part of home entertainment" (Vaughn 76). Furthermore, "[as] networks loosened their standards and the quality of television pictures improved, cable and satellites greatly expanded what could be seen on television" (77). Meanwhile, technological developments, including innovations in special make-up effects, also ramped up the amount and realistic nature of violence that appeared on theater screens and on home televisions. According to Vaughn:

192

New technologies helped to alter the public's relationship to cinema during the 1970s and early 1980s. Innovations expanded production techniques, improved special effects, and helped to move horror, science fiction, and fantasy films into the mainstream of production. They made motion picture violence more realistic, gruesome, and visceral. These advances, in combination with cable, satellite television, and videotape, brought explicit entertainment directly into people's homes on an unprecedented scale. (118)

The "unprecedented scale" of this penetration of graphic material was quickly

understood by culture warriors as an invasion of the home. Horror films, along with

rock music, perceived by some critics as invaders of the home, became favorite targets

of the crusaders of cultural conservatism during the 1980s.

Meanwhile, in the realm of prerecorded home video sales and rentals, Vaughn

notes:

Video merchandisers liked to let it be known that the movies they sold or rented might have been R-rated when they played in the theaters but that they now had X-rated content. Eventually, many low-budget horror movies bypassed theaters in favor of straight-to-video distributions. During the 1980s . . . "blood epics, like sex films, shifted to video and the private home as the preferred site for consumption." (119)

Consequently, home video became a particularly worrisome medium for culture warriors. While the MPAA and CARA at least attempted to curb objectionable material by threatening producers with the X rating, home video gave producers the ability to include material that might not be exhibited in NATO theaters and actually allowed distributors to specifically market their films as containing this objectionable material.

The home entertainment revolution, bringing higher levels of more-realistic violence into the home, certainly caught the attention of culture warriors like Tipper

Gore. Gore, then wife of Senator Al Gore, co-founded the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) in May of 1985 and published the book *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society: What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Children from Sex and Violence in the Media* in 1987. In 1985, the PMRC (successfully) pressured the U.S. Senate to hold a hearing on objectionable content in music and (again successfully) pressured Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) to start using "Parental Advisory" labels on albums that contained "objectionable" content.¹¹ In short, this group (and the interests that it represented) had power. And while rock music remains the focus of this much of her book, slasher films do get some attention (as does the "media" more generally) (xi). Although Gore's book was published several years after the release of *Friday the 13th*, it nevertheless exemplifies several of the concerns of cultural conservatives in the 1980s.

In her introduction, Gore notes that her book "is a book about the kinds of violent and explicit messages our children are receiving through the media and what we as parents can do about it" (Gore xi). This seems to be mostly true as the book certainly contains elements of a guide to community activism and Gore closes her introduction noting her desire that her book "be a call to arms for American parents" (Gore xiii). As Gore puts it: "Just as it is imperative that we work intelligently to defuse the nuclear threat, so must we come to terms with the unfettered commercial exploitation of violence and violent messages throughout our culture" (30). For Gore,

¹¹ See *Record Labeling: Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records* from the United States' Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

the threat to "our culture" is a threat that comes from without, a threat of pollution. This is a pollution that threatens to break through the secondary skin of the family, the community, and the white middle-class suburb.

However, the book also reads as a rather explicit and somewhat salacious recounting of some of the more outrageous things Gore has found in her examination of the media. The front cover of the book warns of "Explicit Material" and the back cover of the book promises "shocking facts" for "[parents] concerned about the harmful effects of sex and violence in today's media." Certainly not one to downplay the tabloidesque aspects of her subject matter, the back cover sells the book as discussing "How some rock lyrics actually promote violence, drug abuse, promiscuity, satanism—and suicide," "How the home video rental boom is making images of graphic violence available to younger audiences," as well as "How early evening television—the time when most kids are watching—is the most violent hour of network programming."

For Gore, and for some more academically-oriented critics such as Andrea Dworkin, the key thing is the connection between on-screen violence and off-screen violence. In Gore's view, the entertainment industry is at fault for numerous societal ills, both real and perceived. According to Gore, "[the] spread of simulated violence should be evaluated against the backdrop of steadily increasing violence in real life" (30). Gore writes: "in virtually every medium, the communications industry offers increasingly explicit images of sex and violence to younger and younger children"

195

(xii). And, for Gore, these are directly related to "youth violence and sexual assaults" in the United States" (Gore 29).

Gore (and Dworkin) were not alone in their belief that representations of violence directly created violence in the real world. As Vaughn notes, the 1970s and 1980s saw a huge increase (in pop culture and in academia) in attention to screen violence, including academic media effects studies of screen violence (102-103). While some researchers argued that there was a causal link between screen violence and real world violence, these findings were contested (and remain contested to this day) (108). However, this did become the dominant way of understanding screen violence.

Not one to shy away from ringing alarm bells, Gore writes the following about the amount of violence broadcast on television:

The levels of violence on television have dramatically changed for the worse over the last five years. We now view movies on television replete with graphic, sickening violence. Remember the reports of people getting sick and fainting while watching *The Exorcist* in the movie house, back in 1974? Some television stations now show this movie in the early evening, when children could be watching. (39-40)

Here we see the second key thing for Gore's reading of contemporary society is the role of the parent as a protector against the degradation of the family and society, a discursive strategy that has been mocked by Jello Biafra (the lead singer of the Dead Kennedys, a punk rock group that was on the receiving end of some of Gore's most virulent persecutions) as nothing more than a "ruse" of "so-called 'concerned parents'" to limit creative expression. There is certainly some validity to Biafra's take as the very sorts of objections raised by Gore were at least partially rekindled in

conservative efforts to limit or eliminate NEA funding to artists in the late 1980s, the early 1990s, the mid-1990s, the late 1990s, and the 2000s, as well as in contemporary efforts to limit screen violence.

Home video certainly does not escape Gore's wide-ranging assault on media violence. Prerecorded home video is certainly a threat. As Gore writes: "VCR owners have access to an incredible variety of fine material. But on the same shelves are an increasing number of atrocious horror films, crammed with grisly, graphic violence, which viewers can select for home entertainment kicks" (46). Gore also expresses concerns over the "scenes of sexual violence" that these films contain, writing that these scenes "should earn them an X rating or restrict them to the under-the-counter porn trade" (47). However, to Gore's chagrin, "[these] kinds of tapes are bought and rented primarily by teens and are readily available without restrictions in neighborhood video stores" (47).

This begs Gore to ask: "How many parents are aware of the growing popularity among teens of slasher films?" Explaining that "[their] subjects are not much different from heavy metal themes, and they are often even more graphic, searing powerful visual images into the young brain" (46). According to Gore, "the appetite for explicit violence is growing" and home video is particularly disturbing due to its ability to bring "graphic, hideous blood, terror, and torture" into living rooms around the United States (47). In the end, it is not as if Gore's observations are totally baseless. This, however, does not make them any more useful for a serious discussion of media violence. VIOLENCE, RATINGS, AND OUTCRY

Despite the implication Gore might give, it was not as if violence in media was left fully unrestrained. As several high-profile ratings controversies made clear, the MPAA and CARA were specifically interested in regulating graphically violent and sexual content. This is most clearly demonstrated by the imperative that films exhibited in NATO theaters have no higher than an R rating (Sandler 48). Thus the X (and later the NC-17) rating came to function as a way to keep (particularly independent) films in line (as we will see in our discussion of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*).

While the producers of *Friday the 13th* likely did not develop their film specifically to stake out a position in the culture war, it certainly had an impact on culture war debates. Graphic violence and, to a lesser extent, sexual content, were the two elements from *Friday the 13th* (as well as slasher films more broadly) that culture warriors, critics, and academics focused their critiques upon. As Kendrick notes, "[critics] derided such films as 'dead teenager,' 'slash-and-chop,' 'teenie-kill,' or 'slice-'em-up' movies, thus effectively reducing everything about them to the moments of graphic violence in which the characters meet their end" (142). This way of speaking about slasher films (and about horror films more broadly) continues to this day, although largely without the culture war stakes of the 1980s.

The most visible way that violence and other "adult" content was policed was through the ratings system. As Vaughn notes, the ratings system, adopted in 1968, had a place, in a sense, for adult fare: the X rating (14). However, that rating rather quickly "became associated with hard-core pornography" and consequently "mainstream studios soon sought to avoid the X at all costs and began to require filmmakers to produce a final product that would receive a classification no worse than R" (67). However, while mainstream MPAA-member productions largely aimed to avoid the X rating, as Vaughn notes, "[this] did not mean that CARA stopped using the X" (69). Instead, the X came to be used as a threat, keeping potentially subversive material out of mainstream Hollywood productions. Vaughn elaborates: "[numerous] films were initially rated X on first screening" and, as referenced above, Heffner, the head of CARA "wanted to use the X more frequently, not just to indicate adult themes or explicit sex but also to indicate extreme violence" (69).

As Nowell appropriately points out, a concern over ratings governed the production of slasher films in the 1980s. He even goes so far as to list the necessity of the R rating as one of the "three principles which governed teen slasher film content" which he lists as "to evoke a combination of hits, to demonstrate marketability to female as well as male youth, and to avoid the X-rating" (33). According to Nowell, this need to avoid the X rating was smart business "[even] if an MPAA-member distribution contract was not forthcoming" (39). Kendrick further elaborates on this major economic concern, noting that "[because] the vast majority of newspapers and radio stations wouldn't accept advertising for films with an X rating and many theaters wouldn't book such films, producers were forced by economic concerns to ensure that they could get an R rating" (145).

Meanwhile, as Kendrick notes, "the threat of a film receiving an X rating for violence was very real and loomed large in the minds of producers as they set about the task of incorporating maximum bloodshed into their films without incurring a rating that would effectively exclude them from the theatrical marketplace" (146). Consequently, "[in] the horror genre, filmmakers were routinely required to snip a few seconds or more from graphically violent sequences before their films were given an R rating (in some cases, entire scenes had to be cut)" (147). This certainly appears to have been the case for *Friday the 13th*, which, although it was not the focus of a major ratings controversy, released an R rated version in theaters in the United States (and later on home video) and a slightly longer (and slightly differently edited) version in parts of Europe (although apparently not in Great Britain) and Japan. An "uncut" version of the film, presumably a version that would not have received an R rating in the United States in 1980, was eventually released in 2009 on Blu-ray and DVD in the United States.

As Kendrick notes, there is a tendency to view the violence in horror films as gratuitous (while it may not be viewed as gratuitous in a drama, comedy, or action film) (148). For Kendrick, this is directly related to what he calls "the disreputable nature" of the horror genre (148). The perceived "disreputability" of the horror genre separated it from much mainstream Hollywood fare (and continues to separate it to this day). In *The Naked Truth: Why Hollywood Doesn't Make X-rated Movies*, Sandler argues that a framework exists through which the American film industry (including the production, distribution, and exhibition of Hollywood product)

produces "responsible entertainment" that is viewable by all ages (although with parental supervision in the case of R-rated features) and avoids producing more "adult" fare (such as films with the X and later the NC-17 rating). In Sandler's extremely well-argued analysis of the emergence of the ratings system, the framework of "[responsible] entertainment required, above all, a collective adherence and commitment by the major distributors and exhibitors to completely abandon the use of the X/NC-17-rating product line" (44). Here Hollywood needed to appear "responsible" (122).

Sandler's key framework here is what he calls the "Incontestable R" (43). The "Incontestable R" involved "regulating all Hollywood films into R categories or lower" (44). According to Sandler, by employing the "Incontestable R," "the industry could ensure the suitability and respectability of Hollywood's products in the eyes of audiences" and thus avoid alienating certain segments of the population and, most importantly, to eluding government attention that might result in censorship (rather than the self-policing structure of the ratings system) (44). Ultimately, in Sandler's understanding this "practice of boundary maintenance" worked "to safeguard the industry's economic and political interests" (122). Only as a secondary concern did it protect the public (or, for that matter, free speech).

Indeed, at times in 1980s, the slasher film pushed at the boundaries of "responsible entertainment." They were not, however, the only films that pushed the boundaries of what the MPAA and CARA found acceptable. For Sandler, films that question the standards of "responsible entertainment" and fall into the X/NC-17 category (films that Sandler refers to as ratings "limit texts"), "lay bare the collusive and collective framework of responsible entertainment, one that requires industrywide allegiance to the Incontestable R" (64). For Sandler, "[the] Rating Board is just one component, albeit the most conspicuous, of a larger system of self-regulation that primarily benefits the economic and political interests of the MPAA signatories" (64). Sandler goes on to bluntly state that the re-cutting of films that are tentatively rated X/NC-17 is a "marketplace practice [that] is monopolistic rather than competitive, coercive rather than democratic, private rather than public" (64).

However, CARA's ratings practices (which, after all, did ultimately award an R rating to *Friday the 13th*), did not stop a strange alliance of cultural conservatives and "progressives" from developing in opposition to media sex and violence, particularly that content that was thought to be "misogynistic." Ultimately, however, this alliance proved to be an uneasy and extremely short-sighted one for progressives (today we can see a similar alliance, albeit involving different individuals, emerge from the rather-infrequent public outcries against media violence). This strange collusion of left-leaning and right-leaning forces marked one of the oddest moments of the culture wars. And in many ways *Friday the 13th* is a prime example of a culture war text, particularly one of those that raised the ire of both left- and right- leaning critics and protestors. In the end however, despite the high profile of some of the protests against *Friday the 13th* (and later slasher films), the outcry ultimately seemed to have little effect beyond pressing the MPAA, through CARA, to restrict, however temporarily, the most graphic displays of violence in horror cinema.

As gestured to above, ratings in the 1980s were most certainly impacted by public outcry. This outcry was aimed at the horror genre in particular (although it certainly did touch other genres). As dealt with by CARA, this public outcry often appeared to disadvantage independent film producers and give deference to products from large, MPAA-member movie studios. According to Kendrick, when independents sought ratings for their films, they "often found that they were the victims of an unspoken and long-criticized tendency of CARA to treat studio films and independent films differently" (149). In Kendrick's view, "[this] was especially true of CARA's treatment of horror films in the 1980s, as the studio-produced films were frequently allowed a surprising amount of latitude in their graphic content, whereas independently produced films were often required to make extensive cuts" (149).

It seems very likely that slasher films received negative press on behalf of them being considered less than "legitimate" entertainment as well as them being lumped in with much more graphically violent and sexually explicit films like William Friedkin's *Cruising* [1980] and Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* [1980] (Nowell 227). Both of these films could certainly be considered "limit texts" in the challenges that they presented to the ratings system (Sandler 73). In my view, it seems that the slasher film *itself* became a kind of scapegoat. It became a film type upon which cultural preconceptions, fears, and anxieties were projected (with little to no connection to the realities of the films that comprised the film type). This way, unfortunately, the result of protests from both the right and the left as well as the ways in which slasher films were discussed in the popular press (as violent anti-woman sex pictures). In fact, Friedkin's and De Palma's films named above can, with relative ease, be called violent anti-woman sex-pictures.

In popular and academic discourse, one of the most common attacks on the slasher film involved connecting them to pornography (and this practice continues to this day in many discussions of violent horror films, particularly those dubbed "torture porn"). As Kendrick notes, however, that this "equation of slasher films with pornography was often not extreme enough for the genre's critics" (142). Instead, for these critics, "[slasher] films weren't understood as just violent films; they were violence itself" (142). In this way, these critics certainly might be described by Linda Williams as "naive realists" (Williams 201).

As Vaughn notes, "[by] the late 1970s, not only did attacks on pornography come from evangelicals, social conservatives, and feminists but [also] an increasing number of scholars" (130). This "pornography" attack provided one particularly destructive juncture at which the culturally conservative right could synergistically link up with the some elements of the left, a union that Sullivan would later dub the "far-left-theocon alliance" with chilling accuracy. An interesting piece of textual evidence of this left-right synergism may be found in the "Meese Report." The year after the record labeling hearing mentioned above, the U.S. government released an even more prurient document named the *Final Report* of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. Nicknamed the "Meese Report," this document focused on the negative effects of pornography and effectively brought together personalities as seemingly diverse as evangelical leader Dr. James Dobson and antipornography

204

advocate Andrea Dworkin. Gore's book, the hearing on Record Labeling, and the Meese Report provide examples of the left synergistically merging with the right in a particularly destructive fashion for creative freedom. While these hearings and commissions took place years after the release of *Friday the 13th*, they were really culminations of public pressure that had been mounting throughout the 1980s and was in its nascent form when *Friday the 13th* was released. Thus much of the protest against slasher films came from relatively progressive "women's groups" as well as film critics resulting in what should have been an uneasy alliance between feminists and Christian conservatives.

Cooper further discusses this odd confluence of protest in response to the slasher film (and those that produced and appreciated the slasher film), fruitfully questioning and complicating the ways that the slasher film has been critiqued and attacked in the popular and academic press. As Cooper wisely observes, "[the] condemnation of horror's directors and viewers as sadistic voyeurs or simply as perverts . . . now defines the 'status quo''' (65). Cooper, writing about contemporary criticism of the horror film argues that "[a] new form of normative ideology superseded the old, and though it may still sometimes serve a necessary political purpose (patriarchy has never stopped being oppressive), it also serves the more insidious purpose of policing and punishing 'perverts' for their pleasures'' (65). We find Cooper's reexamination of the literature surrounding the slasher film to be of chief importance.

Ultimately, Cooper connects the role of the slasher villain to the role of the slasher critic, making the point that the villains here function as "enforcers of oppressive norms" and "[like] critics who attack horror films for sadistic voyeurism, they are in the business of punishing perverts" (68-69). In Cooper's reading, "[the] condemning critic does not join the horror audience to take part in the communal experience of terror and release: the critic joins the audience to label it, judging from a distance, assuming mastery over a horde of contemptible sadists" (69). Furthermore, "[the] ultimate power of the condemning critic is containment: the critic maintains the status quo by attacking the characters and careers of those who would challenge it, effectively locking them within a derogated status" (71). The popular television duo of Siskel and Ebert provide one extremely loud example of this sort of "containment," a containment that was certainly picked up in the popular press as well as in works like Gore's book.

SISKEL, EBERT, AND LEGACIES OF PROTEST

According to Peter M. Bracke's *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th*, Siskel's *Chicago Tribune* review of the film from May 8, 1980, spoiled the ending of the film and called Cunningham "one of the most despicable creatures ever to infest the movie business" (44). As Bracke notes, Siskel's review went on to urge those just as outraged as he was by *Friday the 13th* to write letters to both Paramount Pictures and Betsy Palmer to express their contempt and disgust for them and their film" (44). Furthermore, as Kendrick observes, Siskel went after CARA and the MPAA, "accusing it of giving the film an R rating rather than a deserved X rating because 'Paramount pays part of the salary of the MPAA people who determine the ratings, and this is clearly a case where a big studio gets a less-restrictive rating than is proper" (143). Meanwhile, in an episode of their television show *Sneak Previews* titled "Extreme Violence Directed at Women," that aired in 1980, Ebert argues that the R rating assigned to many slasher films itself does a disservice to the public, tricking viewers into thinking that the film "can't be that bad." With an understanding of how the ratings system works to restrict film content, it is difficult to read this as anything other than a cry for censorship (through the use of the X rating).

One particularly interesting aspect of Siskel and Ebert's criticisms of the slasher film was that it aimed, through the graphic destruction of (female) bodies, "to end the social and professional gains advanced by second-wave feminists" (Nowell 3). In the episode of *Sneak Previews* referenced above, Ebert argues that it is specifically "liberated women who choose to act on their own" that end up being killed for "making decisions" on their own. As Siskel puts it: "I'm convinced that it [this violence against women] has something to do with the growth of the women's movement in America in the last decade." He goes on to say that he "[thinks] that these films are some sort of primordial response, by some very sick people, of men saying 'Get back in your place, women'."

This way of speaking about the violence in slasher films did a lot to create a narrative about the slasher film and was picked up in both popular and academic

207

quarters, leading the charge against what they believed to be an atrocious social ill. As Nowell argues, the moment that Siskel and Ebert fixated on the slasher "was the moment at which the dominant perception of tales of blade-wielding killers stalking young people started to shift from light-hearted entertainment to dangerous social menace" (3).

According to Siskel, these "women in danger films" all boil down to "one image": "a woman screaming in abject terror." As evidence of this claim, Siskel and Ebert offer the opening sequence of *Friday the 13th*, analyzed above, with its slow-motion attack on a young female counselor. Another key element for Ebert's critique of the slasher film is the POV shot. As Ebert argues, when "we view the scene through the eyes of the killer," "it's almost as if the audience is being asked to identify with the attackers in these movies." This "really bothers" him.

For conservative reformers, progressive academics, as well as popular film critics, the slasher film itself became a sort of scapegoat or bogeyman. Or rather, *ideas about* the slasher film became a sort of bogeyman (and these ideas usually did not reflect the actual content of the films themselves). There was essentially a narrative built about slasher films that stuck to them and continues to stick to many contemporary horror films. Slasher films were primarily described as misogynistic depictions of violence against women and secondarily described as conservative takes on society advocating the violent rollback of social progress (including the feminist movement) (Nowell 227). However, these critics certainly miss the mark here, implying that the slasher film is packed full of sadistic, misogynistic violence. Here Siskel and Ebert deliberately choose to simplify the slasher film in order to focus only on female suffering and suggest that the slasher film forces the viewer to sadistically kill its female characters. This chapter, employing the framework of a sadistic-masochistic subjectivity, argues something quite different.

As Kendrick notes, "[despite] its high public profile, the Siskel and Ebert campaign against slasher films didn't have much of an economic effect, as *Friday the 13th* and its immediate sequels and imitators were significant box-office hits" (Kendrick 144). This tendency on the part of these critics to oppose the content that slasher films were thought to contain did not end with the decline of slasher films. The critical and cultural backlash that would follow slasher films throughout the 1980s continues to dog the horror genre to this day. For instance, although "torture porn" is a bit more marginalized as a genre than the slasher film, some examples for the genre (particularly those that are incredibly successful, such as *Saw* or *Hostel*, or those that are outrageous, such as *A Serbian Film*, do still attract negative attention from the press as well as from some governments).

It is important to note that the urge to restrict violent content that Siskel and Ebert demanded has not left us. For instance, in a recent *Variety* special edition, published in the wake of the Sandy Hook massacre, one finds an article written by Carrie Rickey titled "Brutalization of women is a constant in popular film." Rickey describes "a mind/body split" that she experiences "when a direct frames man-on-woman violence from the perpetrator's point-of-view" (50). Rickey certainly draws attention to the implications that restricting this sort of violence has for freedom of expression, as she writes: "[in] the moment a director makes me complicit with the assailant, I cover my eyes and try to square my belief in freedom of speech with my kneejerk response that at this very second I don't believe in freedom of images" (50).

Rickey's is an impassioned plea, but one that falls into the same old arguments from the 1980s. Rickey characterizes slasher films as follows: "Like other film genres, sexualized violence has its trends. In the late '70s and '80s there was the fem-jep slasher (as the woman-in-jeopardy films were dubbed), with franchises like 'Halloween' and 'Friday the 13th' featuring stalker-killers dispensing a kind of Biblical justice by murdering sexually active teenagers and sparing the virgins" (51). Unfortunately, this amounts to using the slasher film as a soft target and, in the process, engages in the same old simplification of this group of films that this dissertation aims to interrogate and destabilize.

The question for Rickey is, above all, one of subjectivity. This is also a key issue for us. According to Rickey, "[the] main difference between watching 'Psycho' and 'Hostel: Part II' is the same as that between natural sympathy for the victim and being coerced into alignment with the assailant because the film is shot from the brutalizer's perspective" (51). In a take that certainly references what Linda Williams calls the work of "naive realists" as well as the protests launched by Siskel and Ebert, Rickey writes: "I'm all for sex, pleasure and free speech. But when they're bound up with violence and misogyny, I push back" (50). However, as this chapter argues, and

as the next chapter will continue to argue, this "complicity" is not as cut-and-dry as it might first seem. Furthermore, this sort of protest, particularly as it weds the left to the culturally conservative right, certainly has the potential to limit free expression in frightening ways.

This certainly brings to mind Cooper's analysis of viewer identification and graphic violence. As Cooper argues:

Horror's encouragement of cross-gender identification belies the essentialist attitude toward gender-identification and the heterosexist approach to sexual object-choice that underpin theories like Mulvey's, theories that assume male viewers identify only with men and desire only women (and vice-versa). Since such essentialism and heterosexism actually support patriarchal assumptions about sex and gender, the critical attitude that condemns the afficionados of horror as sadists involves biases that, ironically, support the very system it is meant to undermine. (65)

Furthermore, according to Cooper, "[the] pervert-punishing norm established by horror's detractors causes a blindness to horror's potential merits tantamount to erasure, and in doing so it exercises an oppressive power similar to the power it ostensibly opposes" (65). While one should be careful not to overestimate the subversive potential of cross-gender/bisexual identification, one should not ignore it either (as many critics have).

Likewise, while it is easy to overestimate the role that these films play in pushing the envelope of acceptability and promoting free speech (with many horror directors speaking in grand terms about creative freedom), one should be careful to not underestimate these films' importance in this area as well. So while the violence of slasher films was certainly distanced from real world violence, the penchant for viewing horror violence as dangerous because it is not "realistic" enough plays directly into the hands of culturally conservative coalitions that seek to limit speech (among other things). And these culturally conservative coalitions are not only comprised of those on the political right. As the coalitions of the 1980s demonstrate, particularly those formed in response to violent and/or pornographic media, singleissue coalitions often united disparate individuals and groups from across the political spectrum against a common enemy with particularly disastrous visions of what creative freedom should look like.

Ultimately, our discussion here aims to point out, in a (somewhat) cautionary way, that many critics (both academic and popular), under the guise of offering progressive techniques of slasher film violence, tend to lapse into a sort of extremely culturally conservative paternalism. Even Vaughn, in his book *Freedom and Entertainment*, falls into this sort of paternalistic trap, casually describing the content of many slasher films as being focused on special make-up effects, "[combining] violence and sex, and [depicting] women as helpless prey" (101). There is something to be learned from looking at the films this way. However, there is also something to be learned from looking at the legacy of simplifying these films in this way. The legacy of that is certainly one of limiting freedom of expression in ways similar to the attempts to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) during the 1980s. While slasher films are rarely considered "high art," they were a small battleground in this larger "culture war" that sought to abolish and/or defund the NEA, and generally limit freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION: FROM SPACES OF PLEASURE TO SPACES OF HORROR

Through specific stylistic choices (such as the point-of-view shot) and specific mise-en-scène (such as the use of special make-up effects in death sequences), Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* opens up a space that gestures to the abject in a manner not dissimilar from that opened up in Carpenter's *Halloween*. Also similar to *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* separates out and then combines safe and unsafe spaces in a sort of spatial abjection. These safer spaces (spaces of pleasure) transform into uncanny spaces of horror through spatial abjection and combinations of sex and death. Importantly, *Friday the 13th* also paves the way for on-screen graphic violence in horror films through the 1980s, the resurgence of the slasher film after *Scream* (1996) in the 1990s, and up to the "torture porn" of the 2000s. Additionally, in its role as a culture war text, the reception of *Friday the 13th* previews the reception that violent horror films will receive throughout the decade and up to the present moment.

Contrary to what many cultural crusaders and detractors of the slasher film might have us believe, we do not see a linear trajectory of violence getting more and more graphic and more and more realistic in the horror film. Nor do we see a fixation on female victims. Instead, one of the major pleasures offered by the slasher film, a pleasure that is touched on in *Halloween* and fully solidified in *Friday the 13th*, is the subversive, masochistic polymorphous pleasure of cross-gender identification. While there are certainly sadistic elements to the looking that *Friday the 13th* engages, it ultimately presents itself as a more masochistic text than its detractors like to admit. Instead, *Friday the 13th* positions us as masochists while not ignoring our sadistic

213

impulses. The result is a sadistic-masochistic viewer that is notably more masochistic than *Halloween*'s viewer.

Ultimately, with the special make-up effects work of Savini, Friday the 13th plays on shocking images. However, these images, due to ratings constraints, are necessarily brief and are not the most central part of *Friday the 13th*'s horror. Instead, *Friday the 13th*'s play between the shock of the seen and the shock of the unseen comes to be a major representative feature of the slasher film. While Halloween essentially creates the slasher film as a suspense-based film rather than a graphic-violence-based film and while *Friday the 13th* certainly has more graphic violence than Halloween, it is, in the end still a suspense-based horror film. It is also a film that questions theories of film that privilege, even as they attempt to challenge, the institution of the sadistic male subjectivity, instead setting up a sadisticmasochistic subjectivity that plays with this "unconscious wish for symbiosis" and forces a transgressive, cross-gender identification (Studlar 189). These two major representative features of the slasher film are solidified here. Although many slasher films do get arguably more violent and do come to feature more nudity, this play between genders and between the seen and the not-seen continues to mark the slasher film (to a greater or lesser degree). The representative features of these films find themselves examined and reworked, via the dream/fantasy, in A Nightmare on Elm Street.

Works Cited

- Adams, Parveen. "Per Os(cillation)." *Camera Obscura* 6.2 (1988): 6-29. *Duke*. Web. 25 March 2013.
- Animal House. Dir. John Landis. 1978. Universal. Film.
- Anzieu, Didier. *The Skin Ego*. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Biafra, Jello. No More Cocoons. Alternative Tentacles, 1987. MP3.
- Bracke, Peter M. Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th. London: Titan, 2005. Print.
- Caddyshack. Dir. Harold Ramis. 1980. Orion. Film.
- Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Clover, Carol J. Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- Cooper, L. Andrew. "The Indulgence of Critique: Relocating the Sadistic Voyeur in Dario Argento's Opera." Quarterly Review of Film and Video 22.1 (2005): 63-72. Taylor & Francis. Web. 10 Apr. 2013.
- Cruising. Dir. William Friedkin. 1980. Warner, 2007. DVD.
- Damien: Omen II. Dir. Don Taylor. 1978. 20th Century Fox, 2006. DVD.
- Dawn of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. 1978. United. Film.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Trans. Jean McNeil. *Masochism*. New York: Zone, 1991. 9-138. Print.
- Django Unchained. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. 2012. Weinstein/Columbia. Film.

Dressed to Kill. Dir. Brian De Palma. 1980. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2001. DVD.

- Dworkin, Andrea. Pornography: Men Possessing Women. 1979. New York: Plume, 1989. Print.
- Edelstein, David. "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn." *New York Magazine* 26 Jan. 2006: n. pag. Web. 22 Aug. 2011.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works. 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.
- Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.
- Friday the 13th Part 2. Dir. Steve Miner. 1981. Paramount, 2009. BD.
- Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.
- Giles, Dennis. "Conditions of Pleasure in Horror Cinema." *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film. Revised Edition.* Eds. Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004. 36-49. Print.
- Gill, Pat. "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family." *Journal of Film and Video* 54.4 (2002): 16-30. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Gore, Tipper. *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*. 1987. New York: Bantam, 1988. Print.
- Gorp! Dir. Joseph Ruben. 1980. American Intl. Film.
- Grainge, Paul, Mark Jancovich, and Sharon Montieth. *Film Histories: An Introduction and Reader*. 2007. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012. Print.
- Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.
- Hostel. Dir. Eli Roth. 2005. Sony. Film.
- Hostel: Part II. Dir. Eli Roth. 2007. Sony. Film.
- Jaws 2. Dir. Jeannot Szwarc. 1978. Universal. Film.
- Kendrick, James. *Hollywood Bloodshed: Violence in 1980s American Cinema*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2009. PDF.

- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Martin. Dir. George A. Romero. 1976. Anchor Bay, 2000. DVD.
- Meatballs. Dir. Ivan Reitman. 1979. Paramount. Film.
- Modleski, Tania. *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*. 1988. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (1975): 6-18. *Oxford*. Web. 6 Nov. 2009.
- A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.
- Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle.* New York: Continuum, 2011. PDF.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry." *Movies and Methods*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 542-58. Print. Trans. of "Le cinéma de poésie." Trans. Marianne de Vettimo and Jacques Bontemps. *Cahiers du cinéma* 171 (1965): 35-44.
- Peeping Tom. Dir. Michael Powell. 1960. Criterion, 1999. DVD.
- Piranha. Dir. Joe Dante. 1978. New World. Film.
- Prom Night. Dir. Paul Lynch. 1980. Anchor Bay. VHS.
- Psycho. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. 1960. Universal, 2010. BD.
- The Rainmaker. Dir. Joseph Anthony. 1956. Paramount. Film.
- Rickey, Carrie. "Brutalization of Women Is a Constant in Popular Film." Special Report: Violence & Entertainment. Ed. Timothy M. Gray. Spec. issue of Variety 429.10 (2013): 49-51. Print.
- Sandler, Kevin S. *The Naked Truth: Why Hollywood Doesn't Make X-Rated Movies*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2007. PDF.
- Saw. Dir. James Wan. 2004. Lions Gate. Film.
- Scream. Dir. Wes Craven. 1996. Miramax Films. DVD.

- Siskel, Gene and Roger Ebert, perf. "Extreme Violence Directed at Women." *Sneak Previews.* WTTW, Chicago, 23 Oct. 1980. Television.
- *Snuff.* Dir. Michael Findlay, Roberta Findlay, and Horacio Fredriksson. 1976. Blue Underground, 2003. DVD.
- Srpski film [A Serbian Film]. Dir. Srđan Spasojević. 2010. Invincible, 2012. DVD.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. Print.
- Sullivan, Andrew. "The Far-Left Theocon Alliance." *The Dish.* 18 Apr. 2005. Web. 16. Apr. 2013.
- Summer Camp. Dir. Chuck Vincent. 1979. Seymour Borde. Film.
- Terror Train. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. 1980. 20th Century Fox, 2004. DVD.
- The Omen. Dir. Richard Donner. 1976. 20th Century Fox, 2008. BD.
- The Passion of the Christ. Dir. Mel Gibson. 2004. Icon/Newmarket. Film.
- The Shining. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1980. Warner, 2007. BD.
- United States. Dept. of Justice. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography: Final Report. Washington: GPO, 1986. Print.
- ---. Senate. Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. *Record Labeling: Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records.* 99th Cong., 1st sess. Washington: GPO, 1985. Print.
- Vaughn, Stephen. Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."* Berkeley: U of California P, 1989. Print.
- Williams, Tony. *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film.* Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1996. PDF.

CHAPTER THREE.

"ONE, TWO, FREDDY'S COMING FOR YOU": THE DREAM-WORK AND RECURSIVITY IN WES CRAVEN'S *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* (1984)

INTRODUCTION

In November of 1984, New Line Cinema, an independent film distributor, released Wes Craven's A Nightmare on Elm Street. A Nightmare on Elm Street tells the story of a group of suburban high school students (Nancy, Tina, Rod, and Glen) who are terrorized in their dreams (as well as in the diegetic reality of the film) by a villain named Freddy Krueger. Freddy, an accused child killer, was murdered by the parents of these teens, and returns here to seek revenge on the children of those that killed him. The terror that he inflicts on these teens constantly throws previously stable boundaries into question (boundaries related to the body as well as boundaries related to reality and fantasy). Over the course of the film he terrorizes and kills Tina, Rod, and Glen, although, at the end of the film Freddy is vanquished and these characters re-appear. However, in the final moments of the film, the vanquishing of Freddy itself proves to be illusory as he returns, thus throwing the entire structure of the filmic diegesis into question. Ultimately, in A Nightmare on Elm Street horror is produced through a space in which reality and dream meet, blend, and lose distinctiveness. This is a space that allows for re-activation of the repressed aggressions that animate the suburb.

219

Arriving several years after the peak of the slasher film, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* offers a reworking and interrogation of the major representative features of the slasher film. Our reading of this film will keep this in mind, employing, as it does Cohen's psychoanalytic-semiotic method in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the ways in which Craven's film situates itself in relation to other slasher films (as well as to the genre of the horror film and the apparatus of the cinema more generally). Following Cohen, we aim to excavate the "recursive images" that both help construct Craven's film and allow it to speak to both the spectator and to the history of cinema (Cohen 151). Here unraveling the "multiple allusions" to elements of *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, as well as a host of other real and imagined characteristics of the slasher film, offers us a greater understanding of the ways in which *A Nightmare on Elm Street* speaks to, reflects upon, and (re)constructs the slasher film (151).

Employing dream interpretation as a framework (a fitting one given the centrality of the dream to Craven's film), it is possible to begin to unravel the meanings that are condensed and displaced through Craven's cinematic approximation of the dream-work. This chapter therefore approaches this task through a dissection of the dream-work processes of condensation, displacement, symbolism, and repression, as they operate within *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Craven, in using the dream as a key feature of his film, uses the recursivity of images within his film to draw attention to the ways in which condensation and displacement (in the dream and in the cinema), work to distort and/or repress aggression, making it (in some ways) more palatable to the characters and the dreamer/spectator.

Through the monstrous figure of Freddy Krueger, Craven's film refuses to take the representative features of the slasher film at face value, instead offering a series of reflections on the slasher villain. Here *A Nightmare on Elm Street* offers Freddy as a fantasized embodiment of aggression, a scapegoat that is violently removed from society in order to preserve society. However, his violent removal from society (and his violent return) point in a profound way to the essential (self)aggression that underlies and animates the fantasies and realities of the white middle-class suburb.

Ultimately, in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Nancy struggles with Freddy in order to exert some power over the structure of the dream (and by extension her reality). This is similar, in some ways to how the sadistic-masochistic viewer of the slasher film might feel the urge to exert some power over the projected image. Nancy's struggle with Freddy essentially functions to make a statement about the sadistic-masochistic viewing subjectivities constructed through the slasher film as the experience of viewing these films is, in a sense, a struggle to assert some power over the images and how they are received (we simultaneously want to warn characters, punish them, protect them, etc.). Here, the film essentially untangles the ways in which the slasher film taps into the sadism, masochism, aggression, and irrationality of the psyche. However, we are ultimately powerless to control these images, just as, in the final sequence of the film, Nancy is shown to be powerless to control Freddy, a monster that comes from within in a more profound way than do Michael Myers and Mrs. Voorhees.

Looking back on the development of the slasher film and its key representative features, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* offers a meditation on the key features of the slasher film, including the production of fear, the appearance of a particular type of monster (replete with a mask of burns in this film), stalking, sharp objects as instruments of murder, teenage protagonists, the use of familiar white middle-class locations as spaces of horror, the abject destruction of boundaries and the uncanny assault on spaces thought of as "safe" (or at least "safer"), as well as irrationality. However, through *A Nightmare on Elm Street*'s use of the fantasy/dream as a way into the history of the slasher film, these representative features of the slasher are doubled, multiplied, and amplified to exponential lengths. Furthermore, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* interrogates the apparatus of cinema and its impact on the slasher film, for while we can safely say that *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* are, above all else, films about looking through sadistic-masochist eyes, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is more fittingly a film about looking at films about looking in an aggressive, sadistic-masochistic way.

THE DREAM-WORK: CONDENSATION, DISPLACEMENT, SYMBOLISM, AND REPRESSION

The key aspects of the dream-work that we see in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* are "condensation" and "displacement" (Freud, *SE IV* 279, 305). As Freud bluntly puts it in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "[dream-displacement] and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams" (308). Unraveling the work of condensation and displacement is absolutely key to the task of dream interpretation. As Freud notes, in

the dream, "what is clearly the essence of the dream-thoughts need not be represented in the dream at all" (305). In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Craven draws attention to the workings of condensation and displacement most directly through the use of recursive images (of objects and locations). These images appear and re-appear, often in different forms, over the course of the film. The affects dealt with in dreams, often associated with objects, are condensed with and displaced onto other objects.

For instance, throughout the film, the locations of the suburban home, the suburban street, and the high school appear and reappear in different forms and with different affects attached to them. These familiar middle-class locations, through the dream-work, also come to appear unfamiliar resulting in a feeling of uncanniness. There are three major sets of recursive images within *A Nightmare on Elm Street* that we will discuss below: those connected with Freddy Krueger (a striped sweater, a hat, a glove with knives affixed to it), those connected to literal secondary skins (cloth, clothing, body bags, etc.), and those connected to religion (crucifixes and christic poses). Before we analyze these recursives, we will first define "condensation" and "displacement" and then discuss how Craven employs these in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Following this we will turn to Anzieu and Federn in order to highlight the roles that falling asleep and waking up as well as the body play in the film.

Regarding condensation, as Freud notes, when we examine dreams, we see that "only a small minority of all the dream-thoughts revealed are represented in the dream by one of their ideational elements" (*SE IV* 281). The end: "condensation is brought about by *omission*: that is . . . the dream is not a faithful translation or a point-for-

point projection of the dream-thoughts," it is instead "a highly incomplete and fragmentary version of them [the dream-thoughts]" (281). Freud does not stop here, however. Instead, he looks to examine "the conditions which determine" the "few elements from the dream-thoughts [that] find their way into the dream-content" (281). As Freud argues: "a dream is constructed . . . by the whole mass of dream-thoughts being submitted to a sort of manipulative process in which those elements which have the most numerous and strongest supports acquire the right of entry into the dream-content" (281). In the end, for Freud: "the elements of the dream are constructed out of the whole mass of dream-thoughts and each one of those elements is shown to have been determined many times over in relation to the dream-thoughts" (284).

In condensation, one "[sees] that the elements which stand out as the principal components of the manifest content of the dream are far from playing the same part in the dream-thoughts" (*SE IV* 305). As Freud concisely put it later: condensation refers to "the fact that the manifest dream has a smaller content than the latent one, and is thus an abbreviated translation of it" (*SE XV* 171). Freud continues: "[condensation] is brought about (1) by the total omission of certain latent elements, (2) by only a fragment of some complexes in the latent dream passing over into the manifest one and (3) by latent elements which have something in common being combined and fused into a single unity in the manifest dream" (171). Condensation essentially concerns which elements are chosen to appear in dreams and that "preference is given to elements that occur several times over in the dream-thoughts" (*SE IV* 295).

The second major part of the dream-work is displacement. As Freud notes, displacement operates in two ways: when "a latent element is replaced not by a component part of itself but by something more remote" ("allusion") as well as when "the psychical accent is shifted from an important element on to another which is unimportant, so that the dream appears differently centred and strange" (*SE XV* 174). As in his discussion of condensation, Freud goes to lengths to note that what appears in dreams, both through condensation and displacement, is impacted by both "multiple determination and inherent psychical value," or "psychical intensity" of "different elements of the dream-thoughts" (*SE IV* 306). Through the work of displacement, Freud observes "the dream-content no longer resembles the core of the dream-thoughts and that the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious" (308).

We also see "symbolism" at work in the dreams in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. According to Freud, symbolism in dreams allows "for the disguised representation of ... latent thoughts" (*SE V* 352). Freud points out that "many of the symbols" that appear and reappear in dreams "are habitually or almost habitually employed to express the same thing" (352). As Freud notes of some of the sorts of symbolism that we will examine later (particularly in relation to the multiple occurrences of the crucifix): "this symbolism is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation . . . and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom, and current jokes, to a more complete extent than in dreams" (351). While symbols such as the crucifix may appear "to a more complete extent" in the "popular myths" that Freud writes, we certainly see these symbols appear in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in ways that explicitly play with the cultural connections to them, including the impositions and internalizations of various prohibitions and repressions through organized religion.

This brings us to one extremely important aspect of the dream: that the dream acts as a "wish-fulfilment" (*SE XV* 213). In his later work *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud addresses some of the seeming difficulties that "anxiety-dreams" present to the theory that dreams function as wish-fulfilments (and "anxiety-dreams" certainly figure, at least partially, as "nightmares" in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*) (214). As Freud argues, "in distorted dreams the wish-fulfilment cannot be obvious but must be looked for . . . it cannot be pointed out until the dream has been interpreted" (214). As Freud emphatically states regarding dreams: "their motive force is in every instance a wish seeking fulfilment" (*SE V* 533). However, "the fact of their not being recognizable as wishes and their many peculiarities and absurdities are due to the influence of the psychical censorship to which they have been subjected during the process of their formation" (533).

As Freud points out, "the wishes in these distorted dreams are forbidden ones—rejected by the censorship—whose existence was precisely the cause of the dream's distortion, the reason for the intervention of the dream-censorship" (*SE XV* 214). Freud does, however note that it is possible that the "distressing affect" of some dreams can be the result of a "dream-work [that] has not completely succeeded in creating a wish-fulfilment; so that a portion of the distressing affect in the dreamthoughts has been left over in the manifest dream" (215). Another possible explanation for the displeasure that some dreams brings is that the wishes that are fulfilled are "evil, repudiated wishes" that, in their fulfilment, do not bring pleasure to the dreamer (218). In this, it is as if "the dreamer [is] fighting against his own wishes" (218). Here we have repression at work.

On this note, Freud observes one other possible explanation for how unpleasant dreams actually function as wish-fulfilling dreams. This is the "possibility that the fulfilment of a wish may bring about something very far from pleasant namely, a punishment" (*SE XV* 219). Here the unpleasant dream taps into one of the numerous and "very powerful" "punitive trends [that exist] in the mental life of human beings" (219). Here the dream can (simultaneously) function as a "wish-fulfilment," an "anxiety-fulfilment," and a "punishment-fulfilment" (219). In Freud's view, "anxiety is the direct opposite of the wish" although he adds that "opposites are especially close to one another in associations and . . . in the unconscious they coalesce" (219). Meanwhile, for Freud, "punishment is also the fulfilment of a wish," albeit a wish belonging to the censorship and perhaps originating in superegoic prohibitions (219).

This presents us with the following question: in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, what sorts of wishes are being distorted through the dream-work and for whom? There are at least two interrelated layers of answers to this question that we will explore below. For now, let us point to the parallels between the cinema and the dream (and watching cinema and dreaming), further explored through a discussion of

the work of Metz below. Ultimately, it seems that what is being distorted and repressed in the dreams of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (and, by extension, in the cinema, particularly the slasher film), are partially (self)aggressive, sadistic impulses. Through the cinema, however, these aggressive, sadistic impulses appear in the form of their opposite, namely masochistic impulses (as discussed, in detail, through the work of Studlar in the previous chapter).

Directly related to displacement (albeit displacement in a more general sense than it is used by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*), and vital for this chapter's discussion of the fearful dissolution of subject and object and the blurring between fantasy and reality in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Metz notes the following of Freud's later work on displacement and its connection to phobia:

More than once, in the texts written after *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud characterises the general mechanism presiding over the formation of the phobic substitute as a displacement of an "internal danger" towards an "external danger." Or again, he considers "displacement onto something ... indifferent" as one of the striking features of obsessional neurosis. (267)

So, the phobia comes to stand-in for the repressed aggression that is oriented toward the self. In its engagement with condensation and displacement, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* uncovers a sort of essential aggression that is oriented toward the self and then displaced onto monstrous characters in order to disavow and repress the aggression.

There are, however, other impulses being distorted and repressed through the dream, namely the masochistic wish for fusion with the mother, which actually appears as a sort of sadism in the slasher film. In the end, the slasher film (and the cinema) turns us from sadists into masochists (although the urge to sadism never truly

leaves us). The result is a fractured, double, contradictory sadistic-masochistic subjectivity that explores our most repressed wishes.

While we argue, following Freud, that the dreams in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* all express some sort of conscious or unconscious wish, over the course of the film we witness an evolution regarding the intelligibility of these often repressed wishes. The film's dreams essentially start out as extremely absurd, incoherent, and irrational but end up with much more coherence (*SE V* 444). Tina's dream that opens the film and occurs during the opening credit sequence (analyzed below) is a prime example of the most irrational, absurd type of dreams that we see in Craven's film. For these absurd dreams, the manifest content appears irrational, at times unintelligible, making the interpretation of these dreams difficult. Interestingly, this sort of dream most intrigued Freud. As Freud put it: "Dreams . . . are often most profound when they seem most crazy" (444). Freud essentially argued that while some dreams may seem absurd, their "dream-thoughts are never absurd" (444). Instead, they must be unraveled through the process of dream analysis.

The second sort of dream in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is relatively more coherent. Here we see relatively intelligible manifest content although the latent content of the dream still requires interpretation. The second set of dreams in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Nancy's dreams that occur before she finds out who Freddy Krueger is) fit this mold (*SE IV* 277-78). For these dreams, much of the manifest content is (relatively) clear, but the latent content of the dream needs interpretation.

229

The third, most coherent type of dream, perhaps occurs once Nancy understands who Freddy Krueger is and how he is attacking her through her dream. However, as we argue, even these seemingly obvious dreams still repress unacceptable aggressions and are not nearly as obvious as they might appear. For Freud, such "easy" interpretation of these sorts of rather obvious dreams, in which the manifest content seems intelligible and can easily be connected to the patient's psyche, is actually rather rare itself because "the dreamer fails as a rule to produce the associations which would in other cases have led us to understand it, or else his associations become obscure and insufficient so that we cannot solve our problem with their help" (*SE IV* 241). Furthermore, as we will see below, in the last moment of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the seeming transition to this more obvious form of connection between the manifest and latent content of the dream is thrown into complete question as the film's open ending doubles and multiplies the dreams that we have witnessed over the course of the film.

FALLING ASLEEP, WAKING UP, AND "EGO FEELINGS"

Freddy Krueger, invading the dreams of his victims and enacting both real and imagined violence upon their bodies, plays on the terrain of what Paul Federn calls the "bodily ego" and its accompanying "ego feelings" (Anzieu 88; Federn 25, 27). For Anzieu, a key aspect of Federn's theory is his attention to "the transitions between waking and sleeping, between sleeping and waking and, more generally, between different levels of vigilance in the Ego" (Anzieu 88). Following Federn, Anzieu's theory emphasizes the centrality of the body to psychological processes (Anzieu 90).

The physical consequences of the dreams/fantasies in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* link up interestingly with the observations regarding the nightmare, aggression, vocalization, and psychophysiological parallelism made by Charles Fisher, Joseph Byrne, Adele Edwards, and Edwin Kahn in "A Psychophysiological Study of Nightmares" (764). Using Fisher et al.'s criteria, one may observe that the fantasies/nightmares in these films do not share all of the qualities of the Stage IV non-REM nightmare (the "night terror") because they cause marked "anxiety" for their dreamers upon waking and are remembered (763, 760). In this way, the fantasies/dreams in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* are more akin to the "anxiety dream" (or REM nightmare) than the Stage IV nightmare, both of which employ condensation and displacement as they work through the dream's latent content (773).

Aside from anxiety upon waking and memory of the fantasy/nightmare, the dreams in these films are actually strikingly similar to the Stage IV nightmare as they are connected with ego regression as well as strong physiological responses (manifested in the physical movement of the dreaming/fantasizing character) (770). Additionally, the dreams of characters in these films contain "intense high vocalization" associated primarily with the Stage IV nightmare (771). In contrast to the Stage IV nightmare, "[it] appears that the REM dream has a mechanism for tempering and modulating anxiety, for desomatizing the physiological response to it, that is, abolishing or diminishing the physiological concomitants" (770). Meanwhile,

the physical wounds that characters carry over from the dreams in this film, signify not only a breach of the self and a breach of the barrier between fantasy/reality, and also appear as representational enactments of what Fisher et al. call "psychophysiological parallelism" (a rather uncommon parallel between manifest dream content and physical experience) (772).

When one quickly falls into a dreamless sleep, according to Federn, "the intensity of all ego feeling is almost at once reduced to zero" (27). Federn uses this occasion to distinguish the "bodily ego" (or "bodily ego feeling") from "mental ego feeling" and "superego feeling" (28). According to Federn, "ego feeling" "is the sensation, constantly present, of one's own person—the ego's perception of itself" (60). It "is the totality of feeling which one has of one's own living person," consisting of both psychological and a physical aspects (62). When normally waking, the bodily and mental ego wake at the same time (28). As Federn points out, when one wakes up, "it is exceptional for the ego feeling to be continuous with that in the dream" (74). Furthermore, when normally waking, "[the] ego . . . immediately regains its security as to its temporal continuity with its own past and its own future" (74). However, A Nightmare on Elm Street constantly disrupts this normal process of waking up, as we will see below. For its horror, A Nightmare on Elm Street essentially plays on the normal functions of the ego in waking up, as the normal processes of falling asleep and waking up fail the characters, most notably Nancy, in Craven's film. For instance, when Nancy wakes up from a nightmare in the film, her

bodily ego feeling is the same as in her dream. In fact, as briefly noted above, the pain inflicted upon her in her dreams appears in the film's diegetic reality upon waking.

Meanwhile, when one slowly falls asleep, according to Federn, "both [bodily and mental] ego feelings are present, and hypnagogic manifestations lead gradually to the dream state" (29). In Federn's view, in the mental ego, "the pleasure principle overcomes the reality principle" (29). Federn directly connects this to a regression to "the ego feeling of the child" or "the childish stage of the bodily ego" (29, 30). There can also be a "[regression] to the childish stage of bodily ego" (30). This also mirrors, through the work of Metz, the psychological effects of viewing the cinema (as we will explore in greater detail below in our discussion of the similarities between the dream and the cinema). In Anzieu's reading of Federn, it is vital to pay attention to waking up and falling asleep as it is during those states that one might be able to observe "both a mental and a bodily [ego] feeling" (Anzieu 92). It is in these states, according to Anzieu, that we may experience a separation of the "mental" "ego feelings," feelings that largely dominate the dream state but that are "experienced as being within the bodily Ego" when we are awake, from "bodily" "ego feelings" (92). However, A Nightmare on Elm Street does not depict characters waking up and falling asleep normally. Instead, the ego feelings of the body play a central role in the dreams of Craven's characters.

According to Federn, in dreams in which "bodily ego feeling is present" one finds that "the dreamer is represented by himself" (Federn 33). Meanwhile, "[in] dreams with complete absence of bodily ego feeling, some figure in the dream always

233

represents the dreamer's ego" (Federn 33-34). As we will see in our close analysis of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* below, this certainly seems to be the case in Craven's film, albeit in a slightly modified way as the dreamers always seem to experience their bodies in the dream. However, the dreamers also encounter Freddy as a figure representing parts of their ego.

As Federn notes, "[in] spite of the fact that everything dreamed is experienced as wholly real, we do not—in the great majority of all dreams—feel that we are corporally present. We do not feel our body with its weight and form. We have no bodily ego feeling with its ego boundaries, as in normal waking life" (77). In the psychic ego, "we do not have a sense of our presence as a body among bodies" but instead have a "bodiless condition" (78). However, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* plays directly with this difference between the bodily and the psychic egos. Craven's film representationally conveys the fact that the characters do feel as if they inhabit "a body among bodies." This is made all the more apparent by the pain that carries over from the dream to the film's diegetic reality.

RECURSIVE IMAGES PART 1: SIGNIFIERS OF FREDDY KRUEGER

Using the dream as a framework through which to analyze *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, this chapter will analyze the appearances and reappearances of several of the key recursive images in this film in an attempt to unravel the ways in which Craven's film condenses and displaces several of the key features and affects of the slasher film. As noted above, we will examine the film's most central recursives in close detail below. We start with signifiers of perhaps the most impactful element of the film: the villain, Freddy Krueger.

The most central recursive images in Craven's film, through which condensation and displacement operate, are connected with the villain/monster. For instance, Freddy wears a red and green striped sweater, a hat, and a leather glove that connects a series of blades to four of the fingers. First and foremost, Freddy's gloved hand is a key recursive, appearing nearly every time that Freddy appears in the film. This glove essentially multiplies the threat presented by the sharp objects that kill teens in *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* (as well as other slashers). So, rather than the single kitchen knife that is associated with many of Michael Myers' killings, now we have four knives. Here the glove seems to multiply the weapons that later earned the slasher film its name (even though, as we saw in the previous chapter, knives/slashings are not necessarily required in order to construct a slasher film killing sequence).

So important, in fact, is this prop that the first portion of the film's opening credits recounts Freddy constructing his weapon. Over its opening credits, the film opens with Freddy playing with an assortment of sharp objects in a metal shop, creating his glove of knives. Here Freddy essentially invents his own weapon, discarding the weapons of the slasher villains that came before him. This early in the film, Craven already announces his film's concern with its own status as a piece of representation. This will be a representation that will "sample" previous works of representation as it constructs a novel film that will be, in many ways, constructed of the parts of earlier slasher films.



Figure 3.1: Donning the weapon and announcing the director (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:00:56). BD still.

A Nightmare on Elm Street further draws attention to its own status as film in its opening credits, reminding the viewer through the use of the frame within the frame of sorts, that the fantasy/film/dream that the viewer will experience is one mediated by the apparatus of cinema. Eventually, in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the boundary between representation and simulation, reality and fantasy, becomes so blurred as to lose all significance. On top of this, Craven chooses to place his name on the screen (the "a Wes Craven film" credit) as Freddy puts on his glove (figure 3.1). Here Craven essentially dons the weapon, announcing that he and his film will function as a sort of weapon that will terrorize the audience. And, as with Freddy's weapon, Craven's film doubles, multiplies, and constantly references the slasher films that came before his. Meanwhile, the injuries inflicted by Freddy's weapon multiply the wounds inflicted by previous slasher villains, often penetrating the skin (or stand-ins for the skin) at several points simultaneously. Craven's film also does this as everything that we see in the film is the result of a sort of condensation and displacement and is overdetermined by multiple affects and multiple filmic references.



Figure 3.2: Freddy points his weapon at us (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:01:01). BD still.

While the film opens in the frame-within-a-frame that we see above, the film abruptly takes up the entire screen after we get a full view of the weapon. We get our first full glimpse of the glove immediately after the "a Wes Craven film" credit dissolves off the screen. Here Craven cuts to an overhead close-up of the glove. Freddy flexes his fingers, testing out and showing off his new weapon, then turns the glove toward the audience, toward us (figure 3.2). The shot almost immediately dissolves to black as the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* logo zooms to the center of the screen.

Of the other visual signifiers associated with Freddy Krueger, the green and red horizontal stripes that Freddy wears on his sweater (if not the most threatening of the objects associated with him), appear extremely often (figure 3.3). The stripes from Krueger's sweater mark three important parts of the film (although they do appear every time Krueger appears). During the opening credit sequence (a dream sequence that blurs reality and fantasy), these stripes appear on Freddy's sweater. While we do not see Freddy much in this opening dream sequence, we do get glimpses of his tattered red and green sweatshirt. The same stripes appear later in the film during a dream sequence in which Nancy sees Tina's corpse while at school. They appear again in the final sequence of the film when they seem to send the message that the aggression condensed with and displaced onto them has not left and that Freddy has not been defeated. The repressing of this aggression continues.



Figure 3.3: Freddy's green and red sweatshirt (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:39:48). BD still.

The stripes appear again later in the film, in a different context, during Nancy's in-school half-dream/fantasy. This time the stripes are still on a sweater, although the person wearing the sweater is not Freddy. Instead, a high school hall monitor wears the striped sweatshirt. As Nancy dozes off in class, she turns her head to the side and sees her friend Tina in a body bag (we will discuss this in more detail below) (figure 3.4). Nancy is visibly disturbed by this abject sight and looks around, checking her surroundings. She seems to be in the film's diegetic reality, but something certainly seems off. Reality and fantasy blur.

Nancy looks back to where Tina was standing and, from Nancy's POV, we see a pool of blood on the hallway floor. Nancy leaves the classroom to investigate. She enters the hallway and looks for Tina. From roughly Nancy's POV we see a trail of blood with Tina's body bag at the end of it, apparently having been dragged down the hallway. Suddenly, Tina's feet are hoisted in the air by an invisible force and she is slowly pulled out of the shot (figure 3.5). The close confines of the hallway gesture to claustrophobia, a major affect that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* plays with (through the claustrophobia of the school, of the suburb, and of the suburban home). And while the school is a protective space in *Halloween*, functioning as a secondary skin that Michael Myers does not penetrate, the school in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* has already been penetrated. There is no safe space in Craven's film.



Figure 3.4: Blurring fantasy and reality: Tina in a body bag (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:24:21). BD still.

Craven cuts to a medium shot of Nancy. The camera tracks backwards as Nancy pursues Tina's corpse and the force that is pulling it down the hallway. Craven then cuts back to a tracking POV shot from Nancy's perspective. The camera begins to propel us more and more quickly down the hallway. Craven cuts back and forth between the medium shot of Nancy and the POV shot from her perspective. The POV shot grows less stable, more frantic as Nancy rushes around the corner. A medium shot of Nancy running around the corner depicts Nancy as she collides with a young female hall monitor. Nancy shrieks (and her shriek is amplified in volume by a high pitched note of Craven's synthetic score), knocking the hall monitor to the ground. The hall monitor, her nose bloodied, wears the same red and green sweater that Freddy does (albeit a much cleaner one). She demands: "Where's your pass?" Nancy responds, "Screw your pass" and continues down the hallway.



Figure 3.5: Tina's corpse being pulled down the hallway (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:25:04). BD still.

As she runs down the hallway, leaves blow around the hallway as if it were outside (blurring fantasy and reality and turning the inside of the school outside). A moment later, Freddy's voice calls out to her: "Hey, Nancy!" Nancy stops in her tracks and turns around. In medium shot we see the hall monitor: she has more blood running down her face and is wearing Freddy's glove on her right hand (figure 3.6). In Freddy's voice she says, "No running in the hallway." Nancy turns and continues to run down the hallway as Freddy's deep, eerie giggle layers into the soundtrack. This mismatch/disembodiment of Freddy's voice points directly to the uncanny. It also gestures to the functioning of the dream-work, particularly condensation and displacement.

These stripes again appear in the final sequence of the film on the cloth-top of Glen's convertible. At this point, it seems that Freddy has been vanquished and everything has returned to normal. Safety seems to have returned to the suburbs. These exteriors of the suburbs are shot in extremely bright light (although it is softened by some fog – a marker, in this film, of the dream). After a brief conversation with her mother, Nancy gets into Glen's car, heading to another day at school. The three teenage characters that have been killed over the course of the film appear here again, alive, packed into Glen's convertible. The top is down, Glen is in the driver's seat, Tina and Rod are in the back seat, and Nancy is in the passenger's seat (figure 3.7). The teens seem happy, relieved. Order appears to have been restored.



Figure 3.6: "No running in the hallway" (*A Nightmare* on Elm Street 0:25:38). BD still.

As the teens get ready to drive away, the convertible's top suddenly begins to raise, slamming down on the top of the car and startling Nancy (figure 3.8). She asks,

"What happened?" The teens laugh for a moment, surprised. Craven cuts to a closeup of Glen's face, situating us alongside the teens inside the car. The teens' jovial moods quickly shift as the latches that buckle down the cloth top click themselves shut. Suddenly the teens become afraid. Glen exclaims: "I'm not doing this." The windows begin to roll themselves up. The car here is essentially an extension of Freddy and taps into the sensation of claustrophobia. The teens are trapped and we are trapped along with them, at least momentarily. In animating the inanimate object of the car, and turning the convertible (a car often signifying some amount of freedom) into a prison, this sequence points to the uncanny.



Figure 3.7: A temporary restoration of order (*A Nightmare* on Elm Street 1:28:19). BD still.

Craven cuts back outside the car and we see the car continue to make itself a claustrophobic carceral space (figure 3.9). Nancy turns to her mother and screams for her, realizing that dream/nightmare has fully merged with reality. The car begins to drive itself away not under Glen's control. This perhaps points to parental and teenage anxieties over control and the loss of control. The children's rhyme from earlier in the film, eerily muffled, layers into the score signifying some sort of a return to innocence.

Although, as was the case with the children's rhyme at the beginning of *Halloween* (and as is the case with the playful threat of "trick-or-treat"), this is not an innocent rhyme. It is a threatening/warning rhyme that cautions: "One, two, Freddy's coming for you." As Nancy's mother watches the car drive down the street Freddy's arm bursts through the window in the front door of Nancy's house and pulls Nancy's mother back into the house. Craven then cuts back to the slow-motion image of the young girls jumping rope as their rhyme cautions: "Three, four, better lock your door." The screen fades to black and the rhyme continues: "Five, six, grab your crucifix." This rhyme signifies the uncanny turning of the American suburb into its opposite.



Figure 3.8: Stripes on the cloth top: "What happened?" (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1:28:22). BD still.

Ultimately, the affects associated with Freddy (related to fear, anxiety, dread, claustrophobia, and repressed aggression) are condensed with and displaced onto these stripes which are, in turn, condensed with and displaced onto other figures perhaps unrelated to the original affects. For instance, the prohibition against running in the hallway gestures to a harsh superegoic role as well as the rules of high school.

Unraveling the stripes a bit further, we could perhaps argue that the hall monitor is a day residue creeping into Nancy's dream while the stripes that are associated with Freddy (and the affects that they distort) are displaced onto another figure. One could also conceivably argue that the stripes themselves are a day residue, brought into Nancy's dream from the hall monitor. In this interpretation, the stripes may relate to affects concerned with figures that embody a punishing superego and from there they are placed onto Freddy (who, in a sense, is a type of superegoic figure, albeit a much more playful one than Mrs. Voorhees was in *Friday the 13th*) (*SE IV* 228). In their appearance on the cloth top of Glen's convertible, they most certainly gesture to the claustrophobia that so much of the film (and the slasher film in general) fixates upon. The reappearance of the stripes on the top of this convertible implies that, at the end of the film, condensation and displacement are still at work (both in the diegesis and in our experience at the cinema), and that we, along with the film's characters, are still in a dream.



Figure 3.9: Trapped in Glen's convertible (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1:28:35). BD still.

RECURSIVE IMAGES PART 2: (TORN) FABRIC AND THE UNSETTLING OF BOUNDARIES

Another important recursive in the film is that of (torn) fabric, a recursive image that relates directly to Anzieu's "Penetration of Boundary variable" (31). In many ways, applying Anzieu to these images, we might read the tearing of fabric as a representational destruction of a protective secondary skin. These secondary skins appear in the film in various ways. For instance, at various points in the film it appears as cloth or clothing (which is shredded/slashed). It also appears several times as a translucent body-bag that contains Tina's corpse. Both of these secondary skins (and the destruction/penetration of them) point to the abject, the destruction of boundaries, the dissolution of subject and object distinctions, and ultimately the destruction of meaning, just as in absurd dreams. It is in the territory of the abject, with its destruction of boundaries, that the slasher film operates.



Figure 3.10: On the penetration of boundaries: The first full-screen image of the film (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:01:08). BD still.

During the film's opening credit sequence, we see our first images of torn cloth/drapery. In fact, the first full-screen image in the film (appearing immediately after the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* title card) is of Freddy's knifed glove slashing/penetrating a piece of cloth (figure 3.10). This image immediately points toward a penetration of boundaries. The cloth here may be understood as a metaphorical representation of a sort of protective secondary skin. It is, however, a secondary skin that, much like the actual skin of the human, is no match for the knives affixed to Freddy Krueger's glove. In its shredding, it is shown to be extremely vulnerable to the violent destruction of meaning that Freddy brings.



Figure 3.11: Tina in the dream world (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:01:12). BD still.

Craven immediately follows this shot with a medium close-up of Tina, dropped into the dream/nightmare world of Freddy's boiler room (figure 3.11). She briefly glances around her and then fixes her gaze on us. Craven punches into an extreme close-up of her face. She is surrounded by a white, overexposed background that perhaps references the undefined nature of the settings of many dreams. In this first shot, we get another image of cloth in the form of Tina's white nightgown. A few moments later we get another, more full image of both the cloth that Freddy slashes and Tina's white nightgown (figure 3.12). The white nightgown signifies innocence in many ways (both through the color of white and the nightgown generally, a very modest nighttime garment). Tina's nightgown also points back to the previous shot in which Freddy's knives penetrate/slash a draped piece of cloth. It also points forward, as we will see below, to the various ways that Freddy will be able to impact reality through dreams (and blur fantasy and reality).



Figure 3.12: In Freddy's boiler room: Cloth, boundaries, nightmares (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:03:14). BD still.

As referenced in our earlier discussion of Anzieu's "Penetration of Boundary

variable," the "Penetration of Boundary variable . . . relates to anything that may be

the symbolic expression of a subjective feeling that the body has only a weak

protective value and can be easily penetrated" (Anzieu 31). In Anzieu's view, there

are "three types of representations of penetration" (31). These are:

- (a) penetration, disruption or wearing away of a bodily surface (a wound, fracture, scratching, crushing, bleeding);
- (b) modes or channels for getting inside a thing or of expelling something from inside to the outside (an open mouth, an orifice of the body or the doorway of a house, an opening in the earth from which liquid substances gush, X-ray pictures or cross-sections of organs showing their interiors);
- (c) representations of the surface of a thing as permeable and fragile (something insubstantial or soft, without clear boundaries, something transparent; a withered, diseased, deteriorating or degenerating surface). (Anzieu 31)

At various points, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* touches on all of these. For example, the character that receives the bulk of Freddy's terror and violence in the film is Tina. In the penetration of the cloth in the film's opening sequence, we see the third "type of representation." This is a metaphorical penetration of the body's surface.

We also see this third type of potential boundary penetration again a few moments after Tina wakes up (figure 3.13). When Tina wakes up, she is wearing the same nightgown that she was wearing in her dream. This gestures in some sense to the presence, for Tina and because of Freddy, of a bodily "ego feeling" that is "continuous with that in the dream" (Federn 74). While Federn points out that this sort of thing is "exceptional," it is in the realm of the exceptional that Freddy stalks his prey (74). Tina here is threatened at the level of the bodily ego feeling: in her dreams she possesses the same sense of her body that she does in her waking life and this poses a distinct threat to her understanding of her self as a secure, whole being (75).

Despite Tina's attempts at trivialization (she assures her mother that what she experienced was "just a dream"), Freddy has managed to penetrate Tina's psyche as well as her physical reality. The threat that he poses is metaphorically conveyed by the shredding/slashing of a hanging piece of cloth in her dream as well as the shredding/slashing of her nightgown in the film's diegetic reality. In shredding her nightgown, Freddy also penetrates Tina's sense of modesty. These penetrated pieces of cloth condense and displace affects related to the threatened destruction of the body as well as to the threatened destruction of the moral order that Freddy brings.



Figure 3.13: Tina's nightgown, upon waking: a "representation of penetration" (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:03:50). BD still.

We also see the unstable nature of boundaries at work, as well as the ways in which fantasy and reality blur, in a sequence in which Freddy hovers over Nancy as she sleeps. In one shot in particular, Freddy is able to almost push through the wall behind Nancy as she sleeps (figure 3.14). Here the wall looks very much like a skin. It has lost the hard physical properties that a wall normally possesses. Instead, its integrity, its ability to hold and protect, is questioned. These images that destroy boundaries, or show them to be easily penetrable, all threaten "the necessity for bodily integrity" (Anzieu 32). As Freddy pushes into the wall, Nancy stirs. It is unclear whether or not she is asleep or awake. In this way, this image relays a sort of "hypnagogic hallucination" on the part of Nancy (Anzieu 88). In presenting the image to the viewer, Craven essentially employs a free indirect subjectivity in which we see the scene as Nancy might see it (even as we still see Nancy in the shot).

This shot, with its confusion of waking and sleeping, touches on precisely the state of lowered wakefulness that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (and, following Metz, cinema more generally), operates within. It is also this psychic state that Anzieu finds

most essential about Federn's work. For Anzieu, Federn's focus on "transitional states" is extremely important (Anzieu 88). These "transitions between waking and sleeping, between sleeping and waking and, more generally, between different levels of vigilance in the Ego" are the transitions that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* questions (88).



Figure 3.14: A hypnagogic hallucination: Freddy pushes on the wall above Nancy (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:14:09). BD still.

Later in the film, we see the threat posed by Freddy to Tina's "bodily integrity" in the beginning of the film realized in her murder sequence (Anzieu 32). Like the slashing of Tina's nightgown and Freddy's pushing into and threatening to break through the wall above Nancy, this murder occurs simultaneously in the dream-world and in the film's diegetic reality, blurring distinctions between the two. This sequence, one of the bloodier sequences in the film (and also one that had to be edited down to receive an R rating), involves a chase sequence through the depopulated nighttime suburbs, and culminates with Freddy slashing open Tina's chest, pulling her up to the ceiling, dragging her along it, and then dropping her corpse onto the bed. The scene is essentially relayed through a free indirect subjectivity that switches between two characters. The first is Tina. In the shots that approximate Tina's perspective, we can, along with Tina, see Freddy as he attacked her. The second perspective is aligned with Tina's boyfriend, Rod. When we watch the scene alongside Rod we cannot see Freddy as he attacks Tina. Instead, in the shots from Rod's perspective, it appears as if Tina is being attacked by some unseen force. However, the border between reality and dream is thoroughly destroyed here as Freddy is completely able to kill Tina, to enact actual bodily violence on her, through her dream. In the sequence, the border between the dream and reality as well as between the inside and outside of the body is brought into question.

After a chase sequence through the nighttime/nightmare suburbs, Tina appears in bed, struggling. She is under the sheets and her violent movements wake her boyfriend, Rod, who leaps out of bed. This shot is likely aligned with Rob's perspective, through free indirect subjectivity, as he and we along him only see Tina struggle. However, Craven then cuts under the sheets to an image of Tina struggling against Freddy. Again, cloth appears as a signifier of boundaries (a series of boundaries that will be destroyed in short order). As we are able to see Freddy during this struggle, this shot is one from a free indirect subjectivity aligned with Tina's perspective. After Tina briefly struggles with Freddy under the sheets, Craven cuts back to a shaky handheld shot of Rod as he moves around and away from the bed. This shot is a free indirect subjective shot aligned with Rod's perspective. It should be noted at this point, in relation to discussions of sadism and masochism, that at no time in this sequence does the audience's subjectivity align with Freddy's perspective. Tina screams for help from Rod. Rod in turns pulls the sheet off of Tina. Again, the shot is aligned with Rod's subjectivity so we do not see Freddy. Instead, we see Tina struggling with an unseen force. Craven cuts back to a medium shot of Rod then back to Tina struggling and flailing on the bed then cuts back to Rod for moment. Craven then quickly cuts back to a close-up of Tina's torso. The striped shirt that she has been wearing is torn open by an unseen force, the protection and modesty that it offers is easily destroyed, and four deep cuts quickly appear on her torso (figure 3.15). These vertical cuts on Tina's torso mark a connection with and a contrast to the vertical stripes of Freddy's sweater. The shot is extremely brief yet points directly to Anzieu's first type of "representation of penetration" as it certainly points to the "penetration" of "a bodily surface." This image also calls to mind the slashings that Freddy made on Tina's nightgown earlier in the film.



Figure 3.15: The penetration of boundaries: Tina's chest slashed (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:17:21). BD still.

Craven quickly cuts back to a reaction shot as Rod appears horrified and screams yet seems frozen, unable to help Tina. After a moment, Craven cuts back to the image of Tina's torso. Blood gushes from the wounds (figure 3.16). In this instance, as we briefly see inside Tina's body, as her insides literally gush out, Anzieu's second type of representation comes to mind. Here the four slashes on her chest become a way of "getting inside a thing or of expelling something from inside to the outside" (Anzieu 31). Here the skin literally no longer holds the body together. It no longer protects. It is shown to be extremely vulnerable, unable to protect from even the "imagined" threat of Freddy Krueger. The four cuts also multiply the damage done by the single knife that Michael Myers often used as a weapon.



Figure 3.16: The skin no longer holds: The inside flowing out (A Nightmare on Elm Street 0:17:22). BD still.

Through these recursive images, aggression and its derivatives are condensed with and displaced onto various objects as reality and fantasy blur, ultimately leading to a destruction of the distinctions between the two. As noted above, ultimately, the repressed aggression that is at the heart of the dreams in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is a sort of essential, originary aggression. It is a repressed aggression that the teenage protagonists inherit from the crimes of their parents (and, by extension, their society). In their nightmares however, they are not given direct access to this aggression. Rather, through the processes of condensation and displacement, they (and the

spectator with them) are given filtered, distorted, repressed, and relocated traces of this aggression and its signifiers (with multiple sources of fear, anxiety, and aggression being condensed with and displaced onto Freddy and his visual markers of monstrosity, to be discussed in more detail below).

RECURSIVE IMAGES PART 3: SYMBOLISM AND THE CRUCIFIX

Another major recursive image in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is that of the crucifix. Through the religious symbol of the crucifix, affects (including anxieties related to superegoic prohibitions) are condensed with and displaced onto certain objects onto other figures. Here Freddy has affects symbolically associated with religion projected onto him and he, in turn, subverts them. Freddy essentially becomes an uncanny christic figure (or perhaps he becomes a christic figure with an Old Testament sensibility, punishing the children of those who killed him). By making Freddy a christic figure that causes an outburst of the uncanny, Craven draws attention to Freddy's monstrosity as well as to the operation of symbolism in the dream (through the symbol of the crucifix).

We first see a crucifix in the first shot of the film that is set in the film's diegetic reality (as opposed to the diegetic dream world). After the opening dream/nightmare/credit sequence in which Tina is pursued by Freddy through his boiler room, Tina wakes in fright. Her waking up comes when Freddy, in the dream-world, pops up behind her and grabs her. Tina jolts awake, sitting up in bed, gasping in terror. Her face, in close-up in the foreground of the shot, occupies the

center-right portion of the frame. A crucifix, hung on the wall above her bed, appears in the left portion of frame, in the background of the shot (figure 3.17). Here the crucifix essentially replaces Freddy who stood behind Tina in the previous shot and symbolically references a whole structure of prohibition and punishment.



Figure 3.17: Symbolism: The first crucifix in the film (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:03:38). BD still.

We see this same crucifix a bit later in the film as Nancy tries to get some sleep during a sleepover at Tina's house. This appearance of the crucifix immediately follows Freddy pushing into the wall (discussed above). In this instance, in a reverse of what we saw in the film's opening sequence, the crucifix is replaced by Freddy hovering over Nancy (rather than the hovering Freddy being replaced by the crucifix) (see figure 3.14 above). This crucifix, which had been pulled off the wall earlier by an unseen force, appears in a shot from roughly Nancy's POV (figure 3.18). Nancy appears to get some sort of comfort from the object and re-affixes it to the wall behind her. This functions to symbolically remind us of Nancy's morality (as she is not sleeping with her boyfriend), and re-introduce the crucifix as a more general symbol of morality (as well as the implication of potential immorality). In reminding us of Nancy's morality, Craven also draws attention to that (perceived) marker of the slasher film: Clover's "final girl." This is one of the tropes that Craven will play with in this film as, at the end of the film it is revealed that even the "immoral" teenage girl has actually survived (at least for the time being).



Figure 3.18: Symbolism from Nancy's POV: Tina's crucifix (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:14:22). BD still.

While crucifixes often appear in the film, at times characters are also put into christic poses. For instance, during the sequence in which Freddy kills Tina (the beginning of which we described above), Tina's pose appears somewhat christic as she is pulled along the ceiling and reaches out for her boyfriend Rod (figure 3.19). The importance of this pose is emphasized by the fact that Tina is actually being killed for the sins of others here (namely the parents that killed Freddy). The biblical nature of this sacrifice is also punctuated by the appearance of a lamb in the credit sequence (when we first meet Tina). This biblical reference to the sacrificial lamb (and later the "crucifixion"/sacrifice of Tina) points us to one of the ways in which Craven deconstructs assumptions about the slasher film. When Tina is killed, Craven makes it clear that this killing is more of a sacrifice than a punishment. Thus, despite being

sexually active, Tina is actually an innocent. In this way, Craven begins to deconstruct the hackneyed assumption that it is sexually active, independent female teens that the slasher film seeks to punish.



Figure 3.19: Watching Tina be "crucified": A sacrificial lamb (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:17:51). BD still.

The most important christic pose, however, came a few moments before the shot above. This pose is struck by Freddy himself. A few moments after the appearance of the crucifix (see figure 3.18 above), Freddy puts himself into a christic pose. This recursivity of the symbol of the crucifix occurs during the chase sequence in Tina's dream that precedes her death. In this shot, in response to Tina pleading for help from God, Freddy stretches his arms to unreal lengths (figure 3.20). He at once approximates a crucifix and opens his arms, as if to embrace Tina. This symbol of the crucifix, as does the crucifix more generally in this film, gestures to religion, law, and the rules and punishments of the superego. It also reminds us of the blurring of the boundaries between fantasy and reality with which this film constantly plays.

Additionally, this image of a christic Freddy provides a visual representation of a bodily distortion that gestures to Federn's understanding of "regression" as it

concerns the bodily ego feeling in the dream. For Federn, "[regression] to the childish stage of bodily ego feeling" can occur in a number of ways (30). One of the major ways that it can appear is when "[the] body ego . . . completely loses all dimensional sense: it becomes warped and distorted in every direction" (30). Furthermore, "the symmetrical parts of the body often appear of unequal length, or spatial dimensions become entirely out of proportion" (30). For Federn, when this occurs, "we have an actual loss of ego boundaries" (30). While Federn is writing of the dreamer's own experience of their own body ego here, the fact that the figures in dreams also originate in the viewer's unconscious allows us to extend this understanding of images of physical distortion to Freddy's appearance in Tina's dream. Here the extreme distortion of Freddy's arms points to a fragility in the dreamer's own understanding of their self as a separate individual self.



Figure 3.20: Christic Freddy: Another sacrificial lamb? (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:16:05). BD still.

In many ways, while Freddy terrorizes the film's teenage characters through their dreams, he is also a christic figure (albeit a monstrous one): he was essentially murdered at the hands of a mob, disfigured, and essentially comes back from the dead (at least through the workings of the dream and the cinema). Thus the recursive figure/symbol of the crucifix also gestures to sacrifice and the figure of the scapegoat. Reading the christic figure of Freddy Krueger through René Girard's understanding of the scapegoat, we see that Freddy, while an apparent murderer of children, is also very much a mythical scapegoat. As Girard observes of the scapegoat (or, as he refers to the scapegoat here, the "victim" of the community that persecutes): "The return to peace and order is ascribed to the same cause as the earlier troubles – to the victim himself" (55). We see precisely this in the retelling of the murder of Freddy by Nancy's mother: Freddy, a signifier of anomaly, is violently removed from society. After his killing at the hands of the parents of the teen protagonists of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, however, he brutally returns to terrorize the children of the vigilantes that killed him. In his return, he signifies a return of that which is repressed and gestures to the social and psychological functions of the scapegoat.

According to Girard, scapegoats function (somewhat indirectly) to generate and regenerate communities. As Girard notes, "the community exists both before and after the crime which it is punishing: it is born of [the] crime, not of its monstrosity which is temporary in nature, but of its humanity which is well defined" (50). In the end, in the removal of the scapegoat from the community, "[the] apparent cause of disorder becomes the apparent cause of order" (50). The scapegoat is essentially a determining factor of the community (here the ordered community of the white middle-class suburb). So here we see a multiplication of monstrosity: Freddy's physical and moral monstrosity as well as the physical and moral monstrosity of the community that designates him as a scapegoat and murders him. The dream figure of Freddy in both the diegetic reality and dream sequences in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* embodies both of these monstrosities. However, the figure of Freddy puts a new twist on this: the "temporary" monstrosity of the community is made (or perhaps exposed as) permanent and constantly returns through the dreams of the children of the group of parents that killed Freddy.

Anzieu also offers some observations on the scapegoat insofar as the figure of the scapegoat relates to "an intense threat of loss of ego identity" that can occur in large groups (28). As Anzieu argues, "[in] the large group . . . anonymity is accentuated and fragmentation anxieties [are] reawakened" (28). The urge of the individual here is toward "self-preservation" (28). One of the ways to defend against this threatened fragmentation is by projecting onto "a participant" in the group "who is treated as a scapegoat" (29). Freddy certainly fits here. While not a member of the group of parents, he is certainly a member of the community. Here, while "the bad object is projected" onto Freddy, "the good object is projected on to small groups where it fosters the illusion of a group identity" (29). The purpose of this group identity is to provide "the reconstituted security of a collective narcissistic envelope" (29). This points to an "attachment drive" in which the group, "through the search for contact (in the double sense, both bodily and social, of the term) . . . ensures a dual protection both against external dangers and against an internal psychical state of distress" (28). In other words, a healthy secondary skin surrounding and protecting the community.

One the fundamental things that the group projects, according to Anzieu, is "aggressiveness" (29). By projecting this aggressiveness, onto Freddy in this case, the group gives itself identity. Here that identity is the illusion of a healthy white middleclass suburban community. However, the scapegoat here functions as a marker that this community is not as real or as healthy as its participants would like to believe. It does not, in reality, function as a healthy secondary skin. In Freddy's return (even in fantastic or dream form), he constantly draws attention to the repressed aggression that animates the suburb.

Ultimately, the community uses the scapegoat during times of crisis in order "to lay the responsibility for the crisis on the victims [scapegoats] and to exert an influence on it [the crisis] by destroying these victims [scapegoats] or at least by banishing them from the community they pollute" (Girard 24). As Girard argues, the community in crisis and those that comprise it "are always potential persecutors, for they dream of purging the community of the impure elements that corrupt it, the traitors who undermine it" (16). Regardless of whether or not Freddy was guilty of the crimes of which he was accused, his crimes, including the killing of children, seem to fit the mold of "truly *mythological*" crimes that are often ascribed to scapegoats by their "persecutors" (26). And for these crimes (and in order to re-affirm the status of the community as a community), scapegoats must be expelled.

The scapegoat here is an other that penetrates the border of the community (or is at least understood by those who persecute him/her as a penetrating other). As Girard notes, "[difference] that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system, its relativity, its fragility, and its mortality" (21). Here Freddy, a scapegoat of sorts, is an other, but one that has already intruded into the community. However, what is most telling about the community is not that it has been intruded upon by Freddy, but that its reaction to that intrusion is to kill Freddy in an act of vigilante mob murder. His murder is necessary in order to allow the community to restore its own "stability" (33). Freddy's murder essentially allows the community to be reconstituted.

As the figure of Freddy provides a meditation on the monstrosity (as well as the violent act of removing the impure from society), it also offers a rethinking of the figure of the monster in the slasher film as well as the importance of the serial killer in popular culture more generally. As Linnie Blake argues in *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity*: "long before the very invention of celluloid, the threats posed to the cohesiveness and integrity of the American civic body by traumatic events such as war had been symbolically located in the figure of the mass or serial murderer" (103). Here the mass murder and serial killer function as another type of scapegoat. According to Blake, "from the 1960s onwards, as longstanding American ideas of individual identity and its interface with mechanisms of state control were interrogated and re-formulated, the figure of the serial killer has come to occupy an increasingly prominent and problematic position at the heart of popular culture" (Blake 105). Speaking of real-life murders and their relationship to cinema (such as *Psycho* and *The Boston Strangler*), Blake notes, "the multiple murderers of the United States have provided the nation with a demonised vanguard" that threatens the cohesiveness of the nation (105-106).

Here we see the central struggle of the slasher film: social order vs. the serial killer (a disrupter of social order). As Blake puts it, the serial killer is understood as "one who compulsively endangers the cohesion of the nation through his unspeakable desires and outlandish actions; specifically his repetitive assaults on an innocent citizenry" (108). Ultimately, "[he] is the enemy of social cohesiveness" (108). However, as Blake argues, this is not simply a battle between proponents of order and the bringers of disorder (108). Instead, it is "a fight to the death over the nature and meaning of America itself" (108). In this way, we may read the community that is assaulted by Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* as a stand-in for certain ideas about the United States. Freddy poses an abject threat to this America and, in turn, is destroyed for that threat. However, the threat is an essential one, intricately related to the very foundation of the community that expels him. He is, after all, an enemy that comes from within the dreamer's (or viewer's) own psyche.

In some ways similar to the way that the scapegoat is dealt with, the monstrous Freddy (and the abject threat of the destruction of boundaries that he brings) constantly gestures to Douglas' notions of "purity" and "anomaly" discussed in Chapter One. Douglas identifies a continuous "impulse to impose order" as a characteristic of all cultures (5). According to Douglas, cultures have various set ways in which to deal with that which brings disorder ("ambiguity or anomaly") (5). These can include "separating, tidying and purifying" (2). In Douglas' view, individuals can

263

"confront ambiguity" through a number of reactions including "laughter, revulsion and shock . . . at different points and intensities" (38). Individuals can also "treat" anomalies/ambiguities (terms which Douglas uses practically interchangeably) by either "ignoring" them, "condemning" them, or "confronting" them by forcing them into more familiar categories or narratives (39).

However, as Douglas points out, "[culture], in the sense of the public, standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals" (40). That is, these individual reactions to difference/anomaly are mediated by culture and community. As Douglas argues, cultures have five ways of making anomaly/ambiguity more tolerable (and thus produce less anxiety in populations): 1) "by settling for one or other interpretation" (see our explanation of this first way of dealing with anomaly in the footnote below); 2) through physical control; 3) through avoidance; 4) by categorizing ambiguity as "dangerous"; and, 5) through ritual (40-41).¹

All of these ways of dealing with anomaly may enrich our understanding of the action of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and of the murder of Freddy Krueger. The ways in which the community deals with Freddy fits into several of these categories. Regarding Part 1 of Douglas' formulation, we certainly see the parents of the community settle on a definition of Freddy as a child killer that operated in the film's

¹ As an example of this first way of making anomaly/ambiguity more tolerable, Douglas notes that "when a monstrous birth occurs, the defining lines between humans and animals may be threatened" (40). If we can label such an event "as an event of a peculiar kind," the boundaries between human and monster "can be restored" (40). In the case of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, for instance, attempting to label Freddy as a deviant or predator may allow us to deal, to some extent, with the existential threat posed by his monstrosity.

diegetic reality. The murder of Freddy certainly seems to fit Part 2 of Douglas' formulation. In terms of Part 3 of Douglas' framework, Nancy's mother, in denying Freddy's existence in the dream world, certainly seems to be trying to "avoid" him (or at least the memory of what she did to him). At the same time, Nancy does not particularly try to avoid Freddy, understanding that she must confront him in order to neutralize the threat he poses. Part 4, the labelling of Freddy as "dangerous," occurs for the teenagers (but not the adults). Part 5, the use of ritual to deal with Freddy, is less clear (although the constant appearance of crucifixes certainly gestures to ritual as does the act of making oneself fall asleep in order to confront Freddy).

Meanwhile, Freddy, throughout the film, pushes back on most of these attempts to contain him: 1) in attacking his victims through their dreams, he does not allow diegetic reality to confine him; 2) likewise, his bending/blurring of the rules of reality defy the "physical control" that was imposed upon him; 3) at the film's end, when Freddy attacks Nancy's mother, he brutally resists her attempts to avoid him; 4) Freddy, although playful in the threats that he poses, certainly embraces the labelling of him as "dangerous"; and 5) as we saw above, Freddy constantly attacks, mimics, and mocks the symbols of ritualized religion.

As Girard notes, through the figure of the mythological scapegoat, "physical monstrosity and moral monstrosity merge" (33-34). *A Nightmare on Elm Street* literalizes this merger. The moral aspects of Freddy's crimes are represented physically on his body. However, this marking on his body is due to an attack on him by a group of parents (in which a group of parents burned him alive). Thus the

physical/moral monstrosity of Freddy, at least as far as his burned skin goes, is a forced merger.



Figure 3.21: Freddy's charred skin (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:16:12). BD still.

One of the primary markers of Freddy's monstrous physical appearance (aside from his knife glove), is his burned skin (figure 3.21). This horrifically burned skin at once marks him as a monster and as a victim (of the violence of the parents). Every time that we see Freddy's face, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* points to Anzieu's first and third "representations of penetration" (31). Here Freddy's face is literally burned away, a series of "wounds," and the surface of his skin is "permeable and fragile" (31). His skin no longer functions as a protective "envelope." Instead, it literalizes the lack "of an envelope of well-being" (44). It also, in a way, allows Freddy to move beyond the confines of his own body and into the psyches of his victims. This representation of burned skin constantly reminds us of our skin's own fragile status as boundary or "envelope" and tugs on Kristeva's sensation of abjection. That is, Freddy's very appearance is at once the result of a forced re-constitution of the ego identity of the group that killed him and, in his return, is a constant threat to that group's own sense of itself as a group (as well as a threat to the individuals within the group and their senses of themselves as individual, differentiated selves).

Freddy Krueger, a burn victim (a victim of the revenge of the teenage protagonists' parents), literally lacks a protective skin and this lack symbolically points to an abject collapse of inside/outside. In turn, Freddy enacts a similar breaking of the skin on his victims (most notably Tina, as discussed above). In the slasher film in general and in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in particular, the audience witnesses the boundary of the skin becoming less and less meaningful, ultimately beginning to disintegrate and representationally threaten a larger collapse of meaning. Freddy's burned skin also plays with the mask as a representative feature of the slasher film: his face is at once his real face and also very much a mask.

Freddy is also a figure that is somewhere between living and dead. He is a burnt corpse but is also, in some ways, alive. As Kristeva writes, "[the] corpse . . . is the utmost of abjection" (4). Further: "It is death infecting life" (4). It brings "[imaginary] uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (4). Freddy, somewhere between living and dead, human and monster, does precisely this. For the viewer and for the characters in the film's diegesis, the threat posed by Freddy must be dealt with and defended against. The most telling way of dealing with this threat, at least as far as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is concerned, is through physical control (including the physical destruction of that which is anomalous), although, as we will explore in more detail, this physical control is not and can never

be complete as Freddy is a monster that ultimately comes from within the dreamer's psyche (Douglas 40).

CLAUSTROPHOBIC SPACES: THE SUBURBS AND THE SUBURBAN HOUSE

While Freddy Krueger is easily able to penetrate the literal skins of his victims (first through their psyches and then literally breaking their skins by cutting them), he is also able to easily penetrate the secondary skin of the high school (as mentioned above), the suburb, and the suburban home. Through Freddy's ability to blur fantasy and reality he is essentially able to penetrate and violate all "protective" or "safer" spaces. The secondary, protective skins of these spaces no longer protect. So, while Freddy does what previous slasher villains do by penetrating "safer" spaces and shredding skins of protection, he also invades the psyche (where he originates), thereby multiplying the threat of invasion presented by the slasher villains that came before him.

We are introduced to the exterior of the suburb through a shot that seems to blur fantasy and reality (as well as, perhaps, the past and the present). In the beginning of the film, after Tina wakes up from her nightmare to find her nightgown slashed (the first interiors of the suburban house), Craven delivers the first exterior of the suburbs. A muffled, reverberant chorus of young girls singing a children's rhyme related to Freddy Krueger layers in with eerie synthetic notes of Craven's score.² This

² The rhyme that these girls sing has the following lyrics: "One, two, Freddy's coming for you / Three, four, better lock your door / Five, six, grab your crucifix / Seven, eight, gonna stay up late / Nine, ten, never sleep again."

rhyme links the film back to the rather dark children's rhyme/incantation that opens *Halloween*. As Tina, in her low-lit bedroom, clutches a crucifix to her chest, Craven cuts to an exterior shot of a group of young girls jumping rope in slow motion on a front lawn (figure 3.22). The shot, brightly lit, is also extremely softly lit and also, it seems, partially obscured by fog (a marker of dream/fantasy in this film). While the mise-en-scène of the first part of this shot is pure white middle-class utopia, Craven's eerie synthetic score lets us know that this safe space has already been penetrated though, as does the rhyme. Furthermore, while jump rope rhymes are certainly common enough, this one contains an extremely violent set of warnings.



Figure 3.22: Bookending the film: Childhood innocence in middle-class utopia (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:04:21). BD still.

Craven pans to the right and eventually settles on Glen's red 1950s Cadillac convertible (a car that, in itself, harkens back to a previous time) as he pulls alongside a curb and parks. Glen, Tina, and Nancy get out of the car as Tina describes her dream from the night before. Both Nancy and Tina connect the dream to the jump rope rhyme that we just heard. Through this connection, this shot, panning from left to right, also perhaps pans from the past to the present (or at least pans from a representation of some fantasied or remembered image to the present).



Figure 3.23: The final shot of the film: Dream/fantasy and childhood innocence (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1:28:59). BD still.

This shot links us forward to the final shot of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and these two shots effectively bookend the film. The final shot of the film is a similar shot in which young girls, clad in a similar angelic/innocent white, jump rope while the same Freddy jump rope song overlays the scene (perhaps announcing the entire film as fantasy/dream) (figure 3.23). In this final shot of the film, however, we know that the suburb has been penetrated (along with the psyches of the characters). That said, this final shot of the film does not re-establish the boundaries that protected the suburb. Instead, in the background of this shot, Glen's car, piloted by an unseen force, drives the teenagers away while, in the previous shot, Freddy violently pulled Nancy's mother through a small window in the front door of their house. By the end of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, fantasy and reality are blurred to such an extent that they are indistinguishable from one another. Here the repetition compulsion takes full charge.

marked as distinctly "dream," the film's final sequence, employing a seemingly dream-logic, effectively destroys all distinction between fantasy/dream and reality (and, in some ways, extends this off of the screen).

A Nightmare on Elm Street reworks the stalking/chase sequences that mark slasher films, pushing the irrational characteristics of the monster/stalker to the extreme. While the rules of reality seem to be questioned in *Halloween* (through the unstoppable physical freakishness of Michael Myers) and, to a lesser extent, in *Friday the 13th, A Nightmare on Elm Street* discards any rules that might apply to a believable portrait of reality. Furthermore, in its blurring of the rational with the irrational, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, like previous slasher films, essentially destroys the (imagined) comforts and safety of the spaces in which it takes place, turning the suburb into its uncanny opposite (as *Halloween* did with the small American town and as *Friday the 13th* did with the summer camp). In this, Craven's film essentially blurs the myth of the white middle-class suburb with its nightmarish reality (or rather argues that this blurring has always already occurred).

For instance, the nightmarish elements are on full display during a dream sequence in which Nancy purposefully falls asleep in order to find Freddy in her dream (with the "assurance" that Glen will wake her up at some point). Throughout this sequence, the exteriors of the suburb appear essentially depopulated and contain images that point to the irrationality of dreams. Once Nancy (apparently) falls asleep, Craven fades into an extreme long shot of Nancy's house. Rather heavy fog rolls in (signaling that this is a dream/fantasy sequence). Craven's synthetic score adds to the

eeriness of the shot: in many ways, this is the depopulated nighttime/nightmare space that we saw in *Halloween*'s nighttime exteriors. It also shares elements with *Friday the 13th*'s isolated, depopulated spaces. Nancy, in white pajamas, exits the house, looking around at the unfamiliar setting she finds herself in (figure 3.24). Nancy's seeming unfamiliarity within what should be a very familiar setting (her own front yard), as well as Craven's eerie score, points us toward the uncanny. This is the suburb of nightmares. This is the isolated, terrifying, no longer familiar space through which the slasher film generates its horror.



Figure 3.24: Isolation: Nancy in nightmare suburbia (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:37:31). BD still.

This uncanniness becomes markedly abject later in the sequence when Nancy is confronted by Tina's corpse. After making her way to the police station and seeing Freddy walk through the cell bars that confine Rod (after he was accused of Tina's murder) (see figure 3.3. above), Nancy, confronted with this horrific breaching of boundaries, calls for Glen to wake up in order to jolt her out of her dream. Instead, Nancy turns around and sees Tina's corpse in its translucent body bag (its transparency gesturing to Anzieu's third "representation of penetration"), snakes slithering around her feet (figure 3.25). Tina's pose also seems to gesture to Catholic statuary, again pointing us towards the realm of ritualized religion. Importantly, Tina's corpse seems to be in a suburban backyard and not at the police station where Nancy saw Rod. Here rational space and time limitations lose their meaning.



Figure 3.25: Abject: Tina's "living" corpse and Catholic statuary (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:40:08). BD still.

Craven cuts back to a shot of Nancy, a horrified look on her face before cutting back to a close-up of Tina's face, blood running from her eyes. Craven then cuts to an extreme close-up of Tina's mouth as a centipede crawls out of the orifice (gesturing to Anzieu's second "representation of penetration"). We are reminded here of Kristeva's remarks on the corpse as a source of abjection. For Kristeva, the lifeless body causes the experience of abjection because it directly confronts the subject with his/her own dissolution: "[the] corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death . . . upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile" (3). For Kristeva, "the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything" (3). The corpse here puts us "at the border of [one's] condition as a living being" (3). While certainly gesturing to the

abject (through the corpse as well as the blurring of the boundary between living and dead), this shot also draws particular attention to the fragility of reality itself, as the corpse here is not (quite) dead.

A few moments later, as Nancy retreats from this abject sight, she calls out for Glen to wake up. She cries out, in desperation: "Are you there?" To which Freddy's disembodied body responds, "I'm here." Then Freddy suddenly appears behind her. She screams, runs away, and a chase sequence reminiscent of the chase sequences of many other slasher films begins. Again, however, the rules of reality do not apply to this chase sequence. Once Freddy begins to pursue Nancy, chasing her into her house, the house itself becomes a claustrophobic prison, trapping rather than protecting Nancy. Throughout A Nightmare on Elm Street, the film engages and in some ways seeks to make more apparent, the operations of dream/fantasy as well as the techniques of the dream-work as they appear in the cinema. In its approach to the boundaries between fantasy/dream and reality, Craven's film engages a sort of "dream logic" (Metz 122). Although, as Metz notes, "[between] the logic of the most 'absurd' film and that of the dream, there will always remain a difference, because in the latter what is astonishing does not astonish and consequently nothing is absurd" (122). So, while nothing feels absurd (only abjectly frightening) to Nancy during the dream, a lot seems absurd and irrational in the filmic approximation of the dream or fantasy.

While the on-screen fantasies/dreams of the characters in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* are the products of characters either asleep or in some other way fantasizing (with the reality principle suspended), the filmic images interpreted by the spectator

are not received as if the reality principle were suspended. They are instead consciously (at least to some extent) examined, interpreted, or discarded by the spectator (123). Metz notes that this conscious process of comprehension and interpretation demonstrates that a form of secondary revision is constantly operating on the spectator (123). In completing this process of secondary revision, the viewer is implicated in the cinema's chain of meaning production.



Figure 3.26: Nancy trapped by quicksand stairs (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:41:05). BD still.

Craven uses this disconnect between the viewer's and the character's comprehension of fantasy/reality to point to the (unperceived) claustrophobia of the suburban home. This appears most obviously in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* when Nancy, being pursued by Freddy, attempts to run up the stairs in her home and her feet get stuck in stairs that have turned into a glue-like substance (figure 3.26).³ Within the reality of her dream, this appears frustrating but not "absurd" to Nancy. These

³ This image directly channels one of Freud's own dreams, recorded in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which Freud, lunging up a set of stairs, sees a maid approach him, feels ashamed and attempts to move up the stairs even more quickly only to find that he "was glued to the steps and unable to budge from the spot" (*SE IV* 238).

glue-like quicksand stairs point to the uncanny. These stairs, a familiar feature of twostory houses, turn into their opposite: rather than helping one move from the house's downstairs level to its upstairs level, they trap. Rather than supporting one's weight, they collapse. This gestures directly to the claustrophobia of the suburban house in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (and in the slasher film more generally). It also gestures to the masochism of the spectator, as the viewer is trapped, alongside the character. Here the viewer is very much aligned with Nancy as she is pursued by Freddy. The viewer shares this feeling of being trapped both in the film's diegesis (which blurs fantasy and reality) and in the act of watching/consuming the film. And while there may be sadistic elements of this watching, the sadistic-masochistic viewer is here much more aligned with masochism.



Figure 3.27: Freddy bursts through Nancy's mirror (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:41:26). BD still.

While Freddy pursues and terrorizes Nancy, moments later we are reminded that the monster actually comes from within and is at least partially generated through the workings of condensation and displacement. The aggression that he brings is both a self-aggression and an aggression directed outward. It is also an aggression that is usually repressed. Once Nancy escapes from the quicksand steps, she runs upstairs and into her bedroom, slamming the door behind her. She stares into a large mirror hung on the inside of her bedroom door and attempts to trivialize the threat posed by Freddy, screaming: "This is just a dream! This isn't real!" We see Nancy's reflection in the mirror in close-up as she attempts to convince herself that Freddy actually poses no threat to her. After a few moments, however, Craven cuts to an over-the-shoulder shot of Nancy with her head in her hands as she stands in front of the mirror. Freddy suddenly breaks through the mirror and continues his assault on Nancy (figure 3.27). The mirror here at once points to self-reflection as well as the fact that the figure of Freddy comes from within. Meanwhile, the shattering of the mirror (and Nancy's reflection with it) continues to point to the abject collapse of meaning on display at various points in the film.

Freddy's internal origins are most apparent in an earlier sequence in which he assaults Nancy as she falls asleep in the bath. In this scene (which acts a sort of reworking of the famous shower scene from *Psycho*), as Nancy dozes off while reciting the jump rope rhyme from earlier in the film, Freddy's glove emerges from the bathwater between her legs (figure 3.28). In a POV shot from Nancy's perspective (although Nancy appears to be asleep), Freddy's knife glove gets closer and closer, threatening Nancy, and through the POV, threatening us (figure 3.29). Although Nancy is briefly woken up by her mother, once she falls asleep again, Freddy is able to pull Nancy into a dreamt/fantasied pool (a distortion of the tub), in an attempt to drown her. While drawing attention to the transitions between falling asleep and

waking up, this sequence also draws particular attention to the fact that the suburban home has already been penetrated. It already offers no safety. Instead, even one of its most private rooms is already Freddy's domain.



Figure 3.28: Falling asleep: Nancy and Freddy in the bath (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:32:19). BD still.

Meanwhile, the killing of Glen also demonstrates Freddy's ability to blur/destroy all boundaries between fantasy/dream and reality. At this point it is unclear whether or not this murder takes place in reality or in a dream (and if it does take place in a dream, it is rather unclear whether it is within Nancy's dream or Glen's dream). While Glen certainly seems to have fallen asleep, the dream here has real world, yet completely irrational consequences. Fantasy/dream and reality have been blurred to indistinction. In this sequence, Freddy both penetrates the suburban home and destroys all rules of reality. In this sequence, Glen lies asleep with a small television on his lap and headphones on his head. Suddenly Freddy's arm protrudes from the bed in a shot somewhat reminiscent of the shot in which Jack's head was grabbed from under the bed in *Friday the 13th*. Freddy's arm pulls Glen (along with his electronic devices) into his bed to notes of the film's synthetic score, drawing attention to the absurdity/irrationality of the dream.



Figure 3.29: In the bath, Freddy threatens us (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:32:24). BD still.

Glen screams but eventually disappears into the bed. Craven cuts to an image of Nancy screaming for Glen in her own home. Craven then cuts back to an image of Glen's room: Glen is gone but we can see the hole that he was pulled into. Suddenly, huge, unreal amounts of blood shoot upward out of the bed. Craven cuts to a high-angle shot of the blood rushing out of the bed and coating the ceiling in red (figure 3.30). Craven delivers a few more shots from different angles of this special effect. Moments later, Glen's mother checks on him, and sees this horrific sight (confirming that this event has actually occurred in the film's diegetic reality). The blood continues to flow and the gravitational pull of the room shifts slightly as if to say that the rules of gravity no longer apply in this diegetic reality.

The huge amounts of blood also point to the fact that by this point in the film the irrational has taken precedence over the rational in the film's diegetic reality. Furthermore, this huge, fantastic amount of blood provides a sort of metacommentary on the slasher film and the criticism of the slasher film: while critics of the films often decried them as "bloodbaths," here Craven almost delivers on an actual bloodbath, soaking Glen's room in a horrifically-exaggerated amount of blood. The hyperbolic amount of blood that Craven offers in this scene essentially taunts critics of the slasher film, at once drawing attention to the popular narrative around the slasher film's graphic violence while still delighting in that violence. So, while the prop of Freddy's knifed glove essentially provides a metacommentary on the sharp weapons used by villains in the slasher film as well as the popular (and academic) criticisms of the use of such sharp objects to dispatch with teenage protagonists (by, among other things, magnifying the monster's weapon and the damage that it does to the skin and the body to terrific proportions), a similar thing occurs here regarding the graphically violent/special make-up effects of the slasher film (literally delivering the buckets of blood that critics claimed could be found in the slasher film).⁴

⁴ Interestingly, this is another sequence from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* that gave Craven difficulties with CARA. According to Kendrick, this scene was "singled out" as containing an "excessive" amount of blood (151). As Kendrick notes, "when Wes Craven submitted *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) to the rating administration, he was told to return to the editing room and remove some of the graphic gore before it could be rated" (151). Craven at first "argued that the scene was 'obviously symbolic', since we never see what happens to [Glen's] body" (151). Furthermore:

When that argument didn't work, [Craven] sent CARA a videotape of the famous dream image from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* in which a literal ocean of blood comes pouring out of an elevator, flooding a hotel hallway and eventually washing over the camera lens (this particular image is repeated at various points throughout the film). To Craven, these scenes were basically identical, as they both involved large amounts of blood fulfilling a symbolic purpose, which meant it made no sense that his use of such imagery was outside the bounds of an R-rated film whereas Kubrick's was not. (151)

However, according to Craven, CARA "sent it [the videotape] back unwatched, saying it was apples and oranges and they don't compare one film with another" (Craven qtd. in Kendrick 151). For Kendrick, this gestures to "the feeling [that] still lingered that the major studios were given more preferential treatment when it came to the line between R and X" (151).



Figure 3.30: In Glen's room: Buckets of blood (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1:08:41). BD still.

Interestingly, prior to Freddy's killing of Glen (which, erupting into the film's diegetic reality as it does, demands the attention of the parents in the film), Nancy's mother's reaction to Nancy's dreaming is to make the suburban home even more carceral by placing bars over the windows (figure 3.31). We might read this as a partial attempt to re-establish the boundaries that Freddy so easily penetrates. However, we are again reminded that this monster comes from within (although he really comes from within the community, specifically the parents, as a result of their violent actions). The bars on the windows do not protect, they cannot protect, they only trap. Here the suburban house is literally turned into a prison, an unhealthy and unprotective envelope, as a result of the actions of the parents.⁵

⁵ Here we are reminded of Gill's work on the function of the family in the slasher film (discussed in the previous chapter). As Gill notes (perhaps too broadly for the slasher film in general, but very fittingly for this film, particularly with reference to Nancy's mother's alcoholism), the parents that appear in slasher films are often "impotent," "hapless," and "distracted" (17). Additionally, they are "unaware of their children's problems and likely to dismiss or discount their warnings and fears" (17). According to Gill, "parents like these need guarding, and children frequently find themselves in the role of protector" (17). In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Nancy certainly finds herself "in the role of protector" although, in the end, she proves unable to truly protect her mother. Furthermore, as noted above, it is actually the violent actions of the parents in this film that find their expression through Freddy. In this way, Freddy may actually be understood as a threat posed by the parents to their children.

Ultimately, like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* plays with ideas of safety connected to ordinary middle-class spaces in order to generate part of its horror. Here the suburb and the suburban home become, rather than spaces of security, spaces of horror. Rather than functioning as the space of white middle-class fantasies of prosperity and security, the suburb becomes a space of nightmares. However, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* draws attention to this transformation through reality-bending (and reality-destruction). In modeling its action on a sort of a dream-logic, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* mixes and matches, blurs, and otherwise confuses diegetic reality and diegetic fantasy to such an extent that they become virtually indistinguishable from one another.



Figure 3.31: The suburban prison (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1:23:41). BD still.

CONCLUSION: INTERROGATING THE CINEMA AND THE SLASHER FILM

Whenever we see Freddy Krueger, we are reminded of his impurity and of the abject potential of his monstrosity as well as the shortcomings of physical control as a way of curbing his monstrosity, a monstrosity that, in the end, comes from within

(from the psyche of the dreamer). *A Nightmare on Elm Street* offers its central critique on this note (the blurring of inside and outside, fantasy and dream, self and other). Freddy's impurity/monstrosity is an impurity/monstrosity that cannot be satisfactorily cleansed. The aggression that he embodies can no longer be adequately repressed. Even though the teens' parents killed Freddy, he returns even more monstrous and powerful, essentially extending into infinity the "open ending" that is characteristic of the slasher film. While he was a child-killer, once he is killed he has the power to attack his victims at their most vulnerable (in the decreased state of awareness that comes with sleeping and dreaming). He also impacts us when we are in a similar state (at the cinema). Thus, Freddy essentially provides a reflection on the ways in which the cinema can tap into our own anxieties concerning vulnerability, the instability of meaning, and ultimately annihilation.

At this point, it is helpful to briefly refer to Metz's observations about the "complex mixture of similarities and differences" between "the filmic state" and "the dream state" (106). For Metz, the cinema offers a sort of "waking sleep" (116). As Metz argues, "the filmic state as induced by traditional fiction films . . . is marked by a general tendency to lower wakefulness, to take a step in the direction of sleep and dreaming" (106-107). Furthermore, "it encourages narcissistic withdrawal and the indulgence of phantasy" (107). Ultimately, for Metz, the film and the dream are quite distinct, but this distinction comes down to one key fact: "the film spectator is a man awake, whereas the dreamer is a man asleep" (108). As Metz notes, the "delusion" that the cinematic text offers, in relation to the delusion of the dream, is "perhaps more

formidable, because it is the delusion of a man awake" while "[the] dream delusion has been partly neutralized, ever since man dreamt, by the bromide that 'this was only a dream'" (109). The diegetic blurring of reality and fantasy within *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, however, as well as *A Nightmare on Elm Street*'s status as a film, forcefully pushes back against this "bromide." Ultimately, this distinction between waking and sleeping is precisely the terrain that *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, in its abject destruction of the boundaries between fantasy and reality (boundaries which are never fully re-established in the film), seeks to destabilize and throw into question.

In the end, while all slasher films are assemblages of elements from previous films (and Nowell goes to great lengths to make this point), to a far greater extent than any of its precursors or contemporaries, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* functions as a compilation of the fundamental features of the slasher film. However, this compilation is ultimately one that deconstructs, calls into question, and problematizes the representative features of the slasher film (particularly, through the scapegoat figure of Freddy Krueger, the aggressive/passive, sadistic-masochistic subjectivities offered by the slasher film). In the process, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* questions the entire series of looks at work in the cinema as well as any claim a cinematic text may make to accurately represent reality.

Ultimately, if the slasher film is a film type that constantly enters into intertextual exchange with other films (including, but not limited to, other slasher films), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* constantly enters into such intertextual exchanges not only with other films but also with the entire abjectly fantastic/realistic apparatus

of the cinema (a sort of intermedial exchange, but one that questions and subverts that very same medium and its structures of pleasure). *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is a film that, in its exploration of the codes of the slasher film and of the cinema, explores, above all, the sadistic-masochistic subjectivity constructed in looking at, and to some extent participating in, the enunciation of the projected image.

As Clover notes, drawing a connection between the horror film and "oral narrative," the "field" of the horror film "is a field in which there is in some sense no original, no real or right text, but only variants" (11). For Clover, the horror film exists in "a world in which . . . the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself" (11). Meanwhile, as Cohen argues of homage in the cinematic text (in his discussion of Chris Marker's La jetée [1962] and Terry Gilliam's 12 Monkeys [1995]): "to pay a filmic homage goes beyond the act of admiration or emulation, towards an act of rivalry or competition with a predecessor" (161). Cohen goes on to note, however, that "[the] homage can just as easily be cannibalized by the specular film that it emulates," which he argues may be the case as regards 12 Monkeys' relationship to La jetée (161). However, the same may not necessarily be said of Craven's film and its relationships to *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. Craven's film is ultimately not as wedded to its foundational material as Gilliam's film. Instead, it works through an entire film type, privileging no film over another and, in the process, destroying the entire history of the slasher film. In the end, if Halloween explodes middle-class fantasies of small-town America and Friday the 13th explodes teenage fantasies of escape and rebellion, A Nightmare on Elm Street explodes the entire notion of reality.

Works Cited

12 Monkeys. Dir. Terry Gilliam. 1995. Universal, 2009. BD.

- Anzieu, Didier. *The Skin Ego*. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Blake, Linnie. *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008. Print.
- Clover, Carol J. Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- Cohen, Alain J.-J. "Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Aggressivity and Sublimation in Film and Painting." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 15.2 (2010): 135-62. Print.
- ---. "*Twelve Monkeys, Vertigo* and *La Jetée*: Postmodern Mythologies and Cult Films." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1.1 (2003): 146-63. *InformaWorld*. Web. 8 June 2009.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 2001. PDF.
- Federn, Paul. *Ego Psychology and the Psychoses*. 1952. Ed. Edoardo Weiss. New York: Basic, 1961. Print.
- Fisher, Charles, Joseph Byrne, Adele Edwards, and Edwin Kahn. "A Psychophysiological Study of Nightmares." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 18 (1970): 747-782. *Sage*. Web. 30 May 2009.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IV (1900): The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1962. Print.
- ---. "The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and On Dreams." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume V* (1900-1901): The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and on Dreams. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1962. Print.

- ---. "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II)." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition* of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XV (1915-1916): Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II). London: Hogarth, 1963. Print.
- ---. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.* 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.
- Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.
- Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.
- Gill, Pat. "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family." *Journal of Film and Video* 54.4 (2002): 16-30. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. Print.
- Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.
- La jetée. Dir. Chris Marker. 1962. Criterion, 2012. BD.
- Kendrick, James. *Hollywood Bloodshed: Violence in 1980s American Cinema*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2009. PDF.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. Print.
- Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle.* New York: Continuum, 2011. PDF.

A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry." *Movies and Methods*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 542-58. Print. Trans. of "Le cinéma de poésie." Trans. Marianne de Vettimo and Jacques Bontemps. *Cahiers du cinéma* 171 (1965): 35-44. Psycho. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. 1960. Universal, 2010. BD.

Studlar, Gaylyn. In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. Print.

CONCLUSION

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE: THE MONSTER INSIDE

This dissertation has argued that, contrary to what many detractors of the slasher film maintain and contrary to the impression many other non-detractors may have, the slasher film is not fundamentally or even primarily sadistic. Instead, this dissertation has argued that the slasher film is profoundly sadistic-masochistic. This unique, seemingly contradictory aspect of the slasher film operates primarily at the level of the viewer subjectivity and is constructed through the key representative features of the slasher film, a subgenre or "cycle" within the horror genre (Nowell 5; A. Klein 5). Through analyses of Carpenter's *Halloween*, Cunningham's *Friday the 13th*, and Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, three exemplars of the slasher film, we have argued that despite the fact that these films have been attacked in popular and academic circles as sadistic, misogynistic blood-baths, they should be understood, above all, by the transgressive, disordered, sadistic-masochistic subjectivities that they offer to the viewer.

Through the use of POV shots (from both the victims' and the villains' perspectives), as well as a sort of "free indirect subjectivity," these films directly play with assumptions about the sadism of the viewer, the masochism of the viewer, as well as the gendering of the viewer (Pasolini 551). At the same time, we have argued that these subjectivities encourage identification, to some extent, across gender boundaries (thus gesturing to an abject destruction of those boundaries) (Studlar 32). Ultimately,

the slasher film doubles-over and destabilizes subjectivity, at times playing almost exclusively on sadism and at other times playing almost exclusively on masochism. Sometimes, however, the slasher film plays on both sadism and masochism simultaneously. On this note, this dissertation has argued that the slasher film taps into the essential repressed aggression of the viewer, an aggression that is always directed both outward and inward. Here the slasher film produces a viewer that is at once sadistic and masochistic as it unleashes urges to control and to be controlled. In the end, as we have argued, the ultimate function of the slasher film is a questioning of the cinema's (and the viewer's) sadistic tendencies as well as the cinema's (and the viewer's) masochistic tendencies.

As we mention above, the slasher film may be best understood as a "film cycle," a short-lived hybridized film type operating within a more established film genre. As Amanda Ann Klein argues, drawing on the works of Rick Altman and Steve Neale on film genre, the film cycle "needs to repeat the same images and plots over and over within a relatively short period of time" and "must capitalize on an audience's interest in a subject before it moves on to something else" (13). A short duration is therefore a requirement of the film cycle (13). Furthermore, as Klein argues, film cycles "have . . . been marginalized in critical, popular, and academic discourses because of their often-deviant subject matter" (6). Additionally, they are often "assemblages" of elements of other film genres and subgenres and therefore "resist neat categorizations and have the potential to disrupt or complicate the discrete categories frequently generated by genre studies" (6). Drawing on the work of

Nowell, we may observe that this is particularly pertinent for the slasher film as it is very much an "assemblage" of various commercially successful trends in cinema (Klein 6; Nowell 146-47). However, while both Nowell and Neale have discussed the "slasher film" or "teen slasher film" as a cycle, this dissertation has expanded on these essentially plot- and market- driven analyses and, in analyzing the representative features of the slasher film, has analyzed the psychological and sociocultural ramifications of this particular group of films. Ultimately, we have argued that the assemblages offered by these films should not be reduced to the purely economic aspects of those films and have sought to interrogate the striking psychological aspects of these films.

In creating and analyzing an inventory of the representative features of the slasher film, this dissertation has argued that a central defining characteristic of the horror film is its engagement with unconscious repressed desires and aggressions. These desires and aggressions are personal as well as cultural. In this way, this dissertation has argued that the slasher film provides a metaphor through which to understand the specific historical moment of the early- to mid- 1980s, a moment most clearly defined by a preoccupation with exclusion and security. We have argued that the slasher film at once explodes notions of security at the level of the individual self, the local community, and the country more generally, and allows us to better comprehend this historical moment, a moment actively shaped and re-shaped by social protest and neoliberal foreign and domestic policy.

This dissertation has also argued that through the construction of a sadistic-masochistic viewer, the slasher film constantly interrogates the institution of the narrative cinema and its structures of pleasure. We have found that contrary to the ways in which these films have been read (as brutal, misogynistic texts), they actually critique the aggression inherent in the narrative cinema's structures of looking. We have also found that while they do not completely disavow this aggression, they construct pleasure through a confusion and disordering of aggressive sadism and passive masochism.

We have argued that the slasher film is constructed of a number of key representative features. The most obvious of these representative features is the use of primarily white middle-class young adult protagonists. In our investigation, we have found that psychologically, the use of these young male and female characters at once gestures to innocence and undercuts this innocence, at least partially, through mild transgressions (such as sexual activity and drug/alcohol use). In their transgressions and the punishments doled out as a result of them, these characters tug on the viewer's sadistic desire to punish as well the viewer's more masochistic desire to protect. In the end, however, these sadistic desires are most forcefully questioned through the audience's masochistic and cross-gender identification with the slasher film's male and female teenage protagonists. This dissertation has argued that this cross-gender identification taps into repressed infantile desires and has found that while the slasher film taps into repressed desires, it also taps into repressed aggressions. We have argued that these desires and aggressions must be considered both psychologically and socioculturally as they are both personal desires and (self)aggressions and societal desires and (self)aggressions.

In our investigation of these films, we have observed that they are most often set in white middle-class utopian-esque "safer" spaces such as the American small town (as in *Halloween*) or suburb (as in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*) as well as the summer camp or other spaces associated with teenager leisure/freedom/rebellion (as in *Friday the 13th*). On this note, we have argued that another major marker of the slasher film is the turning of ordinary, "safer" white middle-class spaces into their opposites, causing an upsurge of uncanniness and hurtling the spectator toward an abject collapse of meaning (threatening the destruction of boundaries between self/other, me/not-me, and insider/outsider).

Applying Anzieu's theory to the slasher films, we have argued that while these "safer" white middle-class spaces normally function as sorts of secondary skins, barriers, and boundaries for their inhabitants (marking off the suburb, the small town, or the summer camp as separate, insular spaces of exclusion), we have argued that the slasher film representationally turns the imagined secondary skins that psychologically protect these communities inside out: no longer free spaces that offer a sort of protected/limited liberty, these spaces become carceral spaces of claustrophobia and persecution. We have argued that, through the slasher film, the imagined secondary skins that protect these "safer" spaces are exposed as being always already faulty secondary skins, "envelopes" that never protected, only offered thoroughly rotten fantasies of protection. Through this metaphor of the protective secondary skin, this

dissertation has argued that the slasher film ultimately destroys white middle-class notions of security.

In causing these "safer" white middle-class spaces to touch on the uncanny, this dissertation has argued that the slasher film employs several key stylistic elements. First and foremost, we have observed that these films employ a mise-en-scène that emphasizes the physical and psychological isolation of the film's characters: empty streets, empty houses, and empty summer camps. Nighttime (and shots with extremely low light) are often used to further emphasize the isolation of characters and representationally destroy the communities in which their actions take place. These are all on display in *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, among many other slasher films.

We have also found that sound figures prominently into this construction of isolation and abandonment through anxiety-producing scores, vocal performances of terror (including screaming, panting, and crying), and the sounds that mark the stalking of the victim by the monster. These auditory markers of stalking, including the sounds of the victim's and villain's footfalls as well the sounds of the heavy breathing of the villain, imply that characters are being watched and followed. This breathing also appears in an altered form in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in Freddy's disembodied voice and laughter as he stalks his villains through their dreams. We have found that these elements all add into the stylistic construction of isolation and pair this isolation with pleasures and anxieties related voyeurism (both watching and

being watched). We have found that through sound, the slasher film taps into our individual desires (related to voyeurism) as well as anxieties over being exposed.

This dissertation has also argued that after *Friday the 13th*, special make-up effects began to take center stage in the slasher film. After *Friday the 13th*, we have observed a greater tendency towards graphic violence/special make-up effects (and a continued focus on the often very sharp instruments of murder that the monster uses to destroy the bodies of his victims). As we have demonstrated, these special make-up effects, even in brief glimpses, provide examples of Anzieu's "representations of penetration" and gesture toward Kristeva's concept of the "abject" (Anzieu 31; Kristeva 1). On this note we have argued that the slasher film's special make-up effects point to anxieties over the skin being pierced, with the destruction of the skin functioning as representational obliterations of the body, the psyche, and the community. We have argued that this threatened destruction of meaning mirrors, in some ways, the construction of the sadistic-masochistic viewing position, a viewing position that destabilizes and destroys the narrative cinema's conventional pleasures of looking.

Another vital representative feature of the slasher film, as we have observed above, is the monster/villain. In our analyses of these films, we have observed the visual accentuating of markers of difference/monstrosity/anomaly. We have argued that these visual makers of monstrosity tend to gesture toward Anzieu's "Barrier variable" and "Penetration of Boundary variable" in that they often involve the skin and gesture to the instability of the binaries of "normal" and "abnormal," be it through

a mask (as in *Halloween, Terror Train*, and the sequels to *Friday the 13th*) or an ugly, destroyed, or burned skin (as in *The Burning* and later *A Nightmare on Elm Street*) (Anzieu 31). These films also blur the line between fantasy/nightmare and reality as the slasher villain often seems able to break the rules of reality (be it through the superhuman strength and omnipresence of Michael Myers or the more literal blurring of fantasy and reality of Freddy Krueger). As our analysis has shown, this blurring of normal and abnormal is an absolutely key feature of the slasher film as it gestures to the internal origins of the monster (a monster internal to the small town, internal to the suburb, internal to the middle class, and internal to the self).

As we have argued above, this blurring of fantasy and reality points us toward the blurring of self and other distinctions. These monsters come from within ourselves and this fact accounts for a portion of the slasher film's ability to evoke a mixture of curiosity and repulsion, pleasure and un-pleasure, among viewers and potential viewers. On this note, we have argued that these monsters function as sorts of impure scapegoats, or rather as representations of scapegoats. They are essentially repressed aggressive instincts turned back outward and then destroyed by the communities that created them (although, through the open ending, they tend to escape and return). However, in each of these films, some form of the monster is thought destroyed and then turned loose (as Myers escapes, Jason is "reborn" from the lake, and Freddy seems to have either successfully infected diegetic reality or trapped all of the characters in a dream world). However, all of these open endings point to the fact that these monsters, being from within us, must escape (and later return).

THE SLASHER FILM AS CONTAGION

Where has the slasher film gone? What is its legacy? Where has the sadistic-masochistic viewer gone in the horror genre? Where might we see the blurring of sadism and masochism that we saw in the slasher film? If, looking back at the 1980s, we might understand the slasher film itself as a sort of scapegoat, where has this threat gone? Has it vanished entirely? Or does it continue to infect the horror genre? While we began this dissertation with a reference to the current wave of zombie films and television shows, we might argue that the sadism-masochism of the slasher does not actually appear in the zombie. Instead, we hypothesize that it currently appears in so-called "torture porn" films, a group of films so reviled by some audience and critics that responses to it make reactions to the slasher film seem comically overstated. This new cycle of the horror film should be examined in closer detail employing the psychological and sociocultural methods that this dissertation has applied to the slasher film.

It should also be noted that the slasher film was merely one expression of an aesthetic that has appeared in literature for an extraordinarily long time (going back, at least, to the notable dismemberments of Greek mythology, particularly those that involve Medea). This ancient aesthetic of dismemberment found expression in the slasher film and continues to find expression in various contemporary genres, subgenres, and cycles in literature and film (to say nothing of the news media). So while the slasher film has in many ways disappeared, and while its peak was of an extremely short duration, its violent aesthetics and violated subjectivities remain with

us to this day (both in the sadistic-masochistic pleasures that it offers and in the sorts of protests that violent entertainment garners from time-to-time).

Furthermore, a greater understanding of the perverse, destabilized, sadistic-masochistic subjectivities offered by the slasher film is vital to understanding the current wave of horror, from zombie films and television shows to the more "disreputable" horror films dubbed "torture porn" (Kendrick 148). This group of horror films prominently features sequences of realistic graphic violence and special make-up effects and ranges from blockbusting American films (such as the *Saw* franchise) to smaller, "art house" and/or foreign films such as Takashi Miike's *Ôdishon [Audition]* (1999), Alexandre Aja's *Haute tension [High Tension]* (2003), Greg Mclean's *Wolf Creek* (2005), David Moreau and Xavier Palud's *Ils [Them]* (2006), and Srdan Spasojević's *Srpski film [A Serbian Film]* (2010). While the slasher film invaded the home through television and home video, "torture porn" invades the home not only through television but also through the internet and video-on-demand. In a way then it is a much more viral and threatening cycle of horror than was the slasher film.

While the figure of the zombie certainly confronts us with an uncanny form of the (no longer) human, the so-called "torture porn" film confronts us with something much closer to the slasher film: an assailed, disordered, violated subjectivity that is at once sadistic and masochistic. While the zombie may point toward a latent monstrosity within the human being, the villains of the "torture porn" genre are (still) human, their sadistic monstrosities have just been brought to the surface. We offer the

hypothesis that these violations at the level of subjectivity parallel the violations of the slasher film. Perhaps tellingly, these films have garnered much more condemnation, revulsion, and outright censorship than have zombie films and television shows. While the graphic violence and special make-up effects of the "torture porn" film may be one of its major selling points and its most obvious area of protest, we offer the hypothesis that what actually distresses detractors of this cycle of the horror film is the way in which it representationally and psychologically blurs the human and the monster, the sadistic and the masochistic (although we might argue that this cycle is even more masochistic than the slasher film). In a way that brings the slasher film to mind, the "torture porn" film draws attention to the monster inside each of us. With the framework of the sadistic-masochistic viewer in mind, this cycle should be investigated further.

Works Cited

Altman, Rick. Film/Genre. 1999. London: BFI, 2000. PDF.

- Anzieu, Didier. *The Skin Ego*. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- The Burning. Dir. Tony Maylam. 1981. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2007. DVD.
- Cohen, Alain J.-J. "Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Aggressivity and Sublimation in Film and Painting." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 15.2 (2010): 135-62. Print.
- ---. "*Twelve Monkeys, Vertigo* and *La Jetée*: Postmodern Mythologies and Cult Films." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1.1 (2003): 146-63. *InformaWorld*. Web. 8 June 2009.
- Cooper, L. Andrew. "The Indulgence of Critique: Relocating the Sadistic Voyeur in Dario Argento's Opera." Quarterly Review of Film and Video 22.1 (2005): 63-72. Taylor & Francis. Web. 10 April 2013.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 2001. PDF.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.
- Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.
- Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.

Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.

Haute tension [High Tension]. Dir. Alexandre Aja. 2003. Lions Gate, 2005. DVD.

- Ils [Them]. Dir. David Moreau and Xavier Palud. 2006. Dark Sky, 2008. DVD.
- Kendrick, James. *Hollywood Bloodshed: Violence in 1980s American Cinema*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2009. PDF.

- Klein, Amanda Ann. American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures. Austin: U of Texas P, 2011.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Neale, Steve. Genre and Hollywood. London: Routledge, 2000. PDF.
- A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.
- Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle.* New York: Continuum, 2011. PDF.
- Ôdishon [Audition]. Dir. Takashi Miike. 1999. Shout! Factory, 2009. BD.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry." *Movies and Methods*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 542-58. Print. Trans. of "Le cinéma de poésie." Trans. Marianne de Vettimo and Jacques Bontemps. *Cahiers du cinéma* 171 (1965): 35-44.
- Saw. Dir. James Wan. Lion Gate, 2004. Film.
- Srpski film [A Serbian Film]. Dir. Srđan Spasojević. 2010. Invincible, 2012. DVD.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. Print.
- Terror Train. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. 1980. 20th Century Fox, 2004. DVD.
- Wolf Creek. Dir. Greg Mclean. Dimension, 2005. Film.

REFERENCES

12 Monkeys. Dir. Terry Gilliam. 1995. Universal, 2009. BD.

- Adams, Parveen. "Per Os(cillation)." *Camera Obscura* 6.2 (1988): 6-29. *Duke*. Web. 25 March 2013.
- Altman, Rick. Film/Genre. 1999. London: BFI, 2000. PDF.
- Animal House. Dir. John Landis. 1978. Universal. Film.
- Anzieu, Didier. The Skin Ego. Trans. Chris Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Print.
- Biafra, Jello. No More Cocoons. Alternative Tentacles, 1987. MP3.
- Black Christmas. Dir. Bob Clark. 1974. Critical Mass, 2008. BD.
- Blake, Linnie. *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008. Print.
- Bracke, Peter M. Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th. London: Titan, 2005. Print.
- The Burning. Dir. Tony Maylam. 1981. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2007. DVD.
- Caddyshack. Dir. Harold Ramis. 1980. Orion. Film.
- Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Clover, Carol J. Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.
- Cohen, Alain J.-J. "Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Aggressivity and Sublimation in Film and Painting." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* 15.2 (2010): 135-62. Print.

- ---. "*Twelve Monkeys, Vertigo* and *La Jetée*: Postmodern Mythologies and Cult Films." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 1.1 (2003): 146-63. *InformaWorld*. Web. 8 June 2009.
- Cooper, L. Andrew. "The Indulgence of Critique: Relocating the Sadistic Voyeur in Dario Argento's Opera." Quarterly Review of Film and Video 22.1 (2005): 63-72. Taylor & Francis. Web. 10 Apr. 2013.
- Creed, Barbara. The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Cruising. Dir. William Friedkin. 1980. Warner, 2007. DVD.
- Damien: Omen II. Dir. Don Taylor. 1978. 20th Century Fox, 2006. DVD.
- Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Metropolitan, 1998. Print.
- Dawn of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. 1978. United. Film.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Trans. Jean McNeil. *Masochism*. New York: Zone, 1991. 9-138. Print.
- Django Unchained. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. 2012. Weinstein/Columbia. Film.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 1966. London: Routledge, 2001. PDF.
- Dressed to Kill. Dir. Brian De Palma. 1980. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2001. DVD.
- Drezner, Daniel W. "The Lessons of Zombie-Mania." *The Wall Street Journal* 6 April 2013: n. pag. Web. 5 May 2013.
- Dworkin, Andrea. Pornography: Men Possessing Women. 1979. New York: Plume, 1989. Print.
- Edelstein, David. "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn." *New York Magazine* 26 Jan. 2006: n. pag. Web. 22 Aug. 2011.
- Federn, Paul. *Ego Psychology and the Psychoses*. 1952. Ed. Edoardo Weiss. New York: Basic, 1961. Print.

- Fisher, Charles, Joseph Byrne, Adele Edwards, and Edwin Kahn. "A Psychophysiological Study of Nightmares." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 18 (1970): 747-782. *Sage*. Web. 30 May 2009.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*. 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-64. Print.
- ---. "Civilizations and Its Discontents." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 57-146. Print.
- ---. "The Ego and the Id." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1975. 1-66. Print.
- ---. "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX (1925-1926): An Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, The Question of Lay Analysis and Other Works.* 1959. London: Hogarth, 1975. 75-176. Print.
- ---. "The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and On Dreams." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume V (1900-1901): The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and on Dreams. 1961. London: Hogarth, 1962. Print.
- ---. "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II)." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition* of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XV (1915-1916): Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II). London: Hogarth, 1963. Print.
- ---. "The 'Uncanny'." Trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud. Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.* 1955. London: Hogarth, 1975. 217-56. Print.

Friday the 13th. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 1999. DVD.

Friday the 13th Part 2. Dir. Steve Miner. 1981. Paramount, 2009. BD.

Friday the 13th Uncut. Dir. Sean S. Cunningham. 1980. Paramount, 2009. BD.

- Giles, Dennis. "Conditions of Pleasure in Horror Cinema." *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film. Revised Edition.* Eds. Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004. 36-49. Print.
- Gill, Pat. "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family." *Journal of Film and Video* 54.4 (2002): 16-30. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. Print.
- Gore, Tipper. *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*. 1987. New York: Bantam, 1988. Print.
- Gorp! Dir. Joseph Ruben. 1980. American Intl. Film.
- Grainge, Paul, Mark Jancovich, and Sharon Montieth. *Film Histories: An Introduction and Reader.* 2007. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012. Print.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print.
- Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Anchor Bay, 2007. BD.
- Haute tension [High Tension]. Dir. Alexandre Aja. 2003. Lions Gate, 2005. DVD.
- Hell Night. Dir. Tom DeSimone. 1981. Anchor Bay, 1999. DVD.
- Hostel. Dir. Eli Roth. 2005. Lionsgate. Film.
- Hostel: Part II. Dir. Eli Roth. 2007. Lionsgate. Film.
- Ils [Them]. Dir. David Moreau and Xavier Palud. 2006. Dark Sky, 2008. DVD.
- Jaws 2. Dir. Jeannot Szwarc. 1978. Universal. Film.
- Kendrick, James. *Hollywood Bloodshed: Violence in 1980s American Cinema*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2009. PDF.

- Kernberg, Otto F. Aggression in Personality Disorders and Perversions. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992. Print.
- Klein, Amanda Ann. American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures. Austin: U of Texas P, 2011.
- Klein, Melanie. "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States." *The Selected Melanie Klein*. Ed. Juliet Mitchell. New York: Free, 1986. 116-45. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- La jetée. Dir. Chris Marker. 1962. Criterion, 2012. BD.
- Laplanche, Jean. "Aggressiveness and Sadomasochism." Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*. 1976. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. 85-102. Print.
- Marin, Louis. *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*. Trans. Robert A. Vollrath. 1984. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P Intl., 1990. Print.
- Martin. Dir. George A. Romero. 1976. Anchor Bay, 2000. DVD.
- Meatballs. Dir. Ivan Reitman. 1979. Paramount. Film.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. Print.
- Modleski, Tania. *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*. 1988. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18. *Oxford*. Web. 6 Nov. 2009.
- Neale, Steve. Genre and Hollywood. London: Routledge, 2000. PDF.
- Nicol, Bran. Stalking. London: Reaktion, 2006. PDF.
- A Nightmare on Elm Street. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Warner, 2010. BD.
- Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle.* New York: Continuum, 2011. PDF.

Ôdishon [Audition]. Dir. Takashi Miike. 1999. Shout! Factory, 2009. BD.

The Omen. Dir. Richard Donner. 1976. 20th Century Fox, 2008. BD.

- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry." *Movies and Methods*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Vol. 1. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 542-58. Print. Trans. of "Le cinéma de poésie." Trans. Marianne de Vettimo and Jacques Bontemps. *Cahiers du cinéma* 171 (1965): 35-44.
- The Passion of the Christ. Dir. Mel Gibson. 2004. Icon/Newmarket. Film.
- Peeping Tom. Dir. Michael Powell. 1960. Criterion, 1999. DVD.
- Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997. Print.
- Piranha. Dir. Joe Dante. 1978. New World. Film.
- Prom Night. Dir. Paul Lynch. 1980. Anchor Bay. VHS.
- Psycho. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. 1960. Universal, 2010. BD.
- The Rainmaker. Dir. Joseph Anthony. 1956. Paramount. Film.
- Rickey, Carrie. "Brutalization of Women Is a Constant in Popular Film." Special Report: Violence & Entertainment. Ed. Timothy M. Gray. Spec. issue of Variety 429.10 (2013): 49-51. Print.
- Sandler, Kevin S. *The Naked Truth: Why Hollywood Doesn't Make X-Rated Movies*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2007. PDF.
- Saw. Dir. James Wan. 2004. Lions Gate. Film.
- The Shining. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1980. Warner, 2007. BD.
- Silent Scream. Dir. Denny Harris. 1980. Scorpion, 2009. DVD.
- Siskel, Gene and Roger Ebert, perf. "Extreme Violence Directed at Women." *Sneak Previews.* WTTW, Chicago, 23 Oct. 1980. Television.
- *Snuff.* Dir. Michael Findlay, Roberta Findlay, and Horacio Fredriksson. 1976. Blue Underground, 2003. DVD.

Srpski film [A Serbian Film]. Dir. Srđan Spasojević. 2010. Invincible, 2012. DVD.

- Studlar, Gaylyn. In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. Print.
- Sullivan, Andrew. "The Far-Left Theocon Alliance." *The Dish.* 18 Apr. 2005. Web. 16. Apr. 2013.

Summer Camp. Dir. Chuck Vincent. 1979. Seymour Borde. Film.

- Terror Train. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. 1980. 20th Century Fox, 2004. DVD.
- United States. Dept. of Justice. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography: Final Report. Washington: GPO, 1986. Print.
- ---. Senate. Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. *Record Labeling: Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records*. 99th Cong., 1st sess. Washington: GPO, 1985. Print.
- Vanity Fair. "Exclusive: The Making of Brad Pitt's *World War Z*, from Stunning Budget Overages and a Reshot Ending to Lots of On-Set Drama." *The Hollywood Blog.* Vanity Fair, 30 April 2013. Web. 5 May 2013.
- Vaughn, Stephen. Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."* Berkeley: U of California P, 1989. Print.
- Williams, Tony. *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film.* Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1996. PDF.
- Wolf Creek. Dir. Greg Mclean. Dimension, 2005. Film.
- World War Z. Dir. Marc Forster. 2013. Paramount. Film.