In History No One Can Hear You Scream: Feminism and the Horror Film 1974-1996

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Abstract

Mehls, Robert (M.A. Art History)

In History No One Can Hear You Scream: Feminism and the Horror Film 1974-1996

Thesis Directed by Associate Professor Melinda Barlow

Horror films, like any cultural product, are a result of their time and place in the world. The traditional reading of horror films focuses primarily on the negative treatment of women. However, there are some moments of resistance that allow for a strong female representation. As the horror film is a genre that targets primarily the youth market, some of these women step beyond the traditional cannon fodder and emerge as feminist role models. Over time the ways and means by which women stepped out of the shadows in the horror genre changed. These changes can in part be traced to the larger societal movements of their era, including Second and Third Wave Feminism. By looking at specific films and how they defined the horror genre over three decades, the impact of larger societal movements can be seen, as can the changing space of women within the genre. From the 1970s the films explored are: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974), to Carrie (Brian DePalma, 1976), and Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979). From the 1980s the films used are: Friday the 13th (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), A Nightmare on Elm Street (Wes Craven, 1984), and Aliens (James Cameron, 1986). The 1990s films examined are: The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991), New Nightmare (Wes Craven, 1994), and Scream (Wes Craven, 1996). Over the course of the decades and through these films this work demonstrates the historical links to how women are portrayed in the horror film, their relationship to the genre as a whole, and the feminist movements of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. In tracing these moments of resistance this work illuminates why these characters have withstood the test of time and why audiences continue to flock to horror films.
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**Introduction**

The modern cultural landscape is defined through the images, moving and still, that the media presents to the populace. In a consumer culture such as the United States, there are few if any cultural forces that can make as immediate or lasting an impression as cinema or television. From *Avatar* grossing $2,776,022,742 worldwide\(^1\) to the millions of people who watch *American Idol* on a weekly basis, the culture and perceptions of the world are defined more and more based on what we view as opposed to any other medium. By studying the environment in which films were made in conjunction with what these films “say” to the audiences today and in the past, the careful observer will be able to gain insight into both the events and peoples of the past. This paper will attempt to provide the reader with this type of insight, a new lens through which to view the past.

It is this change in film and popular culture, specifically the role horror films played from the mid-1970s through the 1990s in the development and presentation of female heroines in a genre dominated by men that is the focus of this work. By seeing the changes that occurred and studying the heroines who have become enduring symbols of not only the times in which the films were made but also an overlooked source of strength, one is able to gain greater insight in the history of horror films and the gender roles of the times in which they were made.

This paper is focused primarily on American horror films for several reasons. The classics of the horror genre are from the United States. From the early Universal Monster films through the modern horror film, the United States has been fertile ground for the creation of the horror film. The second consideration is more pragmatic. There is the cultural familiarity of the author with these films that allows easy access to both the films and materials related to the films.

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Understanding of three key contextual elements is necessary. These three elements are: 1) the general understanding that has been presented of the women and female gender in the horror genre by women's studies experts and film critics; 2) the historical context of the feminist movement in the United States from the 1970s-1990s; 3) an explanation of why we should use film to understand the culture of the past from a new perspective. The author invites the reader to make his or her own judgments while viewing the films with new insight into both the history surrounding them and the representations of gender in the horror genre. One of the greatest strengths of film is that it allows the viewer to enter into the world of the film. In these individual worlds each viewer will see and experience the film in his or her own way and it is through understanding what others see that we can gain a better view of ourselves and of the past.

Historiography and Historical Context Part I-The Horror Genre

"So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."² In these words about the Great Depression and the problems facing America in the 1930s Franklin Roosevelt spoke one of the most famous lines in modern American history. Fear itself is the point of the horror genre. To confront the things that terrify us and to show the audience those things for their own amusement is the foundation of the horror genre. From the first ghost tales told around campfires to the so called "penny dreadful" of the Victorian era and eventually the horror film people have had an obsession with scary things.

When something scary and unexpected happens, every person does exactly the same thing: they blink, crouch, bend their arms, and clench their fists. The face also sets itself into what is known as a "fear grimace": the pupils dilate, the eyes widen, the brow goes up, and the mouth pulls back and down. Make that expression in front of a mirror and

² Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933.
see not only how instantly recognizable it is, but also how it seems to actually produce a sense of fear.³

Fear is one of the few emotions that truly can be seen as universal. While what has scared us has changed over the centuries of human existence the physiological responses remain the same. Why then do millions of Americans every year seek to experience fear? Is it simply the thrill of seeing what is taboo? Is it the physiological response to the fear? Or is it something deeper in the minds of the viewing audience that seeks these thrills? The answer to these questions is not simple and draws from history as well as psychology. But what is important is that these films, through their solicitation of the fear response, bring in audiences. By understanding these audiences and what is being portrayed onscreen we can achieve the greater understanding of the role horror films play in the development of popular culture.

"The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire."⁴ These are some of the final words of one of the oldest and most popular examples of the horror genre in America. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1820) shows the storytelling culture of the times in which it was published. The importance of this line is that even within the story the characters show not only the importance of telling the tale to reinforce cultural beliefs, but also the importance of sharing tales of the macabre to both expand the areas of the mind and entertain an audience.

In his book The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature, Steven Pinker delves into the development of the human mind. Throughout the text he deals with the things that cause fear in relation to his central concept of the "Blank Slate" or the idea that the human mind is essentially blank at birth and only through culture and our interactions with culture do human

beings become fully realized individuals. Specifically when he discusses fear he states: "Risk analysts have discovered to their bemusement that people's fears are often way out of line with objective hazards." The reality is that few if any within our society will face a chainsaw wielding maniac or travel to space to fight an infestation of parasitic aliens. However, the basic fears portrayed of cannibalism, death, implantation of something other than ourselves, all play to the basic, if sometimes outlandish, fears of humanity. While these fears or taboos may change across cultures and times the fear or denial of death, cannibalism, and the idea of the "other" are deeply ingrained in not only United States, but most Western cultures.

In the modern horror film the themes vary from film to film. In this work the focus will be on the strong feminine characters and their relationship to the ideals of feminism and the feminist movement, 1974-1996. Hundreds of books have been written on horror films and within that library dozens deal with the role of gender in the horror film. The majority of them have focused on the roles of women as the object to be feared or as the victim in films. As Barbara Creed states: "Freud argued that woman terrifies because she is castrated. I will argue that woman also terrifies because man endows her with imaginary powers of castration." Throughout her work The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis Creed writes from the Freudian perspective. She outlines the Freudian ideas of castration and the fear of women because they have no penis as being the primary source of terror in horror films. From the fear of Carrie entering puberty and gaining superpowers because of her womanhood to the fear of motherhood as exemplified by the Alien series, Creed makes the argument that women are to be feared because of our base psychological development as males. While Creed argues for strong female villains, from Carrie to the Queen in Aliens, within the horror genre it is only as

the villain or victim that she sees women. "Such a position only serves to reinforce patriarchal
definitions of woman which represent and reinforce the essentialist view that woman, by nature,
is a victim. My intention is to explore the representation of woman in the horror film and to
argue that woman is represented as monstrous in a significant number of horror films." In this
vein the basic roles of women in the horror genre is as the victim and monster are successfully
detailed. To explore these two basic tenets of the horror genre and what has been written about
the role of gender in the horror film let us look deeper into each of these two widely-held tropes
of women in the horror genre.

On the surface the female as the victim is the easiest to see openly in the horror film.
One of the earliest examples of the horror film, Freaks (Tod Browning, 1932), introduces the
female victim. In the film a greedy woman is caught in her attempt to swindle one of the
sideshow freaks out of his inheritance, and as a result she is transformed from the beautiful
trapeze artist into one of the freaks. From this moment through one of the most memorable
scenes in film history, when Janet Leigh as Marion Crane is murdered in the shower in Psycho
(Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), to the modern film, women have been the victims of the horror genre.
While men have died in horror films, women are often the first and most frequent victims. As
one critic notes: "The murders of women, on the other hand, are filmed at closer range, in more
graphic detail, and in greater length." Does this portray a gender bias of both the filmmakers
and the audience? "This is why the horror film-delving always into the abject as a means for
terrorizing the audience with everything from bodily excrement (blood, sweat, vomit) to sexual
perversion as sexualized violent death-relies so heavily in the female character, whether in the

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7 Ibid, page 7.
role of besieged heroine or monster, in order to subvert further the comfort level of the viewer.\textsuperscript{9}

In a patriarchal society many are taught that women are to be protected. The flip side is that in a patriarchal society, gender violence may be protected or entrenched privately and publically. Regardless of the source of the violence, violence against women may elicit a greater emotional response from the viewer than violence against men. With the rise of Second Wave Feminism, the roles women played in the horror genre changed from being the victim into something more. This shift and its links to the history of feminism are a primary focus of this work.

The second role women traditionally played in horror movies is as a source of fear. Whether it is as the monster in the film, or whether through reference to the elements of female life such as childbirth, women have been shown as a source of fear. From the literal use of the female as the cause of terror with Mrs. Voorhees as the primary killer in \textit{Friday the 13th} (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980) to the use of humans as a surrogate womb in \textit{Alien} (Ridley Scott, 1979), the female figure is used to create terror in viewing audiences. When looking at the elements of the female experience that elicit horror within the genre of horror films the causes of horror can be broken down simply into three categories: 1) fear of the woman as a reproductive source (motherhood, childbirth, etc.); 2) fear of the woman as the source of castration; and 3) fear of the woman as the source of foulness or wrongness.\textsuperscript{10} Despite this simple summary the interaction of each with the audience and history is as complex and myriad as the options to view in the horror genre. For example, in the \textit{Alien} franchise the idea of a gender neutral "face hugger" implanting an embryo within a human host (male or female) which then bursts forth from the chest of an unsuspecting victim in a gross parody of birth is but one example of the ways in which

motherhood and reproduction are used within the horror genre as a source of female terror. As Tony Magistrale states:

In fact, the film's mise-en-scène gradually narrows to an ever-more circumscribed world where the human colony has been transformed into a giant incubator (the soldiers complain about the heat being generated in this womb-like installation) and the humans are cocooned in a state of suspended animation in order to serve as surrogate wombs for Alien babies.\(^{11}\)

Freudian thought teaches that the innate fear of women comes from the realization as a child that the mother/female member of the species is devoid of a penis. In male children this is thought to have been caused by castration and the eventual fear of castration lies in the mother figure. Women feel inadequate since they have never had a penis.\(^{12}\) While this is an oversimplification of the fear of castration as it applies to men and women it is sufficient to begin the discussion of the fear of the female in the horror genre. Men guard their manhood with a fierce determination and the thought of castration and becoming less than a man is terrifying to many. This fear is played out throughout the course of the film *Hard Candy* (David Slade, 2000), one of the few horror films in which the male character is the passive victim to a strong female attacker. While *Hard Candy* falls outside the focus of this paper, one of the aspects of the horror genre that will be focused on is this fear of castration, and it is noteworthy that this fear has continued within the horror film. *Hard Candy* with its focus on revenge and punishment for the transgressions of men can be seen as the logical evolution of the horror genre conventions that were developed in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The fear of loss of gender identity, which is one way the fear of castration can be conceived, can be applied to another of the tropes of the horror film, the cross-dressing killer. Gender roles have been continually changed a redefined throughout human history. Some have a fear of those places where the lines between genders

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cease to be clear such as same sex marriages. In the horror film the killer with a gender identity issue is fairly common place. From Norman Bates (played by Anthony Perkins) dressing up as his mother to commit murders in Psycho to Leatherface, a laid-off slaughterhouse worker who terrorizes teenagers with a chainsaw and a face made from human skin that he has covered in makeup to assume the female role in the twisted image of the family in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, gender roles have been challenged and used as a source of terror in the same vein as the fear of castration.

Women as a source of foulness or wrongness can be seen in several ways. The first is the fear of the impure or unclean. Horror films delight in the use of blood, sweat, tears, vomit, excrement, etc. as a means to cause fear. Even some of the common terms used when people see a horror movie such as "it made me sick" or it "scared the shit out of me" use the less clean parts of the human experience to summarize the experience. In relation to the female body, one of the easiest examples is that of menstrual blood. Returning to the example of Carrie, the onset of puberty by Carrie is met with shouts of "Plug it up" while she is pelted with tampons by other girls in the locker room. Later in the film when Carrie is drenched in pig’s blood and then proceeds to kill her classmates the allusion is that the coming of puberty causes dangerous changes, with blood as a primary signifier. In both the original and the more recent version of Carrie (2013) this moment is used to both signify the start of the horror and the shift from unthreatening girl to dangerous woman. Women have also been represented as the corrupter in films, only after the teens have had sex and the young woman has shown been naked and "defiled" can the killer get her, is a common horror trope. In the end it is the differences between men and women that are used as the source of many instances of terror in the horror genre.

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13 Barry Keith Grant, Editor, *The Dread Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996), pages 38-44.
In the horror film, as with any genre, the conventions change and develop over time. The current horror film conventions especially in their relationship to gender were developed over the timeframe of 1974-1996. While the deranged killer, isolated setting, and focus on sexuality were already present within the genre prior to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* several new conventions began to surface in 1974, and were refined through the following decades. In horror films, especially those focused on teenagers, death is often the result of pre-marital sex, drinking, or drug use. By breaking some of the most basic social conventions and taboos these characters are given the ultimate punishment. Asking "who's there?" along with investigating strange noises, and leaving the safety of a home are also punished by death. In the horror film straying beyond the designated social rules, be they engaging in an activity that is frowned upon by society or an excess of curiosity, results in the death of a character. In addition to these "rules" of the horror genre the ultimate reason for punishment is often gender, specifically being a woman. Women throughout the genre are killed in exponentially greater numbers than men, and while there are moments and characters that break this trend, the rules that more women than men will die, that their deaths will be far more graphic, are ones that few films dare to break.

Throughout the work I will look at the negative roles that women have played in the chosen films as much as the positive. Through the understanding of what causes terror in the films one is again able to gain a better understanding of the culture in which the films were made. The focus will be on the ties between the strong female characters and the feminist movement. The roles that women and femininity play in causing terror or as sites of violence will be looked into on a film-by-film basis to explore their interactions with the ideals and values of the time. "Film genres have sometimes been described as serving the same function as myths within an institutionalized, mass-mediated popular culture. Based on an anthropological
definition of myth, this function involves a ritualized and systematic exploration of a culture's founding values."\textsuperscript{14} If we then take it that horror films serve the same purpose as other types of films, it is the discovery and discussion of the founding values and their role in the greater movements of American history that is the purpose of this work.

**Historiography and Historical Context Part II-The Feminist Movement**

Feminist theorists in various disciplines talk about the way gender is socially constructed. Simply put, this means that gender is contingent on time, place, culture, and interactions between people. For instance, being female in 2008 means something quite different from what it meant in 1908 or 1808.\textsuperscript{15}

Feminism has become so ingrained in the modern consciousness that it is hard for many who do not study history to fully grasp the gains that have been made in the rights of women over the last 150 years. The feminist movement is generally divided into three waves. This does not mean that feminism went away during the years in between the rises in the movement, just that the movement lost some of its traction in the popular culture at the time.\textsuperscript{16} What follows is a brief introduction to the three waves, with a focus on Second Wave Feminism because this is the wave that played the most dominant role during the time frame of 1974-1996 both in its influence and in the backlash against it. Gender is a social construction and the means through which ideals and values are being defined, including in horror films. Gender plays a role in the larger understanding of what it means to be a woman and to be a feminist.

First wave feminism began in the late nineteenth century with women's conventions to secure the right to the vote. "In England and the United States the antislavery movement and universal male suffrage provided important political frameworks for the liberal feminist call for

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
women's rights." The earliest work in America for women's rights came as an outgrowth of the work being done to create social and political equality. Women, especially middle class women, played a large role in the antislavery movements in England and out of these liberal ideals important members of society gradually supported the new women's movement. John Stuart Mill argued in his 1869 text that women should be granted suffrage on the same conditions as men. As Gertrude Himmelfarb summarizes: "They should be enfranchised not as women per se but as individuals, as persons who cannot legitimately be confined to any "proper sphere" by virtue of their sex but should be free to participate in public life as and when they like." With these ideals, from roughly 1848-1920, this first wave of feminism sought to secure the right to the vote for women but also gained them the right to own property in their own name, keep the money they earned, enter into contracts, sue in court, attend college and earn higher degrees, and become professionals, all without protection or ties to a man. These simple accomplishments may seem unexceptional to the modern reader but they were the result of battles that were hard fought.

Second Wave Feminism rose from the domesticity of the post-World War II period. In the 1960s and 70s alongside the movements for racial equality and African-American civil rights, feminism grew into something quite different from the First Wave. "As many historians have pointed out, feminist activism has thrived when the cultural climate is generally conductive to reform; just as the first wave of the women's movement arose alongside--indeed, out of --abolition, civil rights work in the 1960s led to a culture more ready to fight for women's rights."17 Estelle B. Freedman, No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), page 55.

19 Ibid, page 66.
20
Second Wave feminism was concerned with equality between men and women. Earlier, classified ads were segregated between male and female jobs. Women earned less than male counterparts doing the same job. There was no strong definition for sexual harassment or domestic abuse. Abortion, prophylactics, and sexual freedom ran alongside the more mainstream rights sought by women.\textsuperscript{21}

A result of Second Wave feminism in the 1980s was a backlash. Women were forced to be "super women" holding jobs and caring for their families. This backlash against the freedom sought by the Second Wave into a new level of constriction paved the groundwork for Third Wave Feminism. Third Wave Feminism is focused on both equality and balance. Equality between the sexes is defined by the individual not using male definitions of social status, place, or success. Third Wave Feminists seek their own definitions. The critical difference is the embracing of those things that make women female, from the embracing of motherhood to the work place, Third Wave Feminists are seeking a balance that works for them.\textsuperscript{22}

It is in the environment of Second Wave Feminism where women were proving they could do anything a man could do, and seek the same wage, that the new horror meme of the strong single female survivor came into existence. "The image of the distressed female most likely to linger in memory is the image of the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl."\textsuperscript{23} The "Final Girl" is the one character of the films that will have the most direct links to the feminism of the time in which the films were made. "Because they recognized that children are socialized to "do gender" through the ways they are named, the toys they play with, and the TV shows and movies they watch, second wave feminism wanted to create alternatives so that

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
children would be exposed to nonstereotypical representations of gender."  For Ripley from *Alien* and Sally from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* their struggles were less about the rights of women everywhere and more about survival but it is the correlations between these struggles that this work will attempt to illuminate.

**Historiography and Historical Context Part III-American Popular Culture**

"Everybody knows what hip is. Or at least, everyone can name it when they see it. For something that is by definition subjective, hip is astoundingly uniform across the population."  Popular culture, like many aspects of culture, has a tendency to define itself. Kids to adults know what cool is and although kids and adults may not agree the reality is that popular culture rises from these definitions of cool and exciting to become a major force in the lives of Americans and populations across the world.

Following the boom of cinema, and later television, a key change began within the world of American popular culture. Youth, especially middle class youth, began to have surplus time and money. In an attempt to access this portion of the market with consumable resources, the studios began to target the specific demographic of young adults. "In 1969 it was estimated that 50 percent of American filmgoers were between ages sixteen and twenty-four. If nothing else, the financial success of *Easy Rider* proved the box office potential of a specialized youth market."  By attempting to focus on the youth market the film studios brought in young filmmakers like George Lucas, Ridley Scott, and Steven Spielberg to make films for the emerging market. In doing so they allowed the youth to not only make their own films but to

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espouse the beliefs of their generation to build and reinforce the popular culture of the time with the ideals of the youth.

When dealing with the horror genre the section of the demographic that it appeals to is traditionally the younger crowd looking for a thrill. Having spent five years as a movie theater projectionist and manager I can empirically state that horror films play best to the younger crowds (from the teens to twenties) and almost always do their best business on Friday night when middle class America is at home unwinding from their work week. This same audience is the one that is involved in the cultural changes that occurred throughout the time period of this work. They were the ones who sought to see the changes in the representation of women on screen and took messages and meaning from the films they saw. This duality of young filmmakers and young audiences allowed the horror genre to be one of the most prominent means of expressing new ideologies while providing entertainment to the audience.

It is through the youth that the horror genre finds its footing however there are times when a horror film becomes so ingrained within the popular culture that it crosses the boundaries from the film into the collective subconscious. One of the most prominent examples can be found by determining “who” the killers in various horror films are. Many people associate Jason as the killer from Friday the 13th, although he doesn't appear until the second film and his trademark hockey mask doesn't appear until the third. Freddy, Leatherface, Hannibal Lector and others all escaped their celluloid origins and entered into the popular culture. It is this ability of film to have a deeper impact and to impart knowledge more broadly for the audience, at times impacting those that have not seen the films, that is key to this paper.
Methodology-Why and How We Should Study Cinema

While there is little doubt that cinema plays a role in society the reasons why one should look to film, particularly in a historical context, are not simple. Films are economic drivers of local and national economies; they provide a shared leisure and cultural experience across time and space; and films provide education and propaganda. Films provide moving images of historical events, from picnicking to battlefields of World Wars I and II, it is the films underlying message that grants a deeper understanding of the times in which they were made. The popularity of films at a given time illustrates what the culture of the time values as both entertainment and as educational material. Films also express the biases of the filmmakers with the methods employed and the stories told. It is these two layers of insight that allow one to gain an understanding of the historical and cultural importance of films.

Cultural historians have treated movies as sociological documents that record the look and mood of particular historical settings; as ideological constructs that advance particular political or moral values or myths; as psychological texts that speak to individual and social anxieties and tensions; as cultural documents that present particular images of gender, ethnicity, class, romance, and violence; and as visual texts that offer complex levels of meaning and seeing.

As illustrated with the above quote from Mintz and Roberts films can be almost anything to the historian or film scholar who chooses to use them. Important to this work is the subtler links between films and the cultural beliefs they portray. "Valuable interpretive accounts can be based on relatively small periods of observation, focusing on media texts as much as people and

activities.” Through these understandings as a foundation the film scholar may use film to study broader trends in popular culture and history. Film like any primary source can portray the culture of the time as much as what it shows onscreen. From the escapism of the films from the depression era, dominated by comedies and historical epics, to the high times and neon of the 1980s film shows the viewer a glimpse into more than what is being shown in the past.

Also critical to note was the rise of the youth market. "As the youth of the late 1960s grew more demonstrative in their alienation, they wanted movies that incorporated their point of view." These new voices, among them the Second Wave of Feminism, began to exert control over the product being placed on the market. From *Easy Rider* to the horror genre, youth wanted to see their ideals and values onscreen as never before. With this rise came the horror film that was "Drenched in taboo and encroaching vigorously on the pornographic, the slasher film lies by and large beyond the purview of the respectable (middle-aged, middle-class) audience." By living and thriving within this seemingly marginalized section of the viewing audience the horror genre rose to what we know it as today. More importantly the youth who were the target audience grew up to become the middle-aged, middle-class. It is the generations that found the same and different meanings in the horror genre that will show the values espoused by the films and their impact on history.

Among so many changes, I shall consider one: the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle. Today we are rather inclined to ignore it; perhaps, in its time, it gave rise to too much inflated rhetoric; perhaps it has been attributed too readily and too emphatically to a process of 'humanization', thus dispensing with the need for further analysis.

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In this paragraph Foucault outlines his thesis for *Discipline & Punish*. I would argue that the idea of torture as a public spectacle has been alive and well even though it may have left the realm of public display and entered into the realm of fiction. As a society we like to see the bad guys punished, from the black hats in classic westerns to *Avatar* bad people being punished is as important as the good guys (and girls) winning. Historians, like Foucault, are able to travel into the past to revisit the events and people that call to them. In doing so historians like filmmakers, become story tellers.

For example, 'the Comic mythos served as the plot structure for most of Ranke's historical works,' in the sense that when writing about the French or English civil wars, for example, he told a three-part story which moved like a comedy (or tragicomedy) from a condition of apparent peace, through the revelation of conflict, to the resolution of the conflict in the establishment of a genuinely peaceful social order.  

Here one of the problems of historical writing has been laid out. How can historians who seek to tell the past from a place of an empirical observer hope to provide the "facts" about what has happened? I propose that it is the historian's innate ability as a story teller that provides them with their greatest strength. Historians' use of research and information enable the construction of an accessible tale of the past.

It is the historian's experience and strength as a storyteller that allows the use of film as a primary source to be so potent. Through the understanding of the elements of narrative and the decisions of what to include or exclude from their work historians like the filmmakers of the horror genre can tell a story beyond what is written on the page. "History has always been a hybrid form of knowledge, syncretizing past and present, memory and myth, the written record and the spoken word."  

Through this inclusion of nearly anything as a historical source, to Ranke and other historians use of narrative, to the kinship shared between the filmmaker and

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historian the study of film, even one from the margins of society like horror, provide an insight into the past and a better understanding of where we come from and are going which in the end is the purpose of history.

In order to study cinema in this manner there are a few key ideas that need to be kept in mind throughout the analysis. First, the producers of the film and individual viewers of the film hold biases. Second, films may be racist, obscene, or distasteful to the modern viewer but the context of the time and place as well as intended audience can serve to explain but not justify, these types of ideas. The third idea is that by placing oneself into the proverbial shoes of the audience and filmmakers, a greater understanding of the individual films and the historical importance of these films can be gained. In this context the historical importance is both as a voice for the popular culture and a window through which one can view the greater movements of the times in which the films were made.

The application of standing genre conventions to a film provides select horror films with the ability to critique modern culture in a way that takes it beyond being just entertainment. As one critic notes:

*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, unlike *The Omen*, achieves the force of authentic art, profoundly disturbing, intensely personal, yet at the same time far more than personal as the general response it has evoked demonstrates. ... It must not be seen as an isolated phenomenon: it expresses, with unique force and intensity, at least one important aspect of what the horror film has come to signify, the sense of civilization condemning itself, through its popular culture, the ultimate disintegration, and ambivalently (with the simultaneous horror/wish-fulfillment of nightmare) celebrating the fact.\(^\text{37}\)

The potential for horror films to carry more than just the narrative, be it a moral code for teenagers or the condemnation of the society makes this genre important. Genre conventions as a tool have been discussed and praised as far back as Aristotle. They are not a stagnant series of rules that must be followed but instead serve as a tradition from which new entries can start,

changing or using the conventions as needed while also providing the audience with a guide for interpretation of the work. As one scholar notes of the genre conventions of poetry:

> conventions are not fixed procedures imposed by impersonal tradition, but are the usages of other poets—a community of past singers, analogous to the community of young Cambridge poets who wrote and collected memorial verses for Edward King. Poetic convention in this sense—the shared practice of those who come together to sing—can enable individual expression, because the poet is seen as responsive to, even when challenging, his predecessors and fellows.\(^{38}\)

Genre conventions allow for the creation of a framework for the audience and artists that is in dialogue with all the past entries into that genre. As long as this framework is respected the audience will not be disappointed. This allows for the artists to fill in the surrounding film with any other material they would like, including potential criticisms of modern culture or strong female characters in a time and genre that rarely allowed them.\(^{39}\)

It is this elasticity of the horror genre that allows a simple splatter film to transcend the boundaries of a few hours entertainment into the realm of historical document. Horror films by appealing to our base nature and instincts allows for thrills, disgust, fear, anger, and possibly societal change. It is this appeal that is one of the key strengths of the horror genre. It appeals to the lowest levels of both society in the youth market and humanity in our base fears. With such a wide range of possibility the horror genre can be almost anything to anyone but the truly great films have deeper meanings and appeal which allows the historian to use them as a window into the lives and times in which they were made.

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38 Paul Alpers, "Lycidas and Modern Criticism", from *ELH* (Vol. 49, No. 2: Summer 1982), page 470.
39 This is closely related to something that was told to me by my first film professor, Stan Brakhage. Following a screening of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in his Sex, Death, and Cinema course (Summer, 1998), he said that horror films were the only form of popular cinema in which the filmmaker could be as artistic as they wanted. As long as the audience sees enough violence and blood, the filmmaker could add in whatever other messages, images, and meanings they wished.
Conclusion

"And whether you came from the tribe of the choleric or of the voluptuous or of the fanatic or of the vengeful, in the end all you passions became virtues and all you devils, angels."\(^{40}\) Much has been written on the role of gender in the horror film. Many viewers, critics and scholars see the genre as a male dominated series of films that portray stereotypes about women and use them as either the victim or villain. This work will seek to turn the devils of female representation into angels providing examples from the most popular horror franchises. These female characters have links to the broader representations of women contemporary with the film’s production. They are influenced by the feminist movement, societal and political changes, and American popular culture.

Horror films may be seen as a marginal section of the film market, but their profitability shows that the American audiences, from youth to adult, yearn for the thrills of the horror genre. The nine primary films to be discussed have a combined domestic gross of $547,889,929\(^{41}\) unadjusted for ticket price inflation. With traditionally low budgets horror films can be immensely profitable for film studios. What is important is that due to their low budgets they can be made by individuals, like Tobe Hooper and \textit{The Texas Chainsaw Massacre}, and still receive wide release. This profit margin allows the studios the ability to let the director have free reign with the film. It is in this creative license that the enduring characters emerge and the greater historical importance of these films can be found.

Through both understanding of what elements may cause the terror and what events were occurring at the time of release of the films, a new viewpoint will emerge. While not all horror films portray a strong feminine heroine and the victims of the films remain predominantly

female, the author will show that not all films fall into this category, and that strong feminist role models can be found in a genre dominated by men. By examining not only where and when strong female leads occur, how the characters behave, and who survives this work will seek to show not only the historical links to the presentation of women within this genre but also to see why there are innumerable female horror fans. In looking to the dialectic of female victims and heroes and the ways the women fight against the traditionally male oppressors this work will attempt to take the discussion of gender and the horror film into not only a new historical direction but a new understanding of the appeal to both genders of viewing the horror film.

This work uses Carol J. Clover's *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* as a starting point for understanding the representation of gender in the horror film. Written in 1992 Clover coined the term "Final Girl" while examining the gender roles and divides present in the genre. Clover does not attempt to situate the films she uses in their historical moments, nor is she seeking to find strong female characters in the films. Her survey of the broad movements within the horror film and the conventions of the genre in relation to gender representation takes a much larger view than this work will. By focusing in on a few films from each decade and the additional historical perspective of the twenty years since *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* was first published this work will seek to emphasize the links between the historical moments of these films and the representation of women onscreen.

The horror genre thrives on the visual spectacle of death on film. The films are designed and executed as a means to provide the audience visual pleasure from the gore and extreme circumstances of the deaths presented on screen. Often, the most gruesome and extreme deaths are those suffered by the female characters. Given this, how can we find feminist ideas or heroines in these films? This work will propose the idea that there are moments of resistance
within these films. By isolating those characters, sequences, plot devices, genre conventions, and narrative elements in which the female characters stand up and say "Enough!" and examining those elements in detail, we can begin to construct a reading of the horror genre that is less dismissive or exploitative of the female. This allows us to shine a light on those elements that reinforce the second class nature of female characters within the world of film. By taking these moments from a series of films we can also begin to see how the horror film represents the ideologies relating to gender during the times in which the films were made and released. This connection of moments of resistance to the cultural movements of the United States and their relationship to both depictions and ideologies of gender roles is important because the horror genre is one that specifically targets the youth market. These audience members are growing and creating their own view of the world. The media that provides them with representations of their gender, what those representations are, and the ability to personally identify with those representations are critical to a historical understanding of the horror genre as an important medium and the larger changing representations of women in cinema. Finding these moments of resistance and linking them to their historical moments and the arc of the horror film requires a closer examination of specific films, the female and male characters representations, and an understanding that these films are the pinnacle of potentially positive female characters. The majority of the horror genre, and the chosen films at times, still heavily favor excessive violence towards women as a means to create terror.

Introduction

The 1970s were a time of change in the United States. The Baby-Boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964 matured during the 1960s and 1970s. While a demographic term, the U.S. Census Bureau also considers the baby boomers in the United States a cultural group that were wealthier, more active and more consumerist than previous generations. Many in this “new” generation sought change from the constrictive ideologies of their youth and parents and expressed new ideas. While there is certainly a deep cultural history in relation to these changes in expression and ideas following the beginning of the end of World War II, the Cold War, the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, the Hippie movement, the Civil Rights movement, among others a key factor to this work is the rise of Second Wave Feminism.

Alongside these changes in culture and ideology came the new age of the horror film within the United States. These films experienced a boom, in part thanks to the ratings system replacing the Production Code; the changing attitudes of the movie going audience; and the development and expansion of the film school throughout the country. By starting with the broader history of Second Wave Feminism, and then tracing how three exemplary films reveal traces of the ideologies of the movement, we can begin to follow the impact that Feminism had upon the representation of gender within the horror film, and how horror films in turn played a role in the dissemination of Feminist ideologies.

What is feminist in these films and in general is open to interpretation. Throughout this chapter we will be looking primarily for strong female characters that expand, defy, and redefine

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the traditional gender roles of the public and domestic spheres, that take action, have their own agency in the events of the film, and exert control over their own destinies over the course of the film. Such characters exemplify the changes that Second Wave Feminism sought to bring to society as a whole. A feminist film in this case is one that engages with granting women a voice and a gaze, and the mechanisms within the cinematic and narrative realms of these films that allow them to take their place as equal to the male characters within the film.

In the 1970s a group of female scholars were searching for positive female characters onscreen. The representations of women in film were largely seen as negative and had been on a downward trajectory since the early days of Hollywood. As Molly Haskell states:

But when will women really come into their own power, or when will the evidence of this power be felt? Where is the mechanism for turning autobiography into the new myths, the new narrative forms? How will women break through the barriers of a commercial cinema more truly monolithic in its sexism than it ever was in the old days of Hollywood?\(^{43}\)

There was a need and a desire for new role models for women in the movies. The call to action was repeated time and again. Placing the representations of women in their historical context Marjorie Rosen traces this same downfall of women and states: "If we can't stop going to films the way we thumb through Harper's Bazaar or Vogue, if movies unconsciously or consciously define and reflect us, shouldn't we, once aware, look for substance as well as chimera? It is time to start utilizing feminine resources. And reinterpreting the American Dream."\(^{44}\) These critics sought to find new role models and change the representation of women in the mainstream media, rather than a creation of a completely new media to change the cinema that was already in place. As two critics who created an anthology of writings about women in film start their work:


The raising of consciousness through the women's liberation movement has led feminists to the profound knowledge that women's roles are cultural rather than biological and that these are molded, stereotyped, caricatured, reinforced - consciously as well as sub-consciously by the mainstream (read: "male values" - dominated) media. If the movies were a landscape dominated by male ideologies it was up to those who were interested to look for some place in the movies that women were present, strong, and not completely limited by the male dominated culture. It is this type of mission that this work is undertaking. In a genre that is one of the worst offenders in the negative representation and treatment of women, from their exploitation as objects of desire to the great lengths the horror film goes to in order to kill and punish the women, where can one find moments of resistance and strength for women?

The three films from the 1970s to be examined are *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), *Carrie* (Brian DePalma, 1976), and *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979). The importance of these films to the horror canon cannot be understated. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* reintroduced and redefined the slasher film whose roots can be traced back to *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* and created the genre framework for the slasher film from 1974 through the modern day. *Carrie*, while joining a long tradition of horror centered on the fear of the female body, updated these fears and changed the representation of the feared female object from one of exclusive terror into one that is sympathetic to the audience. *Alien* both updates the fear of technology and monster movie that has its horror roots in the movies of the Cold War period while simultaneously acting upon the cinematic changes that followed the explosion of science fiction following the release of *Star Wars*. Even as these films became the pinnacle of their genre from the 1970s they are all also a part of a larger continuum of cinematic history.

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There were many other horror films released throughout the 1970s that many consider to contain key components to the horror canon and it is important to briefly discuss why those films are not being used in this work.46 *The Exorcist* (William Freidkin, 1973) remains one of the most terrifying horror films ever created. While the film follows young Regan (Linda Blair) and her mother Chris (Ellen Burstyn) through the events of a demonic possession, the narrative thrust of the movie and the novel on which it is based centers on the male clergy members and the attempt of Father Karras (Jason Miller) to regain his lost faith. The female characters have no agency throughout the film and are primarily present to facilitate the male driven plot. While the importance of *The Exorcist* to the horror genre is without question, due to its narrative focus on the masculine the film doesn't carry prominent examples of Second Wave feminist ideologies. The film is too centered on the central male character to demonstrate the importance that feminist ideologies had on the horror genre.

*Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) has a critical place in the development of the modern movie viewing experience. With *Jaws* the summer blockbuster was created and the horror genre entered into the main stream in a way that it wouldn't again until *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991). *Jaws* follows the events of a New England town that is terrorized by a man eating shark. While playing a critical role in film history, *Jaws* deals almost exclusively with men, from the three main characters who end up isolated on a boat for a large portion of the

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46 Academic works on the horror genre often includes *The Exorcist, Jaws,* and *Halloween.* Carol Clover devotes two major sections to *The Exorcist,* discusses *Jaws,* and has over twenty pages on *Halloween.* Barbara Creed uses *The Exorcist* extensively throughout her work and includes sections on both *Jaws* and *Halloween.* Tony Magistrale uses both *The Exorcist* and *Halloween* throughout his work and includes *Jaws.* Outside of strictly academic works Roger Ebert gave these films each four stars in his reviews, which further demonstrates their importance to the genre.


film, to the shark itself which both on screen and behind the scenes was gendered male (the shark on set was named Bruce). A female presence is almost completely absent from the film, and therefore is not included in this study.

*Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978) is often mentioned in the same breath as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as an important 1970s horror film. The story takes the framework of the slasher film and moves it from the rural setting of Texas and into the suburban world of the middle class. While there are many interesting aspects to the slasher film that *Halloween* reinforces, and it is also a key horror film because it introduces the use of the killer's point of view shot to the genre, the film continues to follow the genre conventions as outlined by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) is one of the most enduring Final Girls of the horror genre battling the killer, Michael Myers, in four films across a twenty-year span. However, the Feminist messages presented within *Halloween* are similar enough to those of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* that their inclusion in this work would become repetitive.  

**Feminism in the 1970s, Second Wave Feminism**

Second Wave Feminism, broadly defined, is the movement sought to change the second-class nature of women within American society. Equality in the workplace as seen in the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1964, and later strengthened through an executive order of Lyndon Johnson in 1967, sought to accept more women into the workforce and to remove some of the sexual discrimination that was systematic, including separate job advertisements, pay scales, and rules specifically about female employees.

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47 *Halloween* maintains the semi-isolated setting, the lack of adult supervision, the primary characters as being teens who trespass socially in their actions and physically into homes, and the Final Woman who is able to stand firm and defeat the killer in the end following the deaths of her friends. All these elements are present in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Laurie as the Final Woman only differs from Sally in that rather than facing a family of killers she faces only one, and rather than attempting to protect her brother she is attempting to protect the young children whom she is babysitting.
The rights of women sexually, from protection against marital rape to protection during pregnancy, also came about as a part of Second Wave Feminism. One of the most well known events is the landmark decision of *Roe versus Wade* (1973) in which the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of a woman's right to abortions. Again all of these moments in history have their own in depth stories and there are many more legal events that had an impact on the changing role and perception of women during the 1960s and 1970s.\(^{48}\)

Beyond these legal advances women were leaving behind traditional roles in the home as never before. A generation earlier many women left the home to replace the male workers who served during World War II. At the end of the War, most returned to their homes. As one historian notes: "In the immediate postwar period, in a desire to reestablish the 'normalcy' of domesticity, most middle-class men and women reverted to a conventional division of labor, with men as breadwinners and women as homemakers."\(^{49}\) The drive to return to the pre-war "normal" was in part fueled by fears that women as the primary source of income within a household would "undermine husbands' self -images and lead to child neglect."\(^{50}\) These fears coupled with an increasingly conservative political and cultural outlook, brought on in part by the communist threats of the Cold War, lead the parents of the Baby-Boomers to remain in the home or office along traditional gender lines. Many female Baby-Boomers reacted against the norm and felt the need to expand beyond the borders of the home and enter into the public sphere, and through this entrance into the outer world fought for their rights as women and equality in the world. This is in part thanks to the additional educational opportunities afforded

\(^{49}\) Ibid, pages 64-65.
these women coupled with a strong economy that allowed for work opportunities for both men and women.

Second Wave Feminism fought dozens of battles on an equal number of fronts in the attempt to eliminate the differences in perception and treatment between men and women. From legal to domestic to social issues the women, and men, of this movement wanted to change the place that women held in society. This leads to one of the biggest issues still facing gender equality today, patriarchy. As one historian notes:

Smith's reference to freedom echoes the demands of activists in the civil rights and black power movements, not to mention the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s; these radical feminists wanted to liberate women from the constraints and oppressions caused by patriarchy, a social system in which men rule and women are pushed into positions of inferiority and subservience.51

The history of male domination has a complex series of roots depending on the culture and time in which one is looking.

So widespread is the greater privilege, opportunity, and value attached to boys and men that anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo once referred to its occurrence as "universal sexual asymmetry." Almost all societies Rosaldo wrote in 1974, not only differentiated by gender but, more important, they valued the male more highly than the female.52

However in modern Judeo-Christian America the roots of patriarchy run far deeper than any would like to admit. The patriarchy has presented a complex series of issues facing both women and men throughout the history of the United States and it is this deeply rooted series of social traditions and contracts that Second Wave Feminism, and indeed even the modern feminist still struggles against.

Historically, dating back to the early 1900s, the movies were one of the few places that women were allowed to go outside of the home. As one cultural historian notes: "the

nickelodeon was the preferred amusement space for young single women, because it was cleaner, cheaper, more accessible, and posed less of a risk to one's reputation than the dance halls, cheap cafes, and amusement parks.\textsuperscript{53} While at the outset the movies were simply an accepted public place for women to be alone outside the home, as time continued the role the movies would play in the development of gender and ideologies related to women would change. From the femme fatale of Film Noir to Bonnie from \textit{Bonnie and Clyde} (Arthur Penn, 1967) the presence of women onscreen served as another means through which women were being taught gender. As we move forward we can begin to look at how the horror film, a genre specifically aimed at the youth market, played a similar role to these previous moments in history and began to express ideas that grew out of Second Wave Feminism.

One of the biggest challenges that face any new idea is the dissemination of those ideas. While the internet age has removed many of the barriers that were in place to control and maintain ideas in the 1970s there was no such easy route of dissemination. Mass culture then, as now, is one of the easiest means to reach a broad audience quickly, and the role the movies played in the dissemination of ideas cannot be understated. From the Communists in Russia making use of the movies as a means to spread communist ideologies to the works of the United States and directors like Frank Capra during war time the movies have proved an invaluable tool for governments to spread ideas.\textsuperscript{54} Beyond governments, Hollywood itself has been cognizant of the power of movies to spread ideas from the outset. In the 1960s and 1970s the Baby Boomers were entering into all aspects of the workforce, and Hollywood was no exception. With these new ideologies and the tools of filmmaking ideas that both criticized and supported the cultural

\textsuperscript{54} Two famous examples are the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's \textit{Battleship Potemkin} (1925) and Frank Capra's \textit{Prelude to War} (1942) both of which used the cinematic medium as a means to promote government ideologies.
patriarchy began to be seen by audiences around the country, and one genre-the horror film served as an ambassador of ideologies to millions.

What is critical to this paper is that these moments all helped to shape and change how women were seen. First and most importantly women were being seen. While this may seem to be a simple statement, and issues of looking and seeing are central to film analysis, women were taking a stand and gaining a voice outside of the traditional Victorian domestic sphere. Women's rights, ideas, and work were entering into a more recognized and seen world of the public sphere. No longer were women destined to simply the roles that had been assigned to them by the patriarchal society they lived in, there was some ability to move and change. This is not to trivialize the trials that faced women, and continue to face them today, but to acknowledge that change was occurring and this change was allowing for the development of new ideas.
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre - 1974

Figure 1, Marilyn Burns as Sally, Jim Siedow as the Old Man, Edwin Neal as the Hitchhiker, and Gunnar Hansen as Leatherface.55

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974) stands as one of the most influential horror films to come out of this time period. The film was shot over the course of two months in Texas during the summer of 1973. With a small budget of approximately $83,000 and shot on 16mm, this film stands out as one of the pinnacles of small filmmakers making a large impact. Director Tobe Hooper assembled the cast and crew from the Austin area and based the story around serial killer Ed Gein, who also served as the inspiration for Norman Bates in Psycho among other horror villains. With a small budget, local knowledge and a basis, however tenuous, in reality he created The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

The story follows a group of five teenagers: Sally Hardesty (Marilyn Burns), her wheelchair bound brother Franklin (Paul Partain), Jerry (Allen Danzigar), Pam (Teri McMinn), and Kirk (William Vail), as they travel to the old Hardesty home in rural Texas. Following the

55 Tobe Hooper, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, (Vortex, 1974).
initial narration by John Larroquette that sets the film up as a story based on real events we see these teens driving along the highway. Following a brief stop at a graveyard in which the graves have been desecrated they pick up a Hitchhiker (Edwin Neal). This Hitchhiker scares the group and they make him leave as they continue their journey. Another quick stop for gas and barbeque, where they meet the Old Man (Jim Siedow), finally leads them to their destination. Slowly the group begins to separate, with Kirk and Pam heading for an old watering hole to swim. These two soon encounter trouble as first Kirk and then Pam enter into a neighbors house uninvited and meet their deaths at the hands of Leatherface (Gunnar Hansen). As night begins to fall Jerry goes in search of Kirk and Pam, and meets a similar fate. Finally without any sign of the others Sally and Franklin begin their own search. Franklin is killed by Leatherface in a field, the only victim to actually die from chainsaw wounds, leaving Sally alone to escape the nightmare in which she finds herself. Through revelations of cannibalism by the family primarily made up of the Hitchhiker, the Old Man, and Leatherface and a dark parody of the family dinner to lingering torture and attempted murder Sally survives the entire situation to finally make it to a road and escape the family.

With this short synopsis in mind we can begin to unpack the relevance of these characters and their actions to the larger ideas of Second Wave Feminism. The first thing of note is that the main characters are all young. While this has become a standard age group for the horror film it also creates a deeper connection between the target audience and the characters since they are the same age. While this is a purely surface observation it is important that these characters and their audience share some level of connection in order to for the film to not only have an impact on the viewers but to serve as a means for deeper ideas to reach the audience.
At the outset the representations of both genders are being presented are largely negative, with a particular focus on the female. Kirk and Pam are both killed for the same moral infraction, trespassing, and at the same moment within the film. Onscreen Kirk enters the house, is startled by Leatherface and brained with a hammer. Pam in contrast enters the house and stumbles into a room of horrors with frequent close-up shots to her face to elicit a stronger emotional response from the audience. After nearly five minutes of being tortured by what she sees she is then grabbed by Leatherface and placed on a meat hook. This doesn't kill her as we see her continue to struggle as Leatherface continues what he was doing. In this moment we can see from where many of the criticisms of the horror genre in relation to its portrayal of women stem. Pam's death is more gruesome and accompanied by far more terror than her male counterpart. While they have both made the same moral mistake the female is punished far more severely than the male. From a social and historical viewpoint this translates to the idea that women need a stronger hand and that she potentially should have known better. Pam as a female, the film seemingly states, doesn't have the power that Kirk has. She should have waited patiently for Kirk's return and by not only ignoring common sense but by attempting to follow in the male's footsteps she engages in a more direct and dangerous trespass than the male. Her challenge to the patriarchy by attempting to take control and act on her own is shown as being a greater trespass than simply entering into another's house. As her trespass is larger, she challenges both gender roles and the sanctity of the home, her death is proportionally more intense.

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56 The traditional readings of horror films are that they are overtly exploitative of women and seek to reinforce the patriarchy through the punishment and degradation of women. In many horror films the female body is exposed, and she more often than not needs to be in a state of undress immediately before being killed. As one of the masters of horror and the author of the progenitor of the slasher film Alfred Hitchcock stated: "I always believe in following the advice of the playwright Sardou. He said, 'Torture the women!' The trouble today is that we don't torture the women enough." Donald Spoto, The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), page 483. With this ideology from a filmmaker it is not hard to see the impact the idea of punishing women had in the horror film, or why these readings of the horror film are so common.
The next two deaths are also of male characters. Jerry is killed in an almost identical fashion to Kirk, with minimal gore or torture. Franklin's is one of the more gore-intensive deaths in the film and a few moments need to be spent on his death. Earlier in the film Sally borrows Franklin's pocketknife and never returns it to him. There are interesting implications in regards to gender, especially within the horror film, that Freudian analysis can illuminate. In Freudian terms the knife serves as a phallic analogue, as does the titular chainsaw. In his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* Freud states:

> The more striking and for both sexes the more interesting component of the genitals, the male organ, finds symbolic substitutes in the first instance in things that resemble it in shape - things accordingly, that are long and up-standing, such as *sticks, umbrellas, posts, tress* and so on; further, in objects which share with the thing they represent the characteristic of penetrating into the body and injuring - thus sharp *weapons* of every kind, *knives, daggers, spears, sabres*, but also fire- *arms, rifles, pistols and revolvers* (particularly suitable owing to their shape).^{57}

Sally by taking and never returning Franklin's knife in effect castrates him. Franklin was already less than a complete masculine figure since he was in a wheelchair, but once his sister takes his knife he is completely neutered. As Sally pushes Franklin through the woods and Leatherface finds them she leaves Franklin as he is killed with the chainsaw. This turn about in masculinity, that Franklin is neutered and then is killed by another phallus penetrating his body suggests that in this case Franklin can be read as another female victim within the film. His death is more gruesome that the other male characters and as the audience watches the chainsaw enter his body repeatedly we cut to close-ups of Sally as she screams.

By visually linking Franklin to the female deaths and the implications of the two phallus analogues suggest that Franklin is a "female" character. Again this is not a positive female representation within the film. Instead we see the less than complete male figure being punished

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for his lack of masculine traits. One of the messages this moment delivers to the audience is that men who are not ideal masculine figures, like Kirk and Jerry, do not even need to have a moral infraction in order to die. Being un-manly is itself enough to cause your death.

This brings us to Sally, the first Final Girl, and her tormentors. Here is where we can begin to see changes in the representation of women within the horror genre. Throughout the film Sally attempts to take care of her brother Franklin and doesn't trespass in a moral or physical sense. Once the Old Man captures her the terrors that she faces are far more extreme than those of her friends. These terrors are the formation of another long standing horror tradition that is linked to the Final Girl. The Final Girl (henceforth referred to as the Final Woman as a means to recognize her contributions to cinema and remove some of the connotations that are implied by the word "girl") must face more extreme torture at the hands of the villains than any other character. These moments within the horror film are some of the most damning for any attempt at finding a feminist message within the films. However this convention of the Final Woman also creates a new element for the genre. This provides a constant place for moment of resistance to enter into the genre, and changes the role and power of at least one female character in each film within the horror genre. Sally as the progenitor of the Final Woman is no different. She is tied up by the Old Man, dragged to his truck, beaten with a broomstick, dragged into the family's house, tied to a chair made of human bones, is bled to feed the Grandfather (John Dugan), is hit repeatedly on the head by the Grandfather, frees herself, is chased throughout the house finally crashing through a window in order to escape, runs down the driveway while being chased, sees another innocent person killed by Leatherface before finally escaping into the back of a passing truck. Her capture and torture occupy the final third of the film and the audience is
constantly bombarded with extreme close-ups of her eyes and face to create a strong connection
to the events that are happening to her.

With all this torture in mind, including actually cutting into Marilyn Burns when the
special effects wouldn't work where then is there any chance at a message relating to Feminism?
Sally is perhaps one of the hardest characters in which to find the strength that becomes more
prominent in other examples of the horror genre. It is also too simple to just read her survival of
all these events as being a representation of strength from a female character. While it is
undoubtedly true that Sally is a strong character and her survival is important looking more
closely at the events of her torture to find the social critiques being presented within the film.

The majority of these events take place around a family dinner table. As Sally regains
consciousness, the audience is placed directly behind her head as she takes in the terrifying
surroundings. There are lampshades made of human faces. The chair she is tied to has human
arms, possibly Kirk's, as the arm rests. In between each of these revelations we are given a
reaction shot of Sally. The terror in her face, her speechless mouth, and her roving eye as seen in
close up shock almost as much as the terrors she is seeing. Sally finally is in control of the gaze,
and she can't look away. All she sees are more horrors. She is placed at the head of the table and
the camera pulls back to establish her position. There we see the Hitchhiker, the Old Man, and
Leatherface all seated together at the other end of the table. As Sally screams they return her
screams, mocking the outburst of terror. This is their normal family life. Cutting between the
close reaction shots of Sally and the medium shots of the family as they are represented the terror
mounts. Sally looks over and sees the seemingly dead Grandfather as her closest dining
companion. As the scene unfolds it is revealed that the Grandfather is not dead, and the family
feeds him some of Sally's blood. The terror comes from the recognition of these American
traditions being distorted into something uncanny. As Freud writes: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."\textsuperscript{58} The dinner scene is one of the most recognizable and discussed moments within \textit{The Texas Chainsaw Massacre}. As a parody of American traditions this moment of torture for the female lead is also a stinging critique of patriarchy and traditional values. As one film theorists points out: "In the horror film, the family is frequently the place where human monstrosity is conceived. \textit{Psycho, Carrie, and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre} are examples of the many available illustrations that indict the dysfunctional family as a repository of brutal negativity, oppression, and conformity."\textsuperscript{59} As the table is set the male patriarch, the Old Man, berates the Hitchhiker for his careless actions. The Old Man, like many father figures, dictates the events that are to unfold. The Hitchhiker falls into the role of the rebellious son, questioning the father figure but ultimately bowing to his wishes. The Grandfather is brought down from the attic, initial seeming to be yet another macabre prop within the home until he begins to suckle on the bleeding finger of Sally. All of the members of this family are male and fall into traditional male roles.

Leatherface is the last male character and the villain that became the face of the franchise. Prior to these moments within the film he has been the epitome of terror, a hulking figure in a mask made of human flesh that killed four of the friends. In the dinner scene he is placed in the role of the Mother. He changes into a blue pantsuit and blouse and applies make up to his mask. Throughout the dinner scene he is belittled and berated by the other male characters, but is also the final figure seen from the family following Sally’s escape. The change in clothing has lead to many readings of the film as a use of the feminine, and transvestitism, as a source to create


\textsuperscript{59} Tony Magistrale, \textit{Abject Terrors}, ((New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2005), page 123.
While those who don't fall into the traditional hetero-normative familial patterns continue to face social problems even into the modern world the actions of Leatherface can be read as something more than this. By placing the most imposing male figure into the female role the film asks the audience to see that there is strength in those roles. While the female figures throughout the scene in the form of Sally and Leatherface are constantly belittled by those who are outwardly expressing their masculinity they are also the only two characters to leave the house. The Old Man is not seen after Sally's escape and the Hitchhiker is run over by a semi-truck in his pursuit. Only Leatherface remains of the family in these final moments, chasing after Sally with his chainsaw.

There is always a danger in reading too much into films and decoding messages that weren't originally intended by the authors of a work the images the audience are presented with suggest a reading along these lines. Sally has escaped her captors and the patriarchy they represent. On some level so has Leatherface. By leaving the house and engaging in the final chase with Sally he has regained some level of intent and action that was denied to him within the confines of the home. The idea that female characters within the film are only able to be themselves outside of the home is one that rings true to the ideologies of Second Wave Feminism. While this message is somewhat dampened by the retrieval of the phallus analogue by Leatherface the fact remains that the two remaining female characters, one a source of terror and one a source of strength, are able to escape the patriarchy and act on their own once they leave the traditional family structure presented in the home. Indeed these two images are the last

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60 As Tony Magistrale discusses: Leatherface changes faces, appropriating the "pretty woman" mask replete with garish makeup and wig. ... The absence of a real woman to guide and moderate this all-male family is grotesquely in evidence in the dinner scene, and perhaps this helps to explain why Sally, as the only "real" woman in the house is treated as a bizarre "guest of honor," seated in a literal "arm chair" at the head of the table. Leatherface's feeble effort to appropriate femininity highlights the barren dysfunctional nature of the patriarchy as it appears in this movie. Tony Magistrale, *Abject Terrors*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2005), page 155. The lack of a strong family and the problems this family has in finding its place in the patriarchy, coupled with the attempted gender conversion of Leatherface are sources of horror within the film.
ones the audience sees when watching the film, Sally covered in blood framed by the back window of a pickup truck as it drives away, and Leatherface impotently swinging his chainsaw as the sun rises behind him. Sally leaves the film traumatized but alive while Leatherface's tantrum can be seen as the fear of what he faces when he is forced to return to the domestic sphere without the young woman whom he had been chasing. While the audience may have some sympathy for Leatherface these final moments are almost heartbreaking in their depiction of two female characters and the different paths presented to them.
The female/feminine as a source of terror is at the heart of *Carrie* (Brian DePalma, 1976). The film follows a young girl, Carrie White (Sissy Spacek), as she becomes a young woman and attempts to understand the changes that are happening to her body. The film opens with a group of high school girls playing volleyball, and follows these young women into the gym and the showering facilities. As young Carrie gets her first period she is pelted with tampons by the other young women in her class. In terror at what is happening she curls into a ball and it isn't until she is rescued by Miss Collins (Betty Buckley) that the girls stop their attack. As the film progresses and Carrie begins to learn about puberty, what these changes to her body mean, and begins to find an interest in boys she also develops telekinesis which at times scare her and at others excite her. The film reaches its climax when Carrie is voted Prom Queen, and when she is receiving her crown is covered in pig's blood by Chris (Nancy Allen) and Billy (John Travolta). This combined with her date, Tommy Ross (William Katt), being knocked unconscious by the bucket containing the pig's blood drives Carrie into a murderous rage. As she takes her revenge on the students and faculty that mistreated her, the telekinetic powers she had been developing

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come into their full power and she kills many at the school before returning home and killing herself and her mother in the final moments of the film.

Of all the films discussed this is the one that can be seen to most obviously contain overt moments of resistance for the female characters, specifically Carrie. From the empowerment of Carrie as she becomes a woman to her struggles against the older generation as represented by her mother there are numerous ways in which this film can be seen through a feminist lens.

Indeed author Stephen King is quoted as saying:

If *The Stepford Wives* concerns itself with what men want from women, then *Carrie* is largely about how women find their own channels of power, and what men fear about women and women's sexuality...which is only to say that, writing the book in 1973 and only out of college three years, I was fully aware of what Women's Liberation implied for me and others of my sex. The book is, in its more adult implications, an uneasy masculine shrinking from a future of female equality.\(^2\)

So we have the original author's words detailing how this film is both about the empowerment of women and the male fear of that empowerment. If we are to take these messages to heart on the original novel then looking at how these ideas translated to film, and the resonance of feminist ideologies plays a key role in the success of the film's translation of the original author intent. More than just the ways in which the narrative can change between mediums we can also look to see if there are other or stronger messages present in the film.

Before we label this film as a feminist text there are a few elements that need deeper examination. The first is the overt sexualization of the young women within the film. In the opening moments of the film the audience is shown a long series of shower scenes in which the young women bathe following their gym class. The slow motion used coupled with the complete objectification of the female body in these moments can be seen as being present purely for the spectacle of the nude female body. Beyond these moments the slow moments of Carrie

showering are even more sexualized. From the slow long shots of Carrie washing herself, which appear as almost masturbatory, to cuts to a close shot of the shower head that is extremely phallic pouring water on her, returning to long shots of her bathing the entire scene plays in a similar way to a pornographic film. While these decisions are clearly intentional on the part of De Palma and do serve as a visual representation of Carrie's sexual awakening they are also exploitative of Sissy Spacek and the female form.

These images when coupled with the narrative moment of Carrie getting her first period and the following chants of "plug it up" from the other girls clearly link Carrie's introduction into womanhood with trauma. The entire narrative from this point forward serves as a series of punishments for Carrie based on her growth into a woman. "Woman's blood is thus linked to the possession of supernatural powers, powers which historically and mythologically have been associated with the representation of woman as witch."\textsuperscript{63} This placement of Carrie into one of the traditionally accepted places for women, that of the witch, and suggests the appropriate punishment of her is death. The American history of witchcraft and witch trials is one that almost any school aged child has heard and understands. These historical implications for the treatment of a witch provide the audience member with an inherent understanding that if Carrie is a witch, or a witch-like figure, she must die. If we accept that this is the case then some of the feminist message of the film is already lost, if women with power must die then there can be no change or challenges to the patriarchy.

When discussing Carrie's supernatural powers of telekinesis it is important to note that for the most part she has no control over her powers. While at the climax of the film she seems to be actively controlling her powers and continues to do so throughout the remainder of the film for the most part they are a mystery to her. While the theme of puberty bringing about

\textsuperscript{63} Barbara Creed, \textit{The Monstrous-Feminine}, (New York: Routledge, 1993), page 79.
supernatural powers is one that has been used repeatedly that they happen to Carrie and not because of Carrie is an important distinction. She is scared and confused by what is happening to her and is unable to fully take control of her own body until she is in a moment of murderous rage. Carrie does engage in some research into her powers, but within the film this knowledge is couched in terms of a religious miracle and not a source of inner power for Carrie. In a feminist reading of this film this small detail should raise questions for the critical audience. One of the primary goals of any feminist movement is giving power to women, and allowing them to wield that power. Carrie has great power, however these powers control her. She trembles in fear when she first discovers them, and throughout the film her powers are treated as an outside force rather than an internal expression of personal empowerment. As she begins to come into her own as a woman and stands up against her mother she talks of her powers as a gift, a dramatic shift from earlier in the film. It is noteworthy that in this moment within the film Margaret calls Carrie a witch, which both demonstrates the traditional explanation for women in power and the naivety of Margaret. Once Carrie is at the Prom and her powers are fully manifested she again seems to lose herself within her powers. While on some level this is simply a continuation of the allegory of her powers as a result of puberty that she isn't in always in control of her own body is problematic.\footnote{In the recent remake, \textit{Carrie} (Kimberly Pierce, 2013), this issue is addressed in that Carrie (Chloë Grace Moretz) actively learns about her powers and practices with them to hone her abilities prior to the Prom scene.}

One of the other primary female figures of the film is Carrie's mother, Margaret White (Piper Laurie). Margaret is a religious fanatic who attempts to punish Carrie for her first period. Margaret is a single mother who completely dismisses the concepts of love and family in favor of a religious fervor that holds both Margaret and her daughter hostage. Margaret is also one of the most obvious analogues for the older conservative generation with her adherence to
traditional gender roles. While she is working to support her family she is a seamstress a traditionally female occupation and when she is not actively at work or proselytizing she is in the home. She attempts to keep Carrie in the home and even attempts to metaphorically return her to the womb by continually forcing Carrie into a small closet to pray. Carrie, in attempting to engage with the outside world, and eventually disobeying her mother to attend the prom, stands up for herself and comes into conflict with those around her who seek to keep her in traditional gender roles. Carrie has a series of moments in which she attempts to take power from those who would keep her in the shadows. These advances are somewhat diminished in the finale of the film when Carrie returns home. Following a bath in which she removes all the blood from the prom, Margaret holds Carrie to her breast in a medium shot and strokes her hair gently. The film cuts to reaction shots of Margaret and then Carrie as she cries into her Mother's chest, talking about how her Mother was right. From Carrie's tearful face the film cuts to Margaret's hand slowly drawing a butcher knife out of the floor. As the two continue to pray the knife is slowly raised and given its own close up shot, quickly slicing through the air. Margaret stabs Carrie in the back and the orchestral soundtrack rises over the calls and cries of Carrie as she falls away from her mother. Carrie tumbles down a flight of stairs and looks up to see her Mother slowly stalking down the stairs with the knife raised. Margaret slowly advances towards Carrie and makes the sign of the cross with the bloody butcher knife. Carrie crawls away on her back as we are given Carrie's point of view as her Mother grins maniacally and advances. Carrie reaches a door and desperately tries to escape her Mother. As Margaret raises the knife for the final blow Carrie again makes use of her power and summons another knife from the sink, impaling the knife-wielding hand of her Mother. Carrie summons more and more kitchen implements to penetrate her Mother, eventually ending with a life sized recreation of the Saint
statue Carrie was seen praying to earlier in the film. Margaret moans in almost orgasmic pleasure as Carrie huddles against the wall. As Margaret dies Carrie rises and slowly drags her into the closet before calling down a rain of stones to destroy the house. As one film critic notes: "In *Carrie*, mother and daughter spill each other's blood in a mutual knife/rape attack; the daughter then drags her mother's body into a womb-like closet where they die locked together like the fated lovers of Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel.*"\(^65\) The daughter (younger generation) killing the mother (older generation) is immediately followed by the return to the womb and the death of both generations. This can suggest that these actions deserved the punishment that was handed out to Carrie for her attempts to move beyond the home and the roles assigned by the previous generations.

*Carrie* also serves as one of the best examples of the female as a source of terror. Carrie's growth into a woman leads her to become a source of terror for those around her. These same changes serve as a representation of the fear Carrie herself has at her new found womanhood. The film seeks to use the transition to womanhood as the primary source of terror, as one film critic notes: "By mapping the supernatural onto female adolescence and engaging the language of the fantastic, *Carrie* presents a masculine fantasy in which the feminine is constituted as horrific."\(^66\) This again calls into question the feminist messages of *Carrie*. The female form, and the female body are often used as a source of terror. In *Carrie* the recurrent theme of blood linked to puberty and menstruation are always present at moments of fear.

In *Carrie*, the film's most monstrous act occurs when the couple are drenched in pig's blood, which symbolizes menstrual blood in the terms set up by the film: women are referred to in the film as 'pigs,' women 'bleed like pigs,' and the pig's blood runs down Carrie's body at a moment of intense pleasure, just as her own menstrual blood ran down her legs during a similar pleasurable moment when she enjoyed her body in the

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shower. Here, women's blood and pig's blood flow together, signifying horror, shame and humiliation.67

If the primary source of fear within the film is from the maturation of a girl into a woman where can we begin to seek out moments from the film that relate to Second Wave Feminism? For the most part they are apparent in the development of Carrie as a character, alongside her mother, and the presence of a primarily female cast. The film offers critiques of traditional female roles as seen in Carrie's mother and her classmates. These represent the two options of femininity within the film that are available to Carrie as she becomes a woman. She can become either the distant and abstinent mother or the angry and sexualized teen, the Madonna or the Whore, with examples of both of physically and emotionally attacking Carrie throughout the course of the film. As Shelley Stamp Lindsey states: "The fantasy Carrie offers is ultimately a paradoxical one: the film enforces sexual difference by equating the feminine with the monstrous, while simultaneously insisting that the feminine position is untenable precisely because of its monstrousness."68 Carrie's empowerment and changes also carry some level of feminist ideology behind them but as author Stephen King suggests, it is also a tale about the male fear of female empowerment.

68 Shelley Stamp Lindsey, "Horror, Femininity, and Carrie's Monstrous Puberty," from The Dread Difference: Gender and the Horror Film, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996), page 293.
Continuing the idea of the female body as a source of terror we come to the final movie from the 1970s we will be discussing, Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979). The film follows a small commercial freighter crew as they are diverted from their delivery and told by their corporate bosses to investigate an unknown radio beacon. The ship touches down on the planetoid, LV-426, and three of the crew: Captain Dallas (Tom Skerrit), Executive Office Kane (John Hurt), and Navigational Officer Lambert (Veronica Cartwright). As these three officers make their way to the source of the signal they discover an enormous derelict ship of alien origins. They enter into the ship, find its pilot dead, and then find a cargo chamber filled with some sort of egg. Kane is attacked by one of the creatures (a facehugger) from inside the eggs and is rescued by his crewmates. They return to the landing craft, the *Nostromo*, named after the Joseph Conrad novel, and there the Science Officer Ash (Ian Holm) breaks quarantine and allows them back onto the ship. Once onboard the crew examines Kane and attempt to make repairs to their ship. Eventually the facehugger falls off of Kane and he seems to be fine. As the crew prepares to re-

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enter hyper-sleep a creature breaks free from Kane's body, the chestburster, and escapes. The remaining crew, Dallas, Ash, Lambert, Parker (Yaphet Kotto), Brett (Harry Dean Stanton), and Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) begin to hunt the creature down. As the alien (xenomorph) slowly kills the crew one by one until the beast is finally defeated by Ripley and flushed into the vacuum of space.

As with any horror movie the design of the villain is critical. In *Alien* the xenomorph and its lifecycle were designed by H.R. Giger. Giger's work has always contained a sexual element and this is certainly true throughout the designs of *Alien*. From the vaginal openings through which Dallas and crew enter the derelict to the phallic nature of the xenomorph's head the sexual imagery is ever-present throughout the film. Tied to these overtly sexual creature designs are the representations of the crew themselves. The crew is made up of men and women who are not overtly sexualized. This lack of overt gender characteristics from the men and women of the film serves to amplify the nature of the objects outside of the human. This lack of defining gender characteristics has its roots in the original script. "In O'Bannon and Shusett's script, the crew was entirely male, and admittedly thinly sketched." That initially all the characters were male suggests that the intent was to directly challenge the male audience members with the films messages of terror from the female and the castration of the male. However Alan Ladd Jr., of Fox Studios, suggested a major change that would forever leave its imprint on the horror and science fiction genre, what if Ripley the hero was a woman? "'Laddie said can Ripley be a woman,' recalls Shusett. 'I said, "I have a feeling that this is going to make this unique."'...He

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thought audiences would engage with a woman in peril.”71 So out of the creative process one of the most powerful female characters to ever appear onscreen was created.

One of the primary sources of fear is the female reproductive process, and the application of this process to the male. From the facehugger implanting the embryo in Kane and its bursting forth from his chest as a grotesque parody of the reproductive cycle to the continual penetration of the male form by phallic analogues the male body being treated as a female body provides one of the most constant sources of terror within the film. However one of the more subtle and important aspects of the film comes from the ships themselves and their role as an analogue for the womb. As Barbara Creed states:

The first primal scenario, which takes the form of a birthing scene, occurs in Alien at the beginning, when the camera/spectator explores the inner space of the mother-ship. This exploratory sequence of the inner body of the 'Mother' culminates in a long tracking shot down one of the corridors which leads to a womb-like chamber where the crew of seven are woken up from their protracted sleep by Mother's voice.72

If we look at the Nostromo as being one large womb protecting the crew from the cold and dangers of space and the primary containment for the terror of the film the phallic xenomorph takes on another level of representation as the intruding phallus into the womb. Coupled with the sense that the entire ship is a womb is the name of the primary computer on the ship, MU/TH/ER, or when spoken by the crew "Mother." "Mother" wakens the crew from their sleep, colludes with the android Ash to bring the alien on board, and counts down to the destruction of the ship coolly and calmly in the climax that pits Ripley against both the xenomorph and her surrogate "Mother." The social and Freudian implications abound in the idea that the Mother figure is trying to replace her current children with a new phallus/child/father figure in the

xenomorph. However in terms of the feminist movement this conflict is another example of the younger generation, represented by Ripley, struggling against the older generation, represented by "Mother" and the evil corporate entity of Weyland-Yutani. From the film we can see that the new generation wants to move beyond the orders of the older generation and follow their own path, not unlike Carrie, and the older generation attempts to stifle and kill the younger generation for their attempts.

The hidden double agent or danger is one of the elements Alien borrows from Film Noir. In the case of Alien the double agent is found in the form of Ash, initially thought to be the science officer but later revealed to be an android placed on the ship to serve the parent company, Weyland-Yutani, and their corporate need over the needs of the human crew. Ash as a male figure lets the infected Kane onto the ship, guards the new creature fiercely, and fights to keep it alive at all costs. In the film Ash becomes a father figure to the xenomorph and when working with "Mother" deems the crew expendable. Within the film this moment happens in the most confined of the womb spaces within the ship, the central control room. This room is one of the most claustrophobic on the ship, hardly larger than a closet and lined with swirling white padding that visually suggest the interior of a body. As Ripley attempts to get answers from "Mother" and finds a message sent to Ash telling him that the only priority is the xenomorph and that the crew are expendable. Ash mysteriously appears within the room and follows Ripley.

There are many examples of the Oedipal complex throughout the film. Particularly worthy of note is the conflict between Dallas and the xenomorph for MU/TH/ER's affection, specifically life granted by the "Mother" in space. Dallas and the human crew act as the opposing Father figures blocking the way for the young male xenomorph to gain access to the "Mother." Two more key examples come in the form of the conflict between Ripley and the xenomorph for the attention of Mother and Ripley's fight against "Mother" in the final moments of the film. These examples highlight the ways in which the film engages with the Oedipal complex. As Freud states: "While he is a still a small child, a son will already begin to develop a special affection for his mother, whom he regards as belonging to him; he begins to feel his father as a rival who disputes his sole possession. And in the same way a little girl who looks on her mother as a person who interferes with her affectionate relation to her father and who occupies a position which she herself could very well fill." Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), page 256.
out into the common area as he confronts her. "Ash tries to kill Ripley the same way that the Alien violates Kane: by sticking a rolled up pornography magazine (tube) down her throat. ...
Thus, Ash and the Alien are both linked to the Company by virtue of their mutual disregard for human life and their willingness to exploit humans in order to satisfy a parasitic need." The two male figures, Ash and the xenomorph, both attempt to use a phallus to penetrate a body. The suggestion that the male company/father analogue is linked to the other male figure of the xenomorph and both are attempting to kill the female characters suggests that men are a constant threat to women. More than that the link of the father and mother figures to the attempted death of women and the human characters is a further example of how the older generation, the parents, are unable to come to terms with the youth and will instead destroy them and their ideals.

Ripley's final battle with the xenomorph is key to both her character and any interpretation of the film. After hearing the deaths of Lambert and Parker over the intercom, a moment that reinforces the links within the film between sex and death as Lambert's unseen but heard death is portrayed through a series of gasps and moans that without the visual references of the film could easily be interpreted as noises from the act of sex, Ripley attempts to stop "Mother" from executing the self destruct, and is unable to. Screaming that "Mother" is a "bitch" Ripley then makes her way to the shuttle, the Narcissus another Conrad reference, and makes her escape as the Nostromo is destroyed. As she prepares for hyper-sleep the xenomorph reappears and Ripley must face the monster one last time. In these moments it is important to notice that the character of Ripley is overtly sexualized for the first time within the film. By placing Sigourney Weaver in only her underwear and a tank top she is objectified and sexualized as a woman. The arm of the xenomorph falls out of a crevice within the small escape shuttle. Ripley

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looks on in terror as the xenomorph begins to move. Slowly she backs away and into a nearby closet. From below we see her recognize a helmet. Slowly she places first one leg and then the other into the suit. The film cuts to the xenomorph's head and once again the second mouth extends towards the nearly naked Ripley. Ripley bows down and places the helmet on her head, sealing the space suit. She reaches down and takes a grappling gun from the closet and slowly moves towards the control seat. Ripley slowly buckles herself in, never taking her eyes away from the danger. Ripley then begins to vent gasses attempting to drive the xenomorph from its hiding place. Each eruption of gas brings it closer to the monster. Ripley slowly sings her lucky star and finally succeeds in driving out the xenomorph. The camera shifts to a close up of Ripley's head as the xenomorph comes into view. Just as the second mouth is about the penetrate Ripley's helmet he blows the hatch, sucking the monster into space. The rush of air forces her chair to swivel and she is facing the monster still clinging to the interior of the ship. She takes the grappling gun and blasts the monster in the chest, dislodging its hold and sending it into space. She releases the gun and it is trapped in the closing door, allowing the xenomorph to hold onto the side of the ship. As the xenomorph uses its tail to gain purchase and crawl into one of the engines Ripley slams her fist onto the controls and burns the monster alive, finally making the small ship safe. This leads to the interpretation that this battle is a fight between the feminine, in Ripley, and the masculine, in the xenomorph. The female must purge the male from one final womb in order to be safe. Ripley is able to complete this task leaving her and the ship's cat Jonesy to sleep until they are safely home. Ripley as both the Final Woman and avenger for the deaths of her crew stands up against the patriarchy and the male and is successful, suggesting that those of the feminist movement will also find success if they are able to make their own stand against the male/patriarchy.
The final item that is important to any discussion of *Alien* in terms of Feminism is that this film is the inspiration for the Bechdel test. The Bechdel test has found fame throughout the internet and world as being a means to test whether a film can be seen as feminist. The rules are simple, if a film 1) has 2 or more female characters 2) who talk to each other 3) about something that moves the plot forward and isn't solely about a man; then the film passes the test. The original comic, entitled "The Rule" (see Figure 4), lays out these conditions and sites *Alien* as the only film that passes the test. While this test is one that is seemingly simple the implications have become one of the most influential in the modern discussion of feminist cinema. Sweden has instituted the Bechdel test as part of their national ratings system. There are dozens of websites and articles devoted to determining which films pass the test and which ones don't. While this is certainly not an academic or institutionalized means for the determination of whether a film is feminist or not, and there are many other tests such as the "Sexy Lamp Test" that *Alien* was the one film singled out as passing the initial test is important to its place within the realm of feminist cinema.

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76 The "Sexy Lamp Test" suggests that if a female character can be replaced by nothing more than a sexy lamp then the film has extreme gender bias and weak female characters.
With these three films we have seen the impact that Second Wave Feminism directly or indirectly played in the development of the major horror rules of the following decades. From the development of the Final Woman, a female lead that is able to defeat the killer that will occur again in *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Aliens*, along with countless others to the generational struggles between the young women and the established order of the past and the patriarchy the events and messages of the 1970s were made manifest through these films.

The continued role that these women and their fights have is serve as both emblems of the time

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and lasting images of powerful women onscreen. While these three films are only a small sampling of the many that came out throughout this decade they are the most exemplary of the messages that were being sent to the youth of America in this timeframe. From the need to question authority and patriarchy to the rights of women and their bodies the horror film played a role in the dissemination of these complex ideologies to a broad audience. From these three films a new type of female character arose, one who was strong enough to defeat the killer while still remaining feminine, and provide a new group of role models to the youth of America. As the decade came to a close so too was Second Wave Feminism coming to an end. With the rise of Third Wave Feminism in the late 1980s and the changes to feminist ideologies throughout the decade so too did the women of horror change to represent these new ideas. In the following chapter we will begin to see how these changes affected the Final Woman, Ripley, and the representation of women within the horror film.

**Introduction**

Following the apparent progress in both the rights and representation of women during the 1970s in the United States, there was a major cultural backlash against Feminism in the 1980s. Heralded by the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan as president and inauguration in 1981, the United States had a strong conservative president. Reagan led the United States into an era that came to be defined by a new economic policy and a reigniting of the Cold War. His economic policies, many of which sought to reduce taxes on the wealthy and raise them on the lower classes, combined with the increased military spending and hard line policy when dealing with the Soviet Union created a new cultural landscape. Suddenly it appeared as if Feminist initiatives that previously gained momentum were stopped or reversed. This cultural change is reflected in many of the most popular films of the 1980s including the horror genre.  

The cultural changes are apparent early in the films of the 1980s. Closely tied to these broader cultural changes is a shift in the representation of women in horror films. By tracing the representation of women in this decade within a specific genre and the linkages between the films and their historical moment, the impact the horror genre has on the understanding of the role of women within a given timeframe is evident. What the author looks for as being indicative as a pro-Feminist representation remains the same as in the previous chapter, finding Films like *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987) were more active in their depiction of this cultural shift, while many of the most popular films had few if any female characters. Of the ten highest grossing movies of the 1980s only *The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980) and *The Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand, 1983) had a prominent and strong female character in Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher). Behind the scenes women were even more absent. In 1985 less than 1% of directors were female. That studios hired so few women led the major unions, SAG, DGA, and WGA to create committees about women working in Hollywood. This in turn led to the DGA filing a lawsuit against Columbia and Warner Bros. in 1983. While the courts sided with the studios the result was a slight increase in the professional presence of women in Hollywood. Maya Montañez Smulker, "A Brief History of Women DGA Directors: The Past 30 Years", accessed online 6/22/15. http://www.womendirectorsinhollywood.com/a-brief-history-of-women-dga-directors-the-past-30-years/
women who are strong and able to make their own choices, but this becomes more difficult to find in 1980s film. This is, in part, because the cultural expectations of women to be in the domestic sphere and subordinate to men during the 1980s are even more pronounced than they were only a few years earlier.

The three films that exemplify the changes in how women were represented within the horror genre from the 1980s are *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984), and *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986). *Friday the 13th* holds the record for the largest horror franchise with twelve films, a television series and another reboot on the horizon. The first installment is especially important because it introduces one of the few female killers within the slasher sub-set and within the entire horror genre. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* introduced the world to Freddy Kruger, a villain who has lasted throughout nine films and a television series. Wes Craven also takes the Final Woman onto her next evolution by placing her on the offensive against the killer and not just sitting back and waiting to be killed. *Aliens*, as the first sequel discussed in-depth in this work, potentially has the most to show us in the changing roles of women within the horror genre. Director James Cameron takes the character of Ripley to new locations and develops her character while still placing her at odds with the xenomorph, and these changes are telling for the critical viewer.

As with the 1970s there are entries into the canon of the horror film that will not be discussed. The first is Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film *The Shining*. *The Shining* follows Jack Torrence (Jack Nicholson) and his family as they agree to be caretakers for a hotel during the winter months. This film while visually stunning and as complete as any of Kubrick's works falls into similar traps as *Jaws* and *The Exorcist*. The story is far more focused on Jack Torrence than on his wife, Wendy (Shelley Duvall), and while it engages with issues of domestic abuse
throughout the film, it still is primarily about Jack's descent into madness. Jack serves as the protagonist for the film, and the final moments solidify this as they relate to Jack and the hotel and not Wendy and Danny's survival.

*The Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi, 1981) returns the genre to the extremely low budget film. The film follows five young people as they go on vacation to a cabin in the woods and accidentally unleash an ancient curse. This film while creating many of the traditional "cabin in the woods" conventions of the horror genre, from the ratio of men to women in the group of five, to the separating of the group into smaller pairings to search the woods, to the boarding up of the house only to need to un-board the house later in the film, *The Evil Dead* popularized many of the conventions of the 1980s horror film. The film also started the careers of both Bruce Campbell and Sam Raimi, both of whom are still returning to these characters and events even today. The film again focuses primarily on the male in terms of the events of the film. The women in the film are simply bodies to add to the count, and examples of how dangerous the woods can be for women, and not characters in their own right.

While not as immediately important to the horror canon as others it is also important to take a moment to note the film *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hiltzik, 1983). While this film appears initially to play off of the same elements as *Friday the 13th* with the killer terrorizing a campground, the twist of the film is important to mention in any discussion of gender within the horror genre. In the final moments of the film it is revealed that one of the campers, who was identified as female throughout the film, is actually physiological male. The film then reveals through a series of flashbacks that the child's parents died and his Aunt took him in. She states that they already had a boy and a second just will not do, and that a girl would be so much nicer, forcing Peter to assume the female gender, and the name of his dead sister, Angela. This forced
gender change is presented as being at the root of why Peter/Angela has to kill throughout the remainder of the series. The film proposes that a male forced to assume female gender roles has no choice but to turn to murder. While the larger issues related to the representation of transgender individuals is not the focus of this work the presence of this plot twist, a decade before the same twist in *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), and that the forced gender change is responsible for the murders, is important to keep in mind. \(^79\)

The final major event within the 1980s as related to horror films is the explosion of sequels. While this work only focuses on two sequels (*Aliens* in this chapter and *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* in the next) the horror landscape was blanketed with sequels throughout the 1980s. Seven sequels to *Friday the 13th* were released over this decade, four *A Nightmare on Elm Street* sequels, along with sequels to *Psycho, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Sleepaway Camp, The Evil Dead, Halloween, The Slumber Party Massacre, Jaws* and many others permeated the landscape. This continued repetition of similar themes, killers, and victims goes to show just how important the sequel came to be for the horror film. It also serves as an example of how frequently the narratives, moral codes, and gender roles of the horror film, along with its genre conventions, were being repeated particularly throughout the years of the 1980s.

**Feminism in the 1980s, the Backlash**

The United States experienced a dramatic political shift towards a more strict conservative ideology under the neo-conservatives. Neo-conservatives were rationalists, believing that reason was the primary source of knowledge, and rejecting many of the moral relativist ideologies such as believing that different people and cultures could believe different things, a philosophy that other republicans supported surrounding the Cold War and political

\(^{79}\) Gender confusion is a horror convention that has its roots in *Psycho*. While many films since *Psycho* have introduced an element of gender confusion to the killer, including Leatherface, this film is the most explicit in the link between challenged gender identities and the need to cope with those challenges through serial murder.
policies. Combined with this trend toward rationalism are many of Reagan's political policies. Economically this was the era of "Reaganomics" a series of economic policies that focused on the control of government spending, reduction of income and capital gains taxes, loosening of governmental regulations, and tighter control of the currency to limit inflation. In addition to these economic policies shaping the cultural landscape of the 1980s were Reagan's increase in military spending and refusal to bow to the Soviet Union, taking his conservative stance to the brink of war. As one scholar of neo-conservatism states:

> Murray identifies March 8, 1983, as the decisive moment when neo-conservatism launched its way into the popular American imagination. It was on this date that President Ronald Reagan referred to the Soviet Union as "an evil empire." Neoconservative notables like Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, as well as many others, were ecstatic that Reagan unequivocally rejected the "moral relativism" in terms of which the conventional wisdom had insisted on understanding the Cold War for decades.

In labeling the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and consequently aligning both the United States and her allies as the "good guys" Reagan was drawing a moral line of justification around the actions of the United States and her Allies. This position allowed the public to accept policy changes like increased military spending to a peak of $456.5 billion (in adjusted 2005 dollars) in 1987, an increase of over $100 billion from the first year of the decade ($325.1 billion in 1980). This stance and the increased possibility for a long term war with the Soviet Union hung over the heads of Americans throughout the 1980s and played a huge role in shaping the types of films being presented to the public.

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In the world of Feminism there was a growing divide in ideologies. The inclusive nature of all forms of feminist thought throughout the 1960s-1970s began to fade as two groups, the Anti-Porn Feminists and the Pro-Sex Feminists began a debate that continues to this day. The Anti-Porn Feminists supported traditional views of heterosexuality. They interpreted pornography as being exploitative of women and promoting negative female stereotypes. The Pro-Sex Feminists, while not actively supporting pornography, sought to give women sexual freedom. The so called "Feminist Sex Wars" began in the late 1970s with the Anti-Porn Feminists starting to rally and protest various depictions of sexual acts, and promote traditional heterosexual sexual ideologies. The Pro-Sex Feminists saw the Anti-Porn group as being puritanical and limiting to the sexual desires of women. In 1980 the National Organization of Women declared their "Big Four" targets: pornography, pedophilia, public sex, and sadomasochism as all being dangerous to women and an invasion of privacy and rights, not about female pleasure.84

The biggest schism occurred in 1982 following the Barnard Conference on Sexuality. The conference was an "interdisciplinary group of feminist scholars, faculty and graduate students, who wanted to broaden and complicate feminist thought about female sexuality."85 This group sought to "develop a more nuanced and theoretically useful framework for thinking about sexuality in all its complexity, as both danger and pleasure. What might a version of feminist sexual politics divorced from moral prescriptions and the labels “good” and “bad” look like?"86 The conference was protested by the Anti-Porn Feminists and solidified opinions on both sides that there would not be any way to come to terms with their opponent. This divide

and the lasting repercussions it had in the distraction and destruction of the Feminist movement signaled the final end to Second Wave Feminism and ushered in a relatively divisive decade until the rise of Third Wave Feminism in the 1990s.

Without a united front advocating for a cohesive set of ideas and in combination with the generally conservative shift in cultural ideologies, Feminism suffered a backlash. This backlash is clearly visible in the ways in which women were being presented onscreen. As Susan Faludi states:

The backlash shaped much of Hollywood's portrayal of women in the '80s. In typical themes, women were set against women; women's anger at their social circumstances was depoliticized and displayed as personal depression instead; and women's lives were framed as morality tales in which the "good mother" wins and the independent woman gets punished. And Hollywood restated and reinforced the backlash thesis: American women were unhappy because they were too free; their liberation had denied them marriage and motherhood.87

Women were no longer allowed to be individuals or rebel against an unjust society in the mainstream film. Instead, they were relegated again into the supporting cast of the film or as the primary antagonist to the male characters. These trends are evident within the horror film, but in a few exceptions horror is able to break from the driving cultural values and maintain a small bit of independence and voice for its female characters.

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Friday the 13th - 1980

Figure 5, Betsy Palmer as Mrs. Voorhees.  

_Friday the 13th_ (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980) opens on a summer camp in 1958. The camera follows two camp counselors as they sneak away from the main group to have some private time. We, as the audience, share in the killer's point of view as these two counselors are killed by an unknown assailant. These two deaths are the least graphically show onscreen, with quick cuts away from the actual act and primarily reaction shots of the counselors and splattered blood. The film flashes forward to the present and follows a young woman, Annie (Robbi Morgan) as she attempts to get a ride from a small town out to Camp Crystal Lake, the same camp from the prologue that is being reopened for the first time since the murders. In the town Ralph (Walt Gorney), the local crazy person, warns Annie that the camp has a death curse due to the accidental death in 1957 and murders in 1958. Annie laughs this off and finds a ride part way to the camp. She is then picked up by another car, taken out past the camp, chased through the woods, and murdered. The film returns to the camp and the other counselors and their boss Steve Christy (Peter Brouwer). As the counselors work on making repairs to the camp that remained empty for the two decades since the murders, Steve returns to town to pick up more

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88 Sean S. Cunningham, _Friday the 13th_ (Paramount, 1980).
supplies. As the evening falls the counselors split into smaller groups to socialize, have sex, or get high. One by one the teens are picked off, killed by knife, axe, or in the most memorable case Jack (Kevin Bacon) is stabbed through the bed he is lying on in the throat by an arrow. As their numbers decrease we zero in on the Final Woman of the film, Alice (Adrienne King). Alice tries to barricade herself in one of the buildings. While she is attempting to make the cabin safer the camera returns to Steve, whose car has broken down. He makes his way back to camp and recognizes someone near the entrance. He is killed and the killer, who has yet to be revealed, returns to Alice. Alice finds an older woman, Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer), in the building. Mrs. Voorhees reveals that she used to work at the camp, and that her son, Jason, a special needs child, drowned while the counselors who were supposed to be watching him swim were off having sex. This led her to return the following year and kill those counselors. She says that she cannot allow the camp to reopen, especially with so many dirty counselors working there. She begins to chase Alice, often speaking in a child's voice telling herself to "Kill them Mommy, Kill them!" as she hunts Alice down. Alice is able to get a hold of a machete, and in the climactic moment severs Mrs. Voorhees' head. Alice then goes adrift in a canoe, and one final scare occurs as Jason jumps out of the lake and grabs her. She awakens in a hospital bed, and when she is told that the police couldn't find a child, she says "So he's still out there," setting up Jason to be the killer in the sequels.

The first thing we see about Friday the 13th is that is still follows all of the major slasher film stereotypes set up by The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. There is an isolated setting, a psychotic killer, a Final Woman, and all of the other genre conventions one would expect. The major difference is in who the killer is. Rather than a male who is sexually impotent and deranged as in Psycho or any number of others, we instead have a woman who is seeking
revenge on behalf of her dead child. Mrs. Voorhees does exhibit a small degree of gender confusion as she takes on the voice of her dead child throughout the film; however this is not played as being the motivating factor for her crimes. As Carol Clover notes: "Female killers are few and their reasons for killing significantly different from the men's. With the possible exception of the murderous mother in *Friday the 13th I*, they show no gender confusion." Mrs. Voorhees is important simply for the fact that she is female and a serial killer, a role that has not been held by many women even into the modern era. However this importance also has another side to it. I would argue that Mrs. Voorhees in her motivations and portrayal is a return to themes and ideas that have more in common with the melodrama of the 1940s-50s than with her horror film counterparts.

A major subgenre of the melodrama of the 1940s-1950s, the "woman's film" or "weepies" is a genre of films that targeted the female demographic as its primary audience and in doing so provided "soft core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife." These films centered on a primary female protagonist who throughout the course of the film encounters various obstacles that she must overcome to return to a state of normalcy. In the case with most "women's films" the state of normalcy is that of a middle-class domestic life. As Haskell notes:

Central to the woman's film is the notion of middle-class-ness, not just as an economic status, but as a state of mind and a relatively rigid moral code. The circumscribed world of the housewife corresponds to the state of woman in general, confronted by a range of options so limited she might as well inhabit a cell. The persistent irony is that she is dependent for her well-being and "fulfillment" on institutions - marriage, motherhood -

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90 Of the most popular horror film releases since *Friday the 13th* the only female killers have been Debbie Salt (Laurie Metcalf) in *Scream 2* (Wes Craven, 1997), Amanda Young (Shawnee Smith) as an accomplice in *Saw II* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2005), *Saw III* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2006) and *Saw VI* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2007), and Jill Roberts (Emma Roberts) in *Scream IV* (Wes Craven, 2011). Of these three women only Debbie Salt and Jill Roberts act as the primary antagonist, and even then Debbie Salt is closely aligned with Mrs. Voorhees in that her motivation is revenge for the death of her son.
that by translation the word "woman" into "wife" and "mother," end her independent identity.92

This return to the cell of the domestic sphere was one that faced women in both the post-war era and again in the 1980s following the increased conservative ideology that swept the country. "In any case, only for domestic reasons - for the sake of family and motherhood - can a woman shout and still come out a heroine in the late '80s cinema."93

Also critical to the "woman's film" are the genre conventions that dictate how the stories unfold. The women of these films traditionally fall into three categories: the ordinary woman, the extraordinary woman, or in rare cases the ordinary woman who becomes extraordinary.94 With these as the primary character types the plots of the films unfold in particular ways, similar to those of the horror film. "The themes of the woman's film can themselves be reduced into four categories, often found overlapping or in combination: sacrifice, affliction, choice, competition."95 In each of these cases the categories outline the basic plot elements of the film. Sacrifice films focus on the woman sacrificing something, herself, her children, her happiness, her lovers, her career, and love generally in the search to uphold middle-class values. In the film concerned with affliction, the woman suffers from some sort of disease and either dies as a saint or is cured by her lover/doctor. The film concerned with choice focuses on the woman's selection between two men. The film dealing with competition sees the protagonist in competition for the affection of a man or her children from another.96 These films met the desires of the women of the 1940s-50s and "Because the woman's film was designed for and tailored to a certain market, its recurrent themes represent the closest thing to an expression of

92 Ibid, pages 159-160.
95 Ibid, page 163.
96 Ibid, pages 163-166.
the collective drives, conscious and unconscious, of American women, of their avowed obligations and their unconscious resistance."97 Finding the meanings and messages of the woman's film is similar to what this work is attempting to do with the horror film again in relation to the female audience.

With this general sense of the woman's film we can return to *Friday the 13th* and see how Mrs. Voorhees relates to the older traditions of the woman's film. The first and most striking thing to notice is that she isn't given a first name in either the film or the credits. She is simply Mrs. Voorhees. The power of naming is one that humanity has understood for centuries, and in disavowing her of any independent identity beyond her assumed married name the film reduces her from being an individual and instead places her firmly within the domestic sphere. This also ties into the 1980s conservative turn of placing women back in the domestic sphere. While it is important not to place too much into something as seemingly minor as a name that she is defined by her husband and role as a mother is key.

*Friday the 13th* and Mrs. Voorhees, if viewed as a woman's film, would fall into Haskell's category of the film concerned with sacrifice. "The sacrifice of and for children - two sides of the same coin - is a disease passing for national virtue, and a constant theme in films that preach one thing, and, for anyone listening say another. ... the spectacle of a woman owned by her children or consumed by her maternal zeal is as much the mainstay of the woman's film as it is of American culture and middle-class marriage."98 Mrs. Voorhees' entire motivation comes from the love of her child. She so loved her child that she is driven to obsessively murder young teens onto whom she projects her own fears and guilt about Jason's death. She is "The woman without a job, without interests, without an absorbing marriage, invests her whole life, erotic and

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97 Ibid, page 168.
emotional energy in the child, who then becomes a divining rod, further drawing off the energy and electricity that should provide a constant current between husband and wife.”

While Mrs. Voorhees has seemingly lost her husband along the way, the how and why are left up to the audience to define for themselves, her obsession with Jason, and the lost love he represents is the driving force behind the entire film.

By looking at the scene in which the truth is revealed we can see clearly the thematic traits of the woman's film being expressed within Friday the 13th. In the sequence following Alice discovering the bodies of her co-workers spread throughout the camp, she has returned to the main cabin. At the cabin she seemingly finds some adult help in the form of a middle aged woman who is waiting for her there. As she haltingly confesses what has happened to the older woman, Mrs. Voorhees, who has appeared in the cabin the camera cuts to a medium shot of Mrs. Voorhees leaning in a doorway. Mrs. Voorhees begins to bemoan the tragedy that haunts the camp. In truly melodramatic intonations as she delivers her lines actress Betsy Palmer, as Mrs. Voorhees chews up the screen as she begins to tell Alice of the history of Camp Crystal Lake.

The camera slowly pans to the right as Mrs. Voorhees tells Alice of the drowning death of a boy while the counselors who were to be watching him went off to make love. The film cuts to Alice and continues the slow pan as Mrs. Voorhees expands on her story. The film returns to Mrs. Voorhees as she slowly begins to walk towards Alice and off screen. The famous "Kill, kill, kill, ma, ma, ma" theme begins to play in the background as the film cuts to a medium shot of Alice slowly backing away. Mrs. Voorhees enters the frame and the music gets louder as she


100 Harry Manfredini the film's composer has stated that the theme music is meant to be a rendition of Jason speaking to his mother telling her to "Kill, Kill, Kill, Mom, Mom, Mom" and serves as another means through which the film reinforces the importance of the mother/son relationship and how Mrs. Voorhees is effected by the death of her son. "Deconstructing Harry" from Slasherama, Jason Arnopp and Harry Manfredini, 2005. Accessed 6/9/15. http://www.slasherama.com/features/harry.HTML
tells Alice that she was working that day, and without her supervision of Jason the counselors should have been watching him. Her voices raises to a fever pitch as she enters into a two-shot with Alice, grabs her shoulders and begins to shake her. The film cuts to over Alice's shoulder and Mrs. Voorhees seems to calm as Alice says she wants to see her boss. Alice takes a step away and the film cuts to a close up profile of Mrs. Voorhees. The audience begins to hear a young boy calling for help, and as Mrs. Voorhees looks up there is a series of brief flashes to a long shot of a young boy flailing in the water. Mrs. Voorhees answers the voice from the past and says "I am Jason." The film then cuts back to the two shot of Alice and Mrs. Voorhees as she says that Jason was her son, and that Friday the 13th was his birthday. Alice backs out of the frame as Mrs. Voorhees speaks about how she couldn't let them open the camp again. Mrs. Voorhees raises her voice as she shouts to Alice "Look what you did to him!" Mrs. Voorhees draws a knife and attempts to attack Alice but Alice hits her with a fireplace poker and runs out of the cabin. As Mrs. Voorhees recovers the film cuts back to the close up and in a child's voice Mrs. Voorhees says "Kill her Mommy, kill her!"

From this one scene and all the preceding deaths we see how much the death of Jason affected Mrs. Voorhees. Her love for her child twisted from genuine caring into homicidal rage, and a presence within her mind of the dead child, a reversal of the same events with Norman Bates and his mother in Psycho. This obsessive love for a child, without the murder, would not be out of place in any of the woman's films from thirty years earlier.

In this type of discussion there is one more aspect that needs to be examined before moving forward, namely the possibility of a link between the horror film and melodrama. These two films genres form part of the body genre trifecta as outlined by Linda Williams. "Alone or in combination, heavy doses of sex, violence, and emotion are dismissed by one faction or
another as having no logic or reason for existence beyond their power to excite. Gratuitous sex, gratuitous violence and terror, gratuitous emotion are frequent epithets hurled at the phenomenon of the "sensational" in pornography, horror, and melodrama. ¹⁰¹ These three body genres all attempt to elicit a physiological response from the body, arousal in the case of pornography, tears in the case of the melodrama, and the rising heartbeat and bodily reactions of fear in the horror film.¹⁰² More than only a physical response from their audience, all three kinds of film focus on sexuality and gender roles, in varying degrees of explicitness, to achieve these responses. If we accept that these three genres all exist in some level of relationship to the body then it should not be surprising to find one genre borrowing from another in this quest. While the horror genre has often relied upon female nudity and the promise of sex outside of wedlock, traits that commonly belong to the realm of the pornographic, in the case of Friday the 13th the horror film has taken some of the tricks in terms of story and performance from another genre, the melodrama.

The similarity between the woman's film and the horror film in the case of Friday the 13th is too strong to ignore. From the driving forces behind the plot to the acting and directing of Betsy Palmer as Mrs. Voorhees the film uses the genre conventions of the woman's film as a framework for the horror genre. More than the structural and physiological links between these two genres is the historical setting into which they both fall, the post World War II era and the post-Vietnam/re-ignition of the Cold War era, respectively both of which saw a return to a more conservative social and cultural role for women than earlier eras. In this examination we can not only see how the culture and political forces have an impact on what is being presented on screen, but that there is a historical, cultural groundwork already in place for the reception of these films by a new audience. Just as select horror films of the 1970s provided moments of

¹⁰¹ Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess”, from Film Quarterly Vol. 44, No. 4 (Summer, 1991), page 3.
resistance for women outside of their traditional social roles, some of those in the 1980s sought to return women to the domestic sphere, with characters like Mrs. Voorhees as a cultural throwback to a time in which many women went to the movies to see films focused on the domestic sphere and the problems that faced women in the home.\footnote{As Haskell notes: At the lowest level, as soap opera, the "woman’s film" fills a masturbatory need, it is soft-core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife. The weepies are founded on a mock-Aristotelian and politically conservative aesthetic whereby women spectators are moved, not by pity and fear but by self-pity and tears, to accept, rather than reject, their lot. That there should be a need and an audience for such an opiate suggests an unholy amount of real misery. Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film", \textit{From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies}, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pages 154-155.}
Standing in stark contrast to Mrs. Voorhees and serving as one of the best examples of the progression of the Final Woman is Nancy (Heather Langenkamp) from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984). Opening with a man in the shadows stalking a victim in a boiler room, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* begins with a visual introduction of the killer before the protagonists. This sequence culminates with a young woman, Tina (Amanda Wyss), waking from a nightmare only to find that there are slashes in her nightgown, mirroring in reality the events of her dream. In fear, Tina asks her friends, Nancy and Glen (Johnny Depp), to spend the night with her in an attempt to calm her mind. While the teens are talking at Tina's house, Nancy and Glen reveal that they had dreams about the same burned man with a glove that has knives for fingers. The famous rhyme that becomes a staple of the series is also introduced in these opening moments. Rod (Jsu Garcia), Tina's boyfriend, arrives and he and Tina sleep together while Nancy and Glen are in another room. During the night Tina is again greeted by the burned man in the boiler room, who is successful in trapping Tina. As she struggles in her

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105 The full rhyme is a play on the old nursery rhyme “One, Two, Buckle Your Shoe” and is repeated throughout the series. The full rhyme is: One, Two, Freddy's coming for you; Three, Four, Better Lock Your Door; Five, Six, Grab a Crucifix; Seven, Eight, Gonna Stay Up Late; Nine, Ten, Never Sleep Again.
dream she manages to wake Rod up and he witnesses her being stabbed repeatedly and slowly dragged up the walls of the room. The combined screams of Rod and Tina wake Nancy and Glen, who are unable to break the door down to help. Rod flees the scene and in the process sets himself up as the prime suspect in Tina’s murder. At the police station Nancy speaks to her father, Lt. Donald Thompson (John Saxon), and mentions that Tina dreamt of a man trying to kill her. The next day Nancy returns to school and is stopped by Rod, who says he didn’t kill Tina before being arrested. Nancy continues with her day and during school falls asleep. In her dream she follows Tina’s body throughout the school and into the basement. There she encounters the killer, who calls himself Freddy (Robert Englund), and is able to wake herself up by burning her arm on a pipe. Nancy wakes up with a burn on her arm and begins to piece things together. Later that night while bathing she falls asleep and Freddy again makes an attempt on her life. With stories from Glen and other classmates she begins to believe that this killer is real and poses a real threat to their lives. Rod dies of an apparent suicide in custody and at his funeral Nancy's mother Marge (Ronee Blakely) insists that Nancy visit a sleep clinic. In the clinic Nancy again has a nightmare and is cut on her arm by Freddy. She awakens and is able to bring his fedora out of the dream and into reality with her. Marge recognizes the hat and after a prolonged confrontation with Nancy admits that the killer’s name was Fred Krueger. Fred was a child murderer, and it is also suggested but not explicitly stated, child molester, burned alive by the townspeople after his release from jail on a technicality. Marge leads Nancy into the basement and pulls Freddy’s glove from their furnace while admitting to playing a key role in the murder of Freddy. Nancy now cannot sleep but is forming a plan of attack. She plans to bring Freddy into the real world with Glen there to knock him out. As she prepares Glen falls asleep and is killed by Freddy. As her father investigates the death of Glen in his home across the street
Nancy yells at him to break into their own house in twenty minutes. She then sets up a series of booby traps to aid her in quest to stop Freddy. Nancy falls asleep and is able to drag Freddy into the real world. He falls into her traps and on fire returns to Marge's bedroom and attempts to smother her. Freddy apparently is defeated but Nancy is too wary to fall for this trick. When he returns she turns her back and by refusing to believe in him strips him of his powers. The final scene of the film finds Nancy emerging from the house in daylight to find a convertible with Glen, Tina, and Rod waiting for her. She gets in the car as Marge waves goodbye from the doorstep. Suddenly the gloved hand of Freddy appears and pulls Marge back into the house, and the top of the convertible rises in the same striped pattern as Freddy's sweater and drives away. The final shots are of children skipping rope and singing Freddy's rhyme.

Before considering Nancy as the Final Woman, the setting of the film must be discussed. The film, unlike many of its horror counterparts, takes place in suburbia. Initially this new common place setting, in which the adults are present and even playing a major role in the events of the film, and that has all the conveniences that are often denied to those horror characters that are stranded somewhere may seem to be breaking with the genre conventions. There is no conflict between the city and country as with many horror films that make use of the suburban and urban setting. Instead the fear and location of the terror is within the minds of the characters, in their dreams. While dreams are an isolated setting and

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106 These films often focus on the city-country dichotomy with those from the city in danger from those in the country. Films like The Hills Have Eyes (Wes Craven, 1977), The Howling (Joe Dante, 1981), or even Deliverance (John Boorman, 1972) all focus on this axis. This is also a separate entity from a film like Candyman (Bernard Rose, 1992) that focuses on the terrors of living in the city. The city-country film differs from films like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre in which people come from the city and into the country, but instead the dividing line is found in the roles that being from the city or from the country delineate for the characters within the films. As Carol Clover states: "More to the point, country people live beyond the reaches of social law. They do not observe the civilized rules of hygiene or personal habit. If city men are clean-shaven or wear stylish beards or moustaches, country men sport stubble. ... The typical country rapist is a toothless or rotten-toothed single man with a four-day growth." Carol J. Clover, Men, Women, and Chainsaws, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), page 125.
individualized setting the concept that not only could someone enter our dreams, but begin to
exert more control over them than we can is truly terrifying. "In Nightmare, the mind is as much under assault as the body; the distinctions between the real world and the dream world are deliberately blurred and conjoined."107 Within this film the worlds of the individual dreamers merge and become almost a manifestation of the collective unconscious of the children of Elm Street. This shared, but limited location, travels far beyond the Freudian ideas of dreams as wish-fulfillment108 and into the supernatural. These types of collective dreams and the power exerted over them by both Freddy and Nancy go beyond the concept of lucid dreaming as they cross over into the waking life. "The distinction between waking and dreaming is dissolved and, in the developing dreamer, becomes an awareness of conscious merging with visionary realm. The visionary experiences the world as a radically transformed environment whose ecological structures become wholly mythic and superordinate."109 In this film and the later entries into the series the abilities of the dreamer to interact with their dreams and cross the boundary between the dream and reality play critical roles in the development of the mythology of A Nightmare on Elm Street.

Moving from the dreams and into reality let us turn our attention to Nancy. Nancy initially meets all the requirements of the Final Woman. She is the lone survivor of the events of the film, she is able to defeat the killer, and she experiences far more onscreen trauma than her counterparts. In a decade in which women's options were being limited onscreen, Nancy instead

108 Freud related three main types of dreams, those that are completely unintelligible to the conscious mind, those that have a mixture of understandable content and the unintelligible, and those like the dreams of a child that are "simple and undisguised wish-fulfillments." Sigmund Freud, On Dreams, from The Freud Reader edited by Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), page 150. While A Nightmare on Elm Street clearly takes the realm of dreams and their logic to extremes of the fantastic it also pays service to the Freudian foundations of dream interpretation in both the sleep clinic and with some of the discussions held among the characters.
of merely continuing to act as the Final Woman, or moving away from the Final Woman into just
the victim, instead steps forward and takes the Final Woman into her next iteration. As Carol
Clover states: "The grittiest of the Final Girls is Nancy of *A Nightmare on Elm Street I*. Aware
in advance that the killer will be paying her a visit, she plans an elaborate defense. When he
enters her house, she dares him to come at her, and then charges him in direct attack. ... When he
rises yet again, she chases him around the house, bashing him with a chair."\(^{110}\) By looking at this
sequence in more detail we can begin to see how Nancy steps beyond a character like Sally and
joins Ripley as a newer version of the Final Woman.

Nancy has successfully brought Freddy from the dream world into reality. The sequence
begins with Nancy screaming out her barred window for her father to come help her. The film
cuts to Glen's lawn and see a deputy responding to Nancy. She tells him to hurry and get her
father. The film returns to the interior of the house and following Nancy in a medium shot see
her run down the stairs and attempt to break the front door window. Her parents bar the door to
keep her inside. The film cuts back to the top of the stairs and see Freddy open Nancy's door.
The first of her traps is triggered and a sledgehammer slams into Freddy's gut. He pushes the
hammer away and from behind see that in this movement he has tripped and fallen over the stair
railing, landing at Nancy's feet. Nancy screams and steps over Freddy narrowly avoiding his
claws. She turns and taunts him, calling him forward into the living room. In a wide shot from
above we see Nancy jump the couch and take cover as Freddy approaches and triggers the next
trap. A firebomb concealed in a lamp ignites, setting Freddy on fire. As Freddy burns Nancy
breaks a window and screams for help. The film cuts again to the deputy who is looking
cluelessly at her from across the street. The film returns to the shot of Nancy through the
window and see Freddy leap into frame, accompanied by a swell in the score of the film. Nancy

escapes and runs into the basement. There we watch as she runs around the staircase and behind the furnace. Nancy pauses to let Freddy catch up, loops around the stairs and grabs a jar of liquid on her way. As Freddy asks where she is she calls out and breaks the jug of liquid over his chest. Nancy then lights a box of matches and throws them to Freddy's feet, engulfing him in flame. The camera tracks Nancy as she runs back upstairs before returning to Freddy now burning alive for a second time. Freddy chases her up the stairs only to be knocked back down when Nancy slams the basement door into him. Freddy rolls to the foot of the stairs and the slowly rises to again give chase. Nancy's father enters and everything seems to be safe until they find a trail of burning footsteps up to the second story bedrooms.

In this sequence we can see the key changes between the previous Final Women and Nancy. Nancy not only willing enters into her dreams with a plan of attack, something that many others would never do, but has a series of devices in place to support her efforts to kill Freddy. While various Final Women have taken up the blade, chainsaw, or other weapon of their attackers in an opportune moment none prior to Nancy has had the same force of will and foresight to create an attack plan. She begins with a pre-made series of barriers in the locked interior doors, placed there by her family for her protection. By trespassing through each of these doorways, Freddy, in a mirror of characters like Pam and Kirk, is punished for each threshold he passes through. There is even the synchronicity of the sledgehammer for the first assault following the trespass. Each trap is slightly more intricate and more deadly, and each has the potential to cause harm to Nancy as well. Only through the fleetness of mind and feet is Nancy able to serve as her own arbiter of justice for these trespasses.

While this is a seemingly small shift it signals Nancy as being something more than her Final Women sisters. She is stepping forward in the face of the patriarchy of her Father, who is
represented as both the primary authority figure in the house and as a figure of authority in the community as a high ranking police officer, and taking matters into her own hands. Her father places literal and figurative obstacles in her way, from the authoritative demands he makes as a police officer to the locks on her door and bars on her windows. Within these confines she struggles and is ultimately triumphant in her attempts at saving her life. While the metaphor of a strong female fighting against the bars placed on her by the patriarchy may not be the intended message it is still one waiting to be seen through analysis. Nancy is also actively fighting against the other primary male figure in Freddy. Freddy as a child killer is presented as being deserving of his fate and the parents as being at least initially as righteous in their crusade. While in each film the characters take to their dreams to fight Freddy, it is only Nancy in the first, third, and seventh entries into the series who is active in her pursuit. Freddy becomes the anti-hero in many of these sequels with an increased focus on his past with little character development for the teens who become little more than cannon fodder for the twisted dream worlds Freddy creates. Indeed Freddy becomes such a focus that by the final installment of the original series, *Freddy vs. Jason* (Ronny Yu, 2003), the film revolves more around him than Jason (the killer from the later *Friday the 13th* films), or any of the human characters. With Freddy as the focus of the later films Nancy's role in the first film becomes more defined, and makes her one of the few examples of strong female characters within the series. Nancy's place a potential female role model is evidenced by the audiences who went to theaters and rented the film. Carol Clover states: "my impression is that the *Nightmare on Elm Street* in particular attracted girls in groups."\(^{111}\) While there could be many reasons for this audience make up I would suggest that Nancy's strength and her role throughout the series played a key part in the representation of

\(^{111}\) Ibid, page 23.
women and their struggle against the backlash of 1980s society. Nancy stands up, plans, and fights where many characters, including Final Women would cave or attempt to run.
Aliens - 1986

Similar to Nancy we find that Ripley again the primary protagonist stands up and fights. Ripley, as a character, spans the 1970s into the 1980s and epitomizes the shifts in cultural values and presents one of the strongest examples of the changing nature in the portrayal of women and how one horror film character can embody the struggles of an era. As Sigourney Weaver said of the character when discussing Alien "I remember thinking, women aren't allowed to play these warriors and I've been handed this opportunity to play a woman who becomes a warrior and goes from someone rational to someone who's completely instinctive. The arc of the character was so incredible." In Aliens Ripley continues her journey as a warrior and fights not only the xenomorph but a new addition to the xenomorph's life cycle, the Alien Queen.

Aliens (James Cameron, 1986) opens with Ripley adrift in the lifeboat from the end of Alien. She is rescued by a salvage crew after being lost in space for 57 years. She is taken back to Earth. There in orbit above the planet she is introduced to Carter Burke (Paul Reiser) a representative of Weyland-Yutani who is there to help her through the hearings about the Nostromo. Following these disciplinary hearings Ripley is demoted and placed on psychiatric

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112 James Cameron, Aliens (20th Century Fox, 1986).
evaluation as there are now colonists on LV-426, renamed Acheron (named for the Greek God of the underworld and the river of pain), and they have never seen any sign of the xenomorph.

Burke and Lt. Gorman (William Hope) pay Ripley a visit in her small apartment and ask her to accompany a group of marines to Acheron and the colony Hadley's Hope since communication has been cut off. In exchange for her help Burke promises Ripley that she will be reinstated as a flight officer and no longer need to work on the docks as manual labor. She reluctantly agrees to go only after a promise from Burke that they are going to destroy the xenomorphs and not bring them back for study. After another hyper-sleep trip Ripley and the marines arrive in orbit. The marines don't take the threat seriously and are jovial before landing on the planet. Once they have landed and don't see any signs of life they enter the colony and begin to search for the missing colonists. Ripley, Gorman, and Burke enter after the marines and find several facehuggers in the medical lab, evidence that Ripley was right. The marines detect movement and almost shoot a small girl, Newt (Carrie Henn), before she is rescued by Ripley. Hudson (Bill Paxton) tracks the colonist's tracking implants to the subbasement of the atmospheric processing plant and the marines go to investigate. In the subbasement they find a secreted resin over many of the surfaces, the beginnings of an alien hive similar in biomechanical design to the derelict ship from the previous film. As they continue to search they find one survivor who has a chestburster emerge from her while the marines react in horror. After killing the baby alien the adult drones attack, killing or capturing several of the marines. Ripley drives the transport into the facility and rescues the survivors. From there Corporal Hicks (Michael Biehn) as the highest ranking marine makes the decision to nuke the site from orbit, as it is the only way to be sure to kill all the aliens. The transport ship arrives to rescue the marines, but the aliens have gotten on board and cause the ship to crash. With no alternatives the remaining marines along with Ripley,
Newt, and Burke decide to hold up in the colony to await rescue. With the crash damaging the atmospheric processor Bishop (Lance Henrikson) the android volunteers to crawl to the remote antenna and attempt to pilot the backup landing craft down to the planet to rescue the marines. While Newt and Ripley sleep Burke releases the facehuggers from the medical lab to impregnate the two. Ripley gets the attention of Hicks and they are rescued just as the aliens cut the power to the complex. As the horde of aliens invade the marines and Ripley retreat. Burke, Hudson, Gorman, and the remaining marines are killed as Ripley, Hicks, and Newt make their escape. Newt is separated from Ripley and taken by the aliens. When Bishop arrives in the landing craft, Ripley arms herself with weapons and demands that they rescue Newt before leaving. Bishop drops Ripley off in the atmospheric processor and she descends to the hive. Making her way slowly Ripley manages to find Newt right before she can be attacked by a facehugger. Carrying Newt, Ripley begins her escape, but after taking a wrong turn they enter the xenomorph egg chamber. There she comes face to face with the xenomorph Queen. The Queen calls off the drones after Ripley threatens the eggs with her flamethrower. Ripley makes her escape after setting fire to the eggs and destroying many of the drones. The Queen follows and Ripley and Newt are just able to get on the landing craft before the Queen attacks and the processor explodes. Back on the marine's ship, the Sulaco, Ripley, Bishop, and Newt prepare to move the injured Hicks. As they prepare the Queen emerges from the landing craft and tears Bishop in half. As the Queen chases Newt, Ripley gets into a mechanical loader, the same style she was forced to use when working on the docks, and fights the Queen hand to hand. After a bruising battle Ripley manages to flush the Queen out of the airlock, and she, Newt, Hicks, and the remains of Bishop all return to hyper-sleep for the journey home.
*Aliens*, as a film, has a completely different tone from *Alien*. By focusing on action and the presence of many xenomorphs *Aliens* is forced to create new means through which the terror is created. The film makes use of the expanded setting of an entire colony and a significantly larger cast of characters to provide the viewer with new experiences while building on the premise of the first film. In this expanded world there is the introduction of new female characters to share the screen with Ripley, from marines to Newt to the Queen the film is full of female characters that not only face similar problems, but also are developed to a degree that expands far beyond most horror films. By looking at three new characters, Vasquez (Jenette Goldstein), Newt, and the Queen, and the changes to Ripley we can begin to see how this film fits into the broader representations of women during the 1980s.

Private Vasquez is introduced as a strong foul mouthed marine, whose first moments on screen feature her doing pull-ups. As Jenette Goldstein says of her character: "I'd never seen this sort of character of a woman portrayed before, she was such a bad ass and she made no apologies. I think that was the big thing, she had a job to do, she made no apologies." This type of character that holds her own with the men but retains her femininity and this does not come without some compromises. In the film Vasquez is very masculine, from her short hair to her macho attitude she acts and is visually closely linked to the male gender. There are hints that she has a romantic involvement with Drake (Mark Rolston) and that she is more masculine than characters like Hudson provide several moments of humor within the film. The granting of female character strength at the cost of outward gender identity markers is one that has been often repeated in Hollywood. Some of her female power is negated by the masculine attributes assigned to her. However Vasquez also gets more screen time than most of the marines, and is the one female marine who is allowed to have power over the xenomorphs by killing more than

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114 Ibid, page 121.
any other character.\textsuperscript{115} Vasquez, like many women of the horror film and films in general, demonstrates the conundrum of representations.

Newt is one of the most remembered characters from the film. Carrie Henn's performance as the lone survivor of the colony and the bond she forms with Ripley form the core emotional drive of the film. Newt has been surviving for weeks on her own; no exact time is given other than the mention that she has survived longer than the seventeen days it will take for a rescue to arrive. It is her knowledge of the air vents that allows Hicks and Ripley to escape the xenomorph horde. She blends in with the marines and while she doesn't have the physical strength of the other women onscreen her will to live comes through again and again. The most important characteristic of, Newt, however is the familial bond she creates with Ripley. The mimicry of the mother-daughter relationship is what drives not only Ripley but the story as it progresses. While on some level it is a problem that one of the female characters is relegated to being nothing more than the object of rescue for the film, this plot element also begins to shine a light on some of the gender roles and representations within the film. While Ripley had complete independence in \textit{Alien} she is choosing to return to the semblance of the traditional family through the adoption of Newt as a daughter.

The Alien Queen is the one xenomorph that is clearly gender identified within the franchise. As Cameron says about the Queen: "For me the Queen is a blend of what Giger does with what I wanted to, which was to create something what was big and powerful and terrifying and fast and female. Hideous and beautiful at the same time, like a black widow spider."\textsuperscript{116} This monstrous feminine of the Queen is shown through several key moments and design aspects.

\textsuperscript{115} There are other female marines, however they are killed immediately. Dietrich (Cynthia Scott) is the first marine taken by the aliens and Ferro (Colette Hiller) is the pilot of the landing craft that is attacked and crashes while trying to rescue the marines.

The first is that when she is introduced she is clearly much larger than both the xenomorph drone and the human protagonists. Her elongated head stretches far taller than any other xenomorph's and carries the visual aspect of a crown through its crenellations and height. Attached to the Queen is the egg laying organ. Stretching out behind her and hanging from the ceiling her womb extends outside of her body and is grotesque in the way it places eggs on the floor. The entire hive, when viewed in the light of the Queen's design, serves as an extension of her body.

"Everything about the mise-en-scène suggests a nightmare vision of what Kristeva describes as 'the fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body.' The interior is dark and slimy and the floor alive with rows of follicles and eggs."117 The hive in which both the marines and Ripley enter are an extension of her womb. This womb is deadly to some and it is only Ripley who is able to enter and exit unscathed. She is the representation of the fear of the maternal processes and this fear, as much as the fear of being impregnated was in the first film, serves as the emotional punch for Aliens.

Moving from the monstrous mother of the Queen to the mother as hero we now turn our attention to Ripley. Ripley has changed since the first film. She no longer rests peacefully, her sleep is constantly interrupted by nightmares about the xenomorph and what it could do to her, including one dream where she is about to be the host for a newly born chestburster. The fear of female reproduction extends from the audience to the protagonist. Barbara Creed sums up the intrinsic horror of Aliens succinctly: "Throughout, Aliens opposes two forms of mothering: Ripley's surrogate mothering in which there is no conception or birth and where the female body is unmarked; and Mother Alien's biological, animalistic, instinctual mothering where the maternal body is open and gaping."118 While the film wants to place Ripley in some form of

118 Ibid, page 51.
normal familial relationship with a Mother (Ripley), Father (Hicks), and Daughter (Newt) it
doesn't want to acknowledge the biological processes that Ripley would need to go through in
order to achieve this ideal.

This battle of the mothers is most evident in the film's final rescue sequence. Hearing
Newt's cries for help, Ripley rushes into the egg chamber and shoots the newly emerged
facehugger before it can impregnate Newt. Lifting Newt into her arms Ripley begins to exit the
hive. From behind Ripley and Newt we see the fog clear and discover in a medium shot that
they are now standing in a field of eggs. As Ripley looks around a low hiss draws the camera
away from Ripley and there is a cut to a long shot of the egg chamber. Panning up slowly we see
a viscous tube depositing a new egg on the floor. The camera follows the tube up to a large sack
suspended from the ceiling and continues the movement along the massive organ until the Queen
is revealed. Light from behind to emphasize the massive carapace of her head the camera settles
into a close up of the Queen's face. From beneath this cowl her head emerges and with long
white teeth she hisses at Ripley. The film cuts back to Ripley as she slowly lowers Newt to the
ground and stares at the Queen. The Queen hisses again and we see an insert of drones
approaching Ripley. The camera pulls back from Ripley as she releases a stream of flame over
the eggs. Ripley looks at the Queen and the film cuts to the Queen's reaction. In fear for her
children she hisses again and the drones begin to back off. The camera moves into a close up of
Ripley as her mouth clenches and her head cocks in determination. She again uses the flame
thrower across the entire egg chamber. The film cuts to the Queen and she screams in pain. The
film returns to Ripley as Newt screams "Behind us!" Ripley turns and shoots the drone. She
then begins to unload her machine gun on the eggs and attacking drones. A series of quick cuts
between the barrel of the gun, exploding drones, the ammunition counter on her gun, and
Ripley's face repeat as she empties her weapons against the xenomorphs. When the counter hits zero film returns to a medium shot of Ripley as she cocks the grenade launcher and begins firing them into the Queen's egg laying organ. Again and again these shots are repeated as Ripley blows the Queen's appendage to pieces. Ripley grabs Newt's hand and begins to escape before pausing. Shot from below in true heroic manner Ripley removes her belt of grenades and tosses the entire string into the egg chamber before picking Newt up and beginning to run.

This sequence outlines the basic battle of the film, the natural mode of childbirth in the Queen, against the antiseptic family creation Ripley engages in. As Barbara Creed states: "that Mother Alien represents Ripley's other self, that is, the female reproductive/mothering capacity per se, which is deemed monstrous, horrifying, abject."119 The film wants to provide the viewer with a family but not all the mess and fuss the actual creation of a family takes. Motherhood is something the film suggests women need. If they aren't mothers then they become masculine as seen in Vasquez, but there is also something dangerous in the act of becoming a mother.

This is not to suggest that Ripley foregoes all the strength she demonstrates in the first film. Ripley as a character continues to grow and change. At the outset of the film she is broken and unable to cope with everyday life. This improves as she takes the step of agreeing to join the expedition. On the Sulaco when briefing the marines she struggles to tell the story of her adventures. But in the act of telling she regains her voice, and throughout the scene he determination and power become clear as her voice becomes stronger. In the dining scene she again struggles with the ghosts of her past when it is revealed that there is an android on the crew. Her initial reaction is fear and then anger thanks to the actions of Ash in the first film. Again the scene ends with her taking the power and standing against the male authority of Burke and Bishop and their attempts to explain away her pain. In Newt she finds not only a daughter

but another reason for her to live.\textsuperscript{120} She follows Newt into areas the marines can't and shares her pain with this little girl. Her determination to save Newt at all costs while serving as an extension of the mothering themes of the film also demonstrates a woman who has taken control of her life when it had been lost to her at the outset of the film. By defeating the Queen and asserting herself as being in control and having the power to choose to be a mother her strength is again displayed. This is a key concept; Ripley chooses to be a mother and isn't forced into the choice. If she had no other choice this would be problematic but because it is her choice the film retains some of the feminist roots of its predecessor.

\textit{Aliens} is "a kind of feminist techno-horror fable, where masculine values and weaponry prove ineffectual, especially against a matriarchal hive in which a queen-mother and her worker drones are solely dedicated to the perpetration of the species."\textsuperscript{121} While the women maintain the majority of the power throughout the film, be they Ripley or the Queen, the conflicting values and representations of motherhood are crucial to the interpretation of the film. Ripley defeats the dangerous mother and returns to a family, seen all sleeping in a nice row in the final shots of the film. She can only find her happiness through the destruction of another family, albeit an alien one, but in the end humanity prevails. The conundrum of Ripley and the warring mothers is one example of the changing nature of how women were being represented on screen. These changes in culture and politics also played a role in the perception of the women's movement during the 1980s. On the one hand the country was moving in a more conservative direction socially and politically. Following the leadership of the dominant political party, the country backed away from the liberal ideas of the previous decade. Women were encouraged to remain

\textsuperscript{120} It is worth noting that in the extended edition of the film a sequence is added which furthers this connection. Ripley had a daughter, Amanda, who in the 57 years she was missing grew up, got married, and died. Ripley had a daughter who was lost to her and in Newt finds a replacement. This also strengthens Ripley's desire to rescue Newt as she is unwilling to lose another daughter.

\textsuperscript{121} Tony Magistrale, \textit{Abject Terrors}, ((New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2005), page94.)
in the home and to place family first. This shift in ideas played out on the big screen across many genres, including horror. From Mrs. Voorhees in *Friday the 13th* we can see this shift and a return to the cinema of the past. But while some films were attempting to return women to the domestic sphere or actively engaged with punishing those who broke with traditional roles women in horror were moving forward, Nancy takes up the mantle of the Final Woman and advances her. Ripley attempts to straddle both lines. She doesn't give up her strength and regains her voice while attempting to reconcile her desire for motherhood. This attempt at bridging the gap continues into the 1990s and the rise of Third Wave Feminism.

**Introduction**

The history of the United States often sees a pendulum swing following cultural and political shifts from one direction to the opposite viewpoint. The presidential election of Bill Clinton in 1992 marked a modest swing to the left from the conservative policies of President George Herbert Walker Bush. A series of social and political changes including the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 that allowed for unpaid leave for medical concerns and pregnancy; the Brady Bill, which required background checks for handgun purchases; expanded student loan funding; increased Head Start program funding; and tax changes are only a few examples of the liberal political actions enacted by Clinton. Clinton wasted no time in addressing the question of abortion policies. On the twentieth anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* and only a few days into his first term President Clinton signed five memorandums which sought to repeal many of the abortion policies of the Reagan and Bush years.¹²²

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent political change combined with the apparently declining influence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, the Cold War came to an end. This event signaled a change in worldview and position for the United States. Ostensibly, the United States won the Cold War and remained a global power while the power of Russia was diminished. This allowed for a lifting of restrictions and spending in relation to Cold War policies and encouraged a more open worldview from the United States.

Tied with a changing social and political climate and in direct response to the backlash of the 1980s came the rise of Third Wave Feminism or Neo-Feminism. As a part of this movement

¹²² These policy changes included allowing counseling at federally funded abortion centers, funding for research using fetal tissue, and the import of abortion medication from France. This dramatically changed the restrictions placed on abortion found under the conservative Presidents in the 1980s. Robin Toner, "Settling In: Easing Abortion Policy" From *The New York Times* (January 23, 1993), accessed online 6/13/15.
the interpretation of women and their representation onscreen again shifted. As de-constructivist and post-structuralism thought came to the forefront, the methods of viewing the meanings contained within a film shifted from a broad all encompassing single voice reading to focus on the individual experience of media. This shift in interpretation of media when combined with a desire to investigate gender roles across all social levels and not solely through the white, middle class, worldview combined to create a moment in which cinema became more aware of depictions of gender. From this change in perspective came films like The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991), New Nightmare (Wes Craven, 1994), and Scream (Wes Craven, 1996). These films are aware of their cinematic past and engage with history on an equal level to the present. Academic writing began to turn a stronger focus on the horror genre and gender, including Carol J. Clover's Men, Women, and Chainsaws; Gender in the Modern Horror Film.

In the 1990s the horror film primarily followed two paths, the sequel or the big budget re-imagining of an earlier story. In terms of sequels, the two films to note are Alien 3 (David Fincher, 1992) and Alien Resurrection (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997). These films continue the story of Ripley, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. Ripley's death and resurrection, while interesting in terms of the series as a whole do not provide Ripley with any moments of resistance that differ from previous iterations. While her use of the alien embryo inside of her to defeat the new xenomorph, and her eventual martyrdom to destroy the newborn Queen, are strong character moments for Ripley, the overall narrative arc of the film and Ripley's presence as the only living female character do not give her many times to express her power. In a first for the series, Ripley is saved by a male from the aggression of other characters, which diminishes her power further. In Alien Resurrection Ripley 8, the clone of Ellen Ripley, while being still being played by Sigourney Weaver and having some memories of her past life, is also
part xenomorph. This hybridization of Ripley results in the primary conflict within the film, namely, that between her human side against her alien side. While she does take charge, use weapons, and kill xenomorphs, it is only a pale imitation of her power as expressed in *Alien and Aliens*.

In terms of re-imaginings of classic horror films the 1990s, the two most prominent were *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992) and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Kenneth Branagh, 1994). These two films had budgets of $40 million plus, A-list directors, and A-list stars. While both films contained female characters both through attempted fidelity to the source material and the representations onscreen, these women are secondary to the male characters. While on some level this can be ascribed purely to the times in which the original novels were written, directors Coppola and Branagh along with the actors and creative teams behind the films certainly had the ability and power to alter their representations within the story and onscreen, and they failed to do so.

The final 1990s film with a lasting impact on horror is *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999). This film, through its viral marketing campaign, use of misdirection, and attempt at passing initially as a truly found piece of footage all helped to create a new kind of horror film. While this film was not the first to utilize this dramatic device in the horror genre, it did bring its usage to a new level through the aggressive use of the internet as a means of marketing. The film also brought horror back to the cheap personal level that had been slowly moved away from since the late 1980s. The filmmaker's artistic and narrative strategies have given rise to the most prominent horror movement since the rise of the slasher in 1974.

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However, found footage films frequently have minimal female presence and this film focused its marketing on the images of fear experienced by the female protagonist rather than any possible strength she might have. One of the most famous scenes from the film is an extreme close up of the lone female character crying to the camera and telling the audience/camera how scared she is. This scene was the last moment in many of the trailers and reminds audiences of the face of fear through the female character.

The final development worth noting, especially in its dissection of the horror genre conventions, is *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. Originating as a movie in 1992 with minimal success, the concept was revived as a television show lasting for seven seasons and spawning a spin-off series and continued adventures in comic books and novels. The character of Buffy Summers has proven to be one of the longest lasting Final Women. Created by Joss Whedon as a response to the women he normally watched in the horror genre, Buffy was a blonde teenage female who had literal and figurative power within the series over a vast menagerie of horror creatures. Whedon viewed Buffy as a means to reach both male and female audiences about female empowerment. As Whedon said, "If I can make teenage boys comfortable with a girl who takes charge of a situation without their knowing that's what's happening, it's better than sitting down and selling them on feminism."124 While this is primarily a television series, its self-referential nature and expressed goal of female empowerment within the horror genre is important to keep in mind.

**Feminism in the 1990s, The Rise of the Third Wave**

While feminism did not die during the 1980s there was a distinct lull in the collective consciousness and activities related to feminism. Feminism went underground and began to

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cultivate guerilla movements that would grow and shape what became feminism in the 1990s. The guerilla movements, specifically in the art world and the music world, laid the initial foundation for Third Wave feminism. Outrage over the Clarence Thomas hearings and the female outcry over the event gave rise to the Third Wave, which also happens to be the current wave of feminism. In a broad sense the Third Wave of feminism sought to allow women to define for themselves what feminism meant. The Third Wave also brought the focus away from definitions of what was good for women as a whole and instead attempted to allow each individual to define what was good for them. This also brought a more inclusive outlook to the movement by bringing in non-white perspectives, queer theory, and a stronger focus on the needs of the individual as a priority.

In the art world the Guerilla Girl movement began to take shape in the 1980s and joined in the creation of the Third Wave of feminism. These female artists, who wore gorilla masks to maintain their anonymity, formed in the mid 1980s to combat sexism and racism in the art world. When discussing their initial activities one Guerilla Girl stated: "We didn't expect anything. We just wanted to have a little fun with our adversaries and to vent a little rage. But we also wanted to make feminism (that "f" word,) fashionable again, with new tactics and strategies."125 By creating posters, billboards, fliers, and other media these women sought to gain more access to the art world for women. By calling attention to the unfair representation of women both in art and as artists the Guerilla Girls want to gain "their fair share of the art-world "pie."126

In another medium, music, there was a similar underground movement taking shape in the 1980s that came to prominence in the 1990s as a piece of Third Wave feminism. The Riot

Grrrl movement sought to reclaim the social and representational space that women had previously held in the punk rock genre. Formed in Washington D.C. and later partially transplanting to Olympia, Washington, the Riot Grrrl movement made use of the existing punk rock culture of fan created magazines and fliers to spread information about newly formed Feminist bands and to express their Feminist ideologies to the fans. "Politically charged, Riot Grrrl bands played aggressive punk rock, with a pronounced feminist agenda, placing gender issues at the forefront." These women and their bands created the music that spoke to the youth of the late 1980s and early 1990s and with their directly Feminist message served as one of the major mediums for the dissemination of the ideas related to the Third Wave of feminism. As one Feminist scholar notes: "The art of music is an integral part of both contemporary society and youth culture. Music has also played a vital role in feminist activism, from suffragist songs such as "Woman Rules You Still" and "Bloomer's Complaint" to the modern day riot grrrls movement and women's music festival events that include large activist components." 

Coupled with these movements for female empowerment was the Feminist backlash against the Clarence Thomas hearings. These hearings were designed to confirm Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. During the process it came to light that Anita Hill, an attorney at the U.S. Department of Education and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, complained about sexual comments made by Thomas. In the media frenzy that followed the allegations by Hill, her credibility as a witness was questioned. As a result of the treatment of Hill by the Senate and the media Rebecca Walker wrote "Becoming the Third Wave" an article that openly calls women to action to change their world and become the Third Wave. As she states:

127 Kevin Dunn and May Summer Farnsworth, "We ARE the Revolution: Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Publishing", from Women's Studies (Vol. 41, Issue 2: March 2012), page 140.
128 Jamie L. Huber, "Singing It Out: Riot Grrrls, Lilith Fair, and Feminism", from Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research (Vol. 9, Fall 2010), page 65.
To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systematic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women whom often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them. While this may sound simple, it is exactly the kind of stand that many of my peers are unwilling to take. So I wrote this as a plea to all women, especially women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation serve to remind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over.¹²⁹

In this call to action not only does Walker first mention the term Third Wave feminism, but also articulates what would become one of the key concepts of the Third Wave, namely, sisterhood between women and support of all women against the patriarchy.

The women and the scholars engaged with the Third Wave used both post-structuralist and deconstructionist analysis. A brief definition of these types of thinking prove key to understanding what happens to the horror film in the 1990s and the ways in which the moments of resistance by the female characters are related to the Third Wave. Post-structuralism is a movement that retaliated against structuralism, which suggested that humanity could be understood as a structure, focused on language that was distinct from reality and abstraction. The Post-structuralists believe humanity defies easy categorization and that language is an artificial construction invented by people.¹³⁰ Feminists who used post-structuralism argued that there was no single definition of "woman" and that through the understanding that there was an infinite variation within the gender so too must feminism provide for all the variations of women, not just those in positions of power.

Deconstructionism is a means of critical thinking and analysis that also looks to the variety of meaning in a given work. This methodology focuses on the idea that depending on a person's background, their education, their personal experiences, the meanings of a work will change. This methodology also looks at the intended audience as one set of meanings from a

¹³⁰ Bronwyn Davies, "The Subject of Post-structuralism: A Reply to Allison Jones", from Gender and Education (Vol. 9, No.3: September, 1997), pages 271-283.
work and the individual or alternative reading of a work as another.\(^{131}\) It is important to note that for the most part this thesis is deconstructionist in nature. While some of the representations of gender discussed in the films herein are what was originally intended by the filmmakers, the majority of the moments of resistance are instances of actions, plot points, characters, and events that run contrary to the traditions of the genre and at times the films as a whole.

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The Silence of the Lambs - 1991

Figure 8, Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling and Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter.  

*The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) begins with a lone woman running an obstacle course in the woods. Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) is called from the course and into the office of her supervisor, Jack Crawford (Scott Glenn). Crawford proposes to send Starling to Baltimore, where she will visit and persuade Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) to fill out a questionnaire. Dr. Lecter is a cannibal psychiatrist serving a life sentence in solitary confinement. At the hospital Starling is assaulted by another inmate, Miggs (Stuart Ruding), as she walks to Lecter's cell. There she asks him for his help, and instead he offers to help her solve the Buffalo Bill murders. Lecter leads her to a storage unit, inside of which she finds a severed head of one of Lecter's patients. When she returns to speak with him about the head he offers again to help her solve the Buffalo Bill murders. The film moves away from Starling and we meet a young woman, Catherine Martin (Brooke Smith) who volunteers to help a man load a chair into his van. Once inside the van the man, Jame Gumb (Ted Levine) aka Buffalo Bill, subdues Catherine and transports her back to his lair. Martin is the daughter of a Senator, and

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the Senator makes a public plea for mercy from Buffalo Bill. Starling learns of the abduction and returns to Lecter with an offer for a transfer in exchange for his help in solving the case. The head of the asylum, Dr. Chilton (Anthony Heald), calls Starling's bluff and sets up a real transfer with Senator Martin. Once in Tennessee Lecter meets with Starling a final time and returns the case file to her. After she leaves Lecter kills two of the guards, impersonating one of them in order to escape custody. Starling reviews the case file and taking Lecter's advice returns to the first victim, Frederica Bimmel. There she makes the discovery that Buffalo Bill is killing and skinning the women in order to make a suit of their skin and complete his transformation into a woman. Starling follows up on the Bimmel case while Crawford and the FBI task force move against a location linked to Jame Gumb in Chicago. Starling finds the real Gumb, and follows him into his basement lair where she finds Catherine at the bottom of a dry well. As Gumb/Bill hunts her throughout the macabre basement Starling finds more and more grotesque souvenirs. In the dark Starling is able to hear the cocking of Gumb's gun and fires repeatedly, killing him. In the final moments Starling graduates from the academy and Lecter calls to congratulate her. The film ends with Lecter stalking Chilton in a tropical location.

_The Silence of the Lambs_ is an outlying horror film in many ways. It received five Academy Awards, including the big four of Best Picture, Actor, Actress, and Director, a feat that has never before or since happened for a horror film. It received mainstream attention and acclaim and was one of the most successful films of 1991. However, it remains a horror film, and Starling serves as a Final Woman. The isolated location of Buffalo Bill's lair is one that looks as if it could be a part of the Sawyer house from _The Texas Chainsaw Massacre_, from the

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133 Sigourney Weaver was nominated for her role in _Aliens_ but didn't win. Even outside of the major categories the horror film remains under represented in recognition from the Academy. The Academy rarely even includes horror film stars in their "In Memoriam" section, most recently leaving Marilyn Burns out of the segment in the 2015 awards ceremony.
putrefying remains of one of his victims to the skin suit on a mannequin. Starling, just as Nancy did in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, takes the fight to the killers and is able to defeat one of them in the final moments of the film. The biggest difference between this film and those that came before it is that the body count of the film is shockingly low. There are only three onscreen deaths, that of Buffalo Bill and Lecter's two guards. While the primary narrative concerns serial killers only one of Bill's victims is seen onscreen during the autopsy sequence, and the two police officers killed by Lecter are shown in the climax of the film.

The most explicit moment of resistance in which Starling stands up for herself and women everywhere comes when she and Crawford are driving back from the autopsy of one of Bill's victims. In a two shot of Crawford and Starling, Crawford in the front seat and Starling in the back, Crawford suggests that his asking the sheriff to talk to him in private away from Starling made her angry. He tries to brush it off as just being a tactic to get help from the local police force. Starling says "It matters Mr. Crawford. Cops look at you to see how to act. It matters." By directly calling her boss out on his treatment of her and his behavior towards the female gender Starling is drawing attention to the passive sexism that pervades her world, and by extension the world of the audience. The acknowledgement that there was a sexist act, the criticism of the act, and the screen time devoted to this criticism, especially following a sequence where Starling is subjected to repeated male gazes from the local police force, and the victim of Bill is left un-named and un-identified is especially important. Starling has another moment of resistance by returning the gazes, and takes control of the room away from the country police force, acting as an avatar for the other women in the film. When other women are not allowed to speak, or even have names in the film, Starling steps forward to give them a voice.

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As with films previously discussed in this thesis, focusing on the killers will serve as a starting point and provide some insight into how the film creates moments in which a key female character is able to assert herself, and their relation to the Third Wave. The first killer, Buffalo Bill, unable to understand his actions and desires, believes that he is transgendered. It is critical to note that Lecter, in his role not as the killer but as the brilliant psychiatrist, makes a clear point that Bill only thinks he is transgendered, and is in reality unhappy with himself. This nuancing of the gender confusion and the stand it takes for those who are actually transgendered is important. Clarice mentions in the same moment that there has never been any link between aggression and transgendered individuals. A hold over from the source novel this small moment of inclusiveness for nontraditional gender identities is one of the key attributes of the Third Wave. While this forward thinking reading is not one that was widely seen at the time of the film's release it can also be seen as a reminder and reprimand for the history of the horror film, from *Psycho* to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, in which gender confusion is played as part and parcel to serial killing. At the time of the film's release the character of Bill was not seen in this light. There was a backlash against the film from the LGBT community for the portrayal of Bill as being homosexual.\(^\text{135}\) As director Jonathan Demme explains: "He wasn't a gay character. He was a tormented man who hated himself and wished he was a woman because that would have made him as far away from himself as he possibly could be."\(^\text{136}\) While this interpretation of Bill and the separation of his gender confusion from his serial killing is one that is being made in

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hindsight, it is also one that holds up when looked at in comparison to the history of the horror genre.

Moving from Bill to Lecter we see a completely different representation of a male character. Lecter is a father figure who guides Starling in her journey while also remaining a source of menace and malice within the film. Lecter is both combative and supportive of Starling throughout the film. While his crimes are more gruesome when seen onscreen this is in counterpoint to moments of kindness with Starling. The only time the two have physical contact is a brief touch when Lecter passes Starling back her case file. He extends one finger to caress her hand. While this moment is small, the close-up of the motion and the implications of Lecter's decision shift their relationship from mentor/mentee into an oedipal relationship. Within the film Lecter appears inspired by this moment and as a release kills the guards. In the film the close shots from below as Lecter beats the guard to death support this idea. He uses a baton (phallus analogue) and repeatedly swipes it down out of frame. With each impact Lecter is splattered with more and more blood. Anthony Hopkins' face, as the primary focus for the camera, throughout this sequence shows initially an angry leer which turns to a look of ecstasy with each falling blow. While he is meant to be a sociopath the look of pleasure on his face suggests that the killing of the guards, and the sequence's narrative placement immediately following their talk and his continued sketching of Starling, is the release of sexual tension from his brief moment with Starling.137

The second father figure of the film is Jack Crawford. Crawford also appears to take an interest in Starling beyond the professional. They share a similar amount of contact as in the

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137 This reading is furthered by the changing relationship between Lecter and Starling in the sequel film and novel. In Hannibal (Ridley Scott, 2001) Lecter kisses Starling and attempts to lure her away with him. In the novel by Thomas Harris of the same name Starling does fall for Lecter and they run away together, presumably to continue killing and eating people. In both the film and the novel the change happens after Starling eats part of a character's brain, a major departure from her character in The Silence of the Lambs.
final moments of the film they slowly shake hands. Shot in an almost identical close-up and slow motion the visual pairing of these two men sexually interested in the younger woman Starling reinforce the Oedipal nature of the relationships. Starling’s Father, as a former police officer who was killed in the line of duty, played a huge role in Starling's life. That he was taken from her when she was young, leading to her entrance into the foster care system, left a hole in her life. This emptiness and the potential of Lecter or Crawford to become surrogate father figures, ones that it would not be as large a taboo for her to engage in sexual activity with, further underline the Oedipal nature of their presences within the film. It is important that in this film Starling does not act on their impulses and remains chaste, as most Final Women do. She does not rebuff either man’s attention, nor is it clear that she is manipulating them for her own gain. Starling remains aloof to their affections for the time being and maintains some of her independence from the father figures throughout the film. She is delaying the oedipal implications of these relationships through non-action. Starling, while by Hollywood standards is desexualized, is not completely androgynous. Within the film she appears open to the flirtations of the entomologist, Pilcher, and even returns the interest in their shared screen time. This can most clearly be seen in how Jodie Foster chooses to portray Starling. Rather than the clipped tone and broken glances used when Chilton is making a pass at her she is joking and smiling while maintaining eye contact with Pilcher.138

138 The reading is reinforced for viewers who have read the novel. In the novel there are more interactions with Pilcher and their flirtation advances beyond what is seen in the film. Starling’s last lines of dialogue in the novel are about her making plans for a romantic weekend away with Pilcher. In the last chapter, following an interlude where Lecter is writing to Starling, the novel ends by describing Starling on this weekend and suggest that she is in bed with Pilcher. The last two sentences of the novel read: "Additional mounds beneath the covers may or may not be Noble Pilcher, it is impossible to determine in the ambient light. But the face on the pillow, rosy in the firelight, is certainly that of Clarice Starling, and she sleeps deeply, sweetly, in the silence of the lambs." While the film removes some of the interactions between these two, the overall fidelity to the source material throughout is an important context for reading the film. This fidelity includes lines of dialogue and entire interactions that are lifted directly from the novel. This flirtation between Starling and Pilcher while not continued in the same way as the
The clearest moment when we can see Starling as a Final Woman is in her final confrontation with Buffalo Bill. Having seen the death's head moth in his home she draws her weapon on him and follows him into his basement lair. After finding Catherine and barricading herself in the well room she chooses to leave its relative safety and pursue Bill. Starling pushes a door open and the film cuts to shot of her from below, to imply power, as she points her gun at the camera. We follow her eye line as she sees something that terrifies her. The film cuts to a bathtub full of the rotting human remains. As the camera zooms in on the body, the long grey hair suggests that it is the former owner of the house, the screen goes black and we hear Starling breathing heavily. There is a high pitched whine as something powers up, and we see through Bill's eyes in night vision Starling coming around the corner and out of the room with the body. The audience through Bill's point of view follows Starling as she moves out of the room and fumbles against the wall and furnace in the dark. The film cuts to a shot of Bill in the darkness, his night vision goggles leering at the camera. We return to his point of view and slowly track with Starling as she moves. When she falls the camera tilts with her, maintaining the illusion of a constant point of view. We are given another shot of Bill looking at the camera and he slowly begins to move forward. This cycle of shots is repeated until Bill slowly begins to move closer. Through his eyes we see him reach out and almost touch Starling's hair, and then again he reaches out as she turns to almost touch her face. In the green of night vision we see him begin to raise his revolver. The film cuts to the gun being pointed directly at camera before returning to his point of view. Time slows down as the gun is cocked and Starling suddenly turns. In the darkness there is a flash as Bill fires and he is briefly lit up. Then the camera returns to Starling as she empties her weapons at him, hitting him and breaking the glass of the basement window.

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Light streams in over the smoke and a small American flag. Starling falls to the floor and the
camera pulls back to reveal Bill on his back gasping for air as Starling re-loads her weapon.

In this sequence there are several moments worthy of note. The first is the macabre
discovery Starling makes in the bathtub. In a moment that feels almost out of place with the rest
of the film there is a long time spent with the horror of the woman in the bathtub. Beyond
simply the gross factor there is an inelegance to the way that Bill has left this woman. When
compared to a previous scene where Lecter has created an almost patriotic tableau with the body
of the guard, Bill's dismissal of a woman in such a manner reinforces that he is a larger danger to
Starling, and women than Lecter. The murders and bodies presented onscreen are defined along
gender lines, with all of Bill's victims being female and Lecter's being male. While Lecter has
attacked women, as mentioned in the film, onscreen we are only privy to male deaths at his hand.
Bill by comparison has killed and kidnapped exclusively women. This gender divide reinforces
the notion that within the world of the film Lecter is less dangerous to Starling, as a woman, than
Bill is. In the horror films discussed in this thesis the killers attack both genders
indiscriminately, albeit with more emphasis and screen time given to the deaths of women. That
this film chooses to divide the victims in this way is telling. The relationship Starling has created
with Lecter, however potentially dangerous, poses less danger to female life than Bill does. As
such it is acceptable to the audience that Starling kills Bill, and Lecter escapes to continue
killing.

Tied to this is the fact that Bill never comes into physical contact with Starling. Both of
the other major male characters, Lecter and Crawford, touch her in a sexualized way. Bill on the
other hand reaches out tentatively twice but never makes physical contact. This suggests that
both Lecter and Crawford have the ability to touch and seduce, as representations of the father
and Oedipal figure, while Bill, the killer of women does not. Starling agrees to the contact with Crawford, and while Lecter initiates the touch she doesn't recoil from him, further strengthening the idea that they are allowed to touch from their positions of power while Bill is not. This artificial hierarchy of Lecter/Crawford then Starling and at the bottom Bill is one that the film reiterates throughout. There are the "good guys" and then Starling, and then the "bad guy." The physical divide in victims between Lecter and Bill also returns here, as the killer of women Bill, even through so small a contact as brushing against her hair, is more of a threat than is Lecter.

In terms of Third Wave feminism *The Silence of the Lambs* is certainly aware of the conventions of the horror and thriller genres and makes use of them in order to garner reactions from the audience. The film plays with audience expectations throughout, with one clear example being the door bell sequence. Crawford and the FBI seem to be closing in on Bill, and approach a house. Starling following up leads on the first death is also approaching a house. Crawford's team rings the doorbell, and the doorbell is shown ringing in Bill's lair. When Bill opens the door there is Starling, not Crawford. Film editing and history has taught audiences that space is continuous over edits within the film, especially when those spaces are bridged by sound. In this film there are two completely different locations, one in Chicago and one in Ohio. These expectations and the intentional manipulation of the audience extends to Starling as the Final Woman. As one critic notes:

> She may still be on view, may still be subject to the consuming gaze of the powerful male - this time a murderer with no intent to rape - but the deck is not stacked. Here, she can win, saving not only herself in the process but also the girl, trapped and panicked, screaming out "help me" from the bottom of a well. Who does she represent? Every actress done for by a killer in a horror movie? Every woman assaulted? You? Me? Foster herself in other movies? Infra-red vision or not, Clarice Starling seems to demonstrate that there are some male gazes - some male acts - that are not permissible and will not be tolerated.¹³⁹

Starling can be seen as rescuing all the women from the horror genre in this film. While this work attempts to find others who have similar footing to Starling the wider audiences of cinema certainly see Starling as a sterling example of woman who stands up and takes not only a voice but action on behalf of the victims and her gender. While the target audience of *The Silence of the Lambs* is not the same as the traditional horror film, Carol Clover says that the film is part of a new vision of the horror film that is "awfully close to being slasher movies for yuppies - well made, well-acted, and well-conceived versions of the familiar story of a female victim-hero who squares off against, and finally blows away, without male help, a monstrous oppressor."\(^{140}\) The film makes use of the cultural knowledge of potential audience members. This attention to expectations and deconstructing those expectations is a method that is at home within the Third Wave.

The representation of Starling, and her moments of resistance to traditional roles stands out within the film. Starling doesn't have a clear or definite love interest and acts on her own, without requiring a love interest or male support. As one critic notes: "It [*The Silence of the Lambs*] takes a familiar narrative and shakes up the gender and sexuality stuff. It's a slasher film in which the woman is hero rather than victim, the pursuer rather than the pursued."\(^{141}\) These changes and the moments of character strength and resistance that Starling demonstrates are different from those in previous slasher films. Starling isn't just thrust into a situation, she choses to engage with Lecter and Bill. She has strength that is her own, and her actions while guided in part by the father figures, are also her own. She finds Bill on her own, and while it is in part happenstance that the moth arrives in the film when it does, it is her hard work that has

allowed her to be in a position to act. These changes all fall in line with the changing face of how women were perceived and what was culturally expected of them. Starling is not Sally in \textit{The Texas Chainsaw Massacre} just trying to survive. She is not Ripley in \textit{Aliens} taking on the mother role and fighting other mothers. Starling is her own woman who makes her own choices. This is possibly the most important aspect of the Third Wave: women should be able to self-define feminism and they should be able to act on their own without interference from the patriarchy. While the patriarchy is still present in \textit{The Silence of the Lambs}, most obviously in Chilton and his attempts at flirtation that are rebuffed and lead to his actions that allow Lecter to break free, and through the constant barrage of gazes placed upon her. Starling is the object of many gazes throughout the film, many of them male and unfriendly. The film translates this position to the audience through the constant use of point-of-view shots where the audience is in Starling's shoes and being watched by the actors looking directly at camera. This transference of gazes from Starling to the audience allows for the audience to experience what it can feel like to be leered at constantly. The other side of the coin are those men in the film who while attempting to gain Starling's attention do not hinder her, but instead support her in their own ways. Crawford is providing her with an advantage in her working life. Lecter is helping her to save other women. More than anything this film allows for the viewer to experience the plethora of possible gender relationships which play out through Starling as a strong character attempting to find her way through the maze of expectations for women.
The second sequel, *New Nightmare* (sometimes titled *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, Wes Craven, 1994), is both a sequel and a reimagining of a previous work. As the first of the truly meta-horror films, films that are completely self-aware and self-referential of the genre and their place within it, *New Nightmare* heralded a series of changes to the genre of horror and its representation of women. Opening with a sequence of birth and creation in which a new, more mechanical version of Freddy's glove is being created, the film reveals that there is a film within the film. A new version of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is being created. Within this sequence we see Heather Langenkamp playing herself, once again back for a *Nightmare* film. The sequence ends in terror as the new glove runs amok and the audience is suddenly thrown into a bedroom, where Heather awakens. This double trick of setting is furthered as there are no title credits for the film, intended to maintain the illusion that the film is something more than just another sequel. An earthquake hits and Heather's husband, Chase (David Newsome), is cut. The cut mimics the one he received in Heather's dream, however Heather dismisses this as a coincidence.

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Heather is receiving harassing phone calls seemingly from a fan of the franchise. Heather is forced to leave her son, Dylan (Miko Hughes), to attend an interview. At the interview she is startled by Robert Englund appearing as Freddy for the anniversary of the original film. After this appearance Heather is called into New Line Cinemas to meet about a new project. There, Robert Shaye, again playing himself, tells her that Wes Craven is working on a new Nightmare film in which Heather is once again the star. Heather returns home and Dylan suffers a seizure prompting Heather to call her husband home. On the drive home Freddy's new glove attacks and kills him. At the funeral Wes, Robert, and others console Heather, and she hits her head, triggering a dream where she is fighting with Freddy to save Dylan. Dylan's health continues to deteriorate and Heather seeks advice from John Saxon, also playing himself and falling into the Father role he had in the original film. While they are talking Dylan jumps from a playground play set and is barely caught by Heather. Dylan's health and fear of Freddy continue to get worse and Heather decides to go and see Wes Craven. There Wes explains that he is having nightmares again, and that the plot revolves around the idea that there is an ancient demon that can only be contained by story tellers. This demon has grown used to the Freddy persona and is trying to escape into our world. The only thing that might stop him is Heather, if she is willing to play Nancy one last time. The scene ends with Heather and Wes at his computer, with their dialogue already typed into the script that Wes is writing.

Heather returns home and is awakened by Dylan slashing her arm with knives taped to his hands. She calms him and decides he needs more serious medical care. At the hospital the doctors worry that Dylan has childhood schizophrenia. Heather again dreams of Freddy and rushes to the hospital where Dylan escapes over a freeway trying to get home. Heather sees that Freddy is helping him along as a way to lure her out. She returns home and finds John Saxon.
Instead of being John he has slipped into his role from the first film. He calls her Nancy, and says he loves her before driving away in a police car. From one shot of Heather to the next she is suddenly back in the same costume she wore as Nancy in the first film. Her house has also changed into the house from the films. She enters the house and finds herself in a different dimension. There she finds the script for the film and begins to read it. Before she can see how it ends Freddy attacks, and she and Dylan are able to fight him off. Heather follows Freddy throughout the nightmare realm, finally catching him in a furnace and killing him. She and Dylan escape and roll out of bed, finding the completed script. Heather reads to Dylan from the script as the credits begin to roll. The illusion of reality is maintained throughout the credits as Freddy is credited as himself, and not Robert Englund.

On a basic level this film meets all the genre requirements of horror, just as its predecessor *A Nightmare on Elm Street* does. The isolated location is within the character's dream spaces, there is a deformed killer rendered even more grotesque than in previous iterations, and there is a Final Woman (Heather). *New Nightmare* goes to great lengths to repeat the major moments from the franchise, from the wounds and bandage Heather suffers on her arm to lifting of shots and dialogue from the original film, this is a film steeped in history. Rather than being a beat for beat recreation of the original, however, the film also is aware of the changes to the genre in the ten years since the original. The film introduces a protagonist who is an adult, not a teen. The genre conventions related to punishment for social trespass have also been lifted. Instead we are given a narrative in which the only major problem has been Heather's choice as a young woman to act in a movie. While these lessening conventions may seem minor that the characters are allowed to live their lives as they choose and not be punished for their social actions, only their past involvement with a film franchise is important.
Due to its higher concepts it is not difficult to understand why this film was less successful than others in the series. The film intentionally plays with concepts of filmmaking, dreams, and reality in a very cerebral way for a horror film. As one film critic points out: "Realism is fundamental to the "Nightmare" series. Mr. Craven does not deal chiefly in phantasmagoric demons; he deals in terrifying extensions of everyday experience, the stuff of which true nightmares are made."\(^{143}\) The blurring of lines between reality and fantasy within the film was extensive: Heather Langenkamp really is married to a special effects technician, her son was the same age as Dylan in the film, and she really did have a stalker at the time the film was being made. The use of many of the actors from the first film, either as themselves or in roles similar to those they played in the first film, heightens the fluid nature of reality within the film. The references to the original film and the horror genre in general all combine to make this film one of the most aesthetically and narratively progressive entries into the horror genre.

Building to her final fight with Freddy, Heather has chased Dylan across a freeway and arrived at her home finding John Saxon and Dylan. Heather tells John that her husband was really killed by Freddy, and that this was not just an accident as the police had reported. As Dylan begins to repeat Freddy's nursery rhyme, John calls Heather "Nancy" and asks her to step outside. As Freddy begins to emerge from Dylan's bed the film cuts to a medium shot of John and Heather, and John asks what is going on. The two shot tracks with them as they walk out of the house and Heather asks why John is calling her Nancy. John walks out of frame and the audience hears police chatter over an off-screen radio. In a reverse shot John has now returned to his costume from the original \textit{Nightmare} and tells Nancy to pull herself together, mirroring the end of the first film. The film cuts to Heather's reaction and zooms in on her face, before

continuing the zoom on her eye line as she focuses on the newly appeared police badge on John's belt. The film returns to Heather and then cuts to Dylan's room as Freddy continues to emerge from the bed. Heather calls out to John and the camera tracks with her as she limps forward. The tracking shot continues as John re-enters the frame and Heather asks him to call Robert Englund. The film cuts back to Freddy pressing against the fabric of reality, as seen in the form of Dylan's bed. The first of his blades cuts through into reality. The film returns to the tracking shot as Heather tries to explain who Robert Englund is. Freddy continues to cut his way free as Heather struggles with John. John/Lt. Thompson tells her that Freddy is dead. The film cuts to Freddy looking directly at camera preparing to step into reality. John/Lt. Thompson tells Heather not to lose it like her mother, and that he loves her before kissing her cheek. As John/Lt. Thompson opens the door to his police car the film cuts to a close up of Heather as she says "I love you too, Daddy." This image is matched by another close up of Freddy smiling, and then a shot from below Freddy as he fuller emerges into reality. The camera tracks with Freddy's shadow as he begins to walk through Dylan's room. The film cuts back to Heather, now dressed in the same clothes she wore as Nancy in the finale of the first film, and pans as she turns towards her house. John/Lt. Thompson tells her to get some rest, and she looks down realizing that her clothes have changed. John/Lt. Thompson brushes her cheek and drives away. Heather turns back towards her house as the classic Nightmare theme begins to play. The camera follows her as she walks up her sidewalk towards her house. The camera moves from being beside her to being behind her and we see that the house has become the same one from the original film. Dylan's recital of the nursery rhyme as the background sound joins the original Nightmare theme as Heather runs into the house. The camera pulls back to fully show the house, and as soon as Heather enters the front door it slams shut on its own, mirroring a moment from the first film.
This sequence has more meaning for those audience members familiar with the original films who will understand all the references. For both the film and its relationship to the changing representation of women the key moment comes from Heather's acceptance of herself and her past. In the few moments when she pauses and acknowledges John as her father Lt. Thompson she is coming to terms with her past. The progressive nature of the film is demonstrated by the portrayal of Heather throughout the film. Heather attempts to distance herself from Nancy, and represent herself as something more than just that one character. Heather in the interview seen in the film, or later in the film when offered the chance to return to the franchise, says she isn't interested in repeating her roles of the past. However, when faced with the choice of becoming Nancy again or letting her child die the choice becomes clear: she must once again return to the role that made her famous. As a moment of resistance this choice may seem minor but within the world of the film it is one that is hard for Heather to make. She doesn't want Freddy to continue to rule her life, or Nancy for that matter. In making this choice she is not only accepting the reality of the situation but also accepting a part of herself that she would like to deny. This acceptance and acknowledgement of who she is and who she can be allows her to become a complete person, a concept that is in line with many of the ideals of Third Wave feminism.

As Roger Ebert noted in his review of the film: "This is the first horror movie that is actually about the question, 'Don't you people ever think about the effect your movies have on the people who watch them?'"\(^{144}\) By taking the cast and crew of a classic horror film and placing them, albeit as fictionalized versions, in a horror film, *New Nightmare* is also asking the audiences to take a similar look at the role the horror film has had in their lives. Whether this is

the audience that likes to watch the brutal murders, often of women, or those who root for the Final Woman, the film asks the audience to look at the role horror films have played in their lives. The desire to watch the horror film for whatever reason, be it those listed above, the combination of the two, or any of the many other reasons for watching the horror film has lead audiences and fans to watch these films repeatedly over generations. The impact this type of continued focus on violence, either consciously or unconsciously, on the lives of the audiences who watch them and the people who make them is at the heart of New Nightmare. Those who are engaged with this film will also engage with this question. In this case through the changing representation of Heather/Nancy and the shift in culture towards a more liberal outlook on gender roles, the film provides moments of resistance for not only Heather, but for the audience. These moments when the audience is forced to question not only what is real and what is not is crucial to the success of the film. They are also important because they allow the audience to connect not only with the characters of the film but with their own understanding of what the horror genre has given or taken away from their own lives.
Wes Craven's next film, *Scream*, takes many of the questions about the horror genre from *New Nightmare* and presents them in a more accessible yet equally self-reflexive manner. While *New Nightmare* only grossed only a little over $18 million domestically, *Scream* grossed over $103 million domestically. By placing a more traditional horror narrative over similar ideological questions as *New Nightmare* Wes Craven was able to not only reach a much larger audience, but to create one of the last great Final Women of the horror genre in Sydney Prescott (Neve Campbell).

Opening with a young woman, Casey (Drew Barrymore) alone in her house in the rural part of California, the film quickly introduces what has become one of the most famous lines in the horror canon. Casey receives a phone call and a voice asks her "What's your favorite scary movie?" This phone conversation continues as the killer quizzes Casey about the horror genre,
tripping her up with a question about who the killer in Friday the 13th is. She answers "Jason" but the killer on the phone reminds her that in the original the killer was Mrs. Voorhees. This leads to the death of Casey's boyfriend, and after being warned about the rules of the horror genre Casey is chased outside and killed. The next day as the media descends on the small town of Woodsboro the film introduces the main characters, Sydney, Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich), Tatum (Rose McGowan), Stu (Matthew Lillard), and Randy (Jamie Kennedy). These teens discuss the murders and Sydney is reminded that the anniversary of her Mother's murder is coming in a few days. As the teens speculate on who the killer could be the audience is introduced to Gale Weathers (Courtney Cox), a reporter who doesn't believe Sydney's Mother was killed by the person in jail for the crime. Gale pesters Sydney and wants to gain more information for her upcoming book on the crime. In school the students are questioned about the crime. Sydney's father leaves town and Sydney asks to stay with Tatum. While waiting for Tatum to come and pick her up Sydney receives a phone call from the killer, and after stepping outside to see what is going on, breaking one of the rules of the horror film, she is attacked. Billy appears and claims to have scared off the killer. Tatum's brother, Deputy Dewey (David Arquette), arrives and arrests Billy. Later at Tatum's house the killer calls Sydney again. The next day at school Sydney is attacked in the women's restroom, prompting the closing of the school and a curfew to be placed in effect. Stu offers his house for a party to celebrate school being cancelled. Later at the house many of the students are partying, and Gale arrives. Gale places a camera in the house to monitor what is happening and she and her cameraman wait for something to happen. Randy and some of the students are watching Halloween and Randy stops to explain the rules of the horror film. News reaches the party that the principal has been killed and hung on the goalposts so many of the students leave. Billy arrives and takes Sydney into a
bedroom to talk. There they have sex, moments before the killer breaks in to kill Billy.

Meanwhile the killer has attacked the cameraman and Gale attempts to flee in their truck. Dewey is stabbed in the back and left for dead while Gale crashes the camera truck. Billy reappears, seemingly wounded, and takes Dewey's gun from Sydney. He then shoots Randy, revealing that he is one of the killers. Stu comes back and is revealed as the second killer. The two of them explain that they killed Sydney's mother, and that they intend to be the only survivors of the massacre in order to eventually make the sequel. Sydney escapes and kills Stu after calling the police. She then fights with Billy until Gale wakes up and shoots him. Randy is revealed to be alive and warns that in a horror film this is the moment when the killer rises for one last scare. Sydney shoots him in the head stating "Not in my movie." The film ends with Gale reporting on the events of the film, and Dewey miraculously surviving his wounds.

*Scream* takes pleasure in meeting genre conventions and then breaking them. The rules as outlined in the film are: 1) You will die if you have sex 2) You will die if you drink or do drugs 3) You will die if you say "I'll be right back" 4) You will die if you ask "Who's there?" 5) You will die if you go to investigate a strange noise and finally 6) Everyone is a suspect. As one critic notes:

> In the conventional slasher film, the Final Girl is the only teenager aware of the monster and his intentions; her friends are either killed by random surprise or ignore naïvely whatever danger signs are associated with their presence. All the teenagers in *Scream* have grown up watching multiple films from slasher cinema and thus possess an intimate knowledge of the various conventions associated with the genre. 148

Sydney breaks all the rules except drinking and saying that she'll be right back and survives. Gale says "I'll be right back" and survives. Randy drinks and survives. The only people to break the rules and die are Casey in the introduction, along with Stu and Billy, the killers. The acknowledgement of the horror genre goes far deeper than the outlining of the rules. Screen time

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is given to *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931), *Friday the 13th*, *Psycho*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *The Howling*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Carrie*, *Halloween*, *Terror Train* (Roger Spottiswoode, 1980), and *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980). Linda Blair, Reagan from *The Exorcist*, and Wes Craven, have cameos in the film. This film is aware of the history of the horror genre and its own place as a continuation of that history. By taking a closer look at the main characters and the deviations in the horror genre we can being to see not only how far the genre has come, but also the moments of resistance for the female characters that are the culmination of their place in the horror film.

Rather than focusing primarily on the characters this section will instead take a look at each of the rules established within the film. By seeing how the transgression of the rules changes the narrative of *Scream*, and interrogating the role these rules have had in the genre as a whole, the changing nature of gender representation within the horror film can be seen and tracked. By specifically looking at the rules regarding what it takes to survive a horror film we can begin to see how *Scream* provides moments of resistance for the female characters and how those moments may relate to Third Wave feminism. The first rules we will look at are the rules about saying "I'll be right back" or "who's there?" Within the horror genre over confidence and curiosity lead to death. The first person to openly ask "who's there" is Casey. She is even admonished in the moment by the killer for asking such a question. For breaking that rule Casey is killed. This moment is the most graphic death onscreen and conforms to the genre conventions of the death of women being more intense and graphic. She is left disemboweled in a tree to be discovered by her parents. Casey and her death are used as a starting point within the film, and by beginning the film with so violent a death Wes Craven is setting the audience up for a traditional horror film. However such a graphic death is also a counterpoint not only to the rest
of the film, but to the horror genre as a whole. The film, in initially conforming to the horror genre style, makes the moments later in the film all the more impactful when those women who survive and fight back are able to openly break the rules.

While as a comment "I'll be right back" is a fairly common one, in the horror film it is the equivalent of mocking both the genre and the killer. There are two major characters who use this line in *Scream*, Gale Weathers and Stu. Stu uses this line immediately after being warned against saying it in a horror film. He plays it for laugh. While his death isn't immediate, and he is one of the killers, that he is the one who dies as a result of breaking the rules is important for two reasons. The first is that within the horror genre, particularly after 1974, one or more of the killers often survive to wreak havoc in the sequel. Stu's death is a result of not only his being the killer, but also of his breaking the rules. Gale as the second Final Woman and the other female protagonist throughout the film tells her camera man that she'll be right back. This moment within the film is followed when Gale goes to investigate a strange car down the road, another rule break. It is also worth noting that the line is re-recorded dialogue. Her mouth movements don't match the spoken lines. This suggests that the filmmakers felt changing her line to "I'll be right back" was more important than whatever was there previously. This sequence also follows almost immediately the moment in the film when Randy, the film geek, explains the rules to the audience of the film and those within the film. In the film this moment is designed to lead the audience to the suspicion that Gale will die. That she survives, shoots one of the killers, and even reports on the events on live TV after they happen are all major moments of resistance for her and her gender within the film. In this example we can see a gender divide. Wes Craven chose to allow the woman who broke the rule to survive and the man who broke the rule is the one who died. This is not a major accomplishment in itself, however, when combined with other
moments within the film it begins to create a world in which women are more capable than the men and this signals a dramatic shift within the genre.

The next rule we will look at is that if you go to investigate a strange noise you will die. In the horror film the strange noise is almost always produced by the killer in an attempt to lure the victim out. From the xenomorph to Mrs. Voorhees to Leatherface, this is one of the oldest tricks in the horror playbook. In Scream the film intentionally plays with these ideas, and Sydney breaks this rule most openly. When she is first talking to the killer on the phone the killer suggests that he is outside her house. In order to investigate she goes out her front door and openly mocks the killer, even picking her nose to prove that he is not watching her. Strangely enough she would have remained safe if she had stayed outside, as the killer was actually already in the house. Tied to hearing a strange noise is investigating something strange, and Gale goes into the woods with Dewey in order to investigate a strange car. Both of these instances of rule breaking fall into the category of being too curious and have even deeper roots in the idea of curiosity killing the cat. In both of these cases Scream plays on audience expectations and reverses them, and in doing so allows female characters moments of resistance to not only the film but to the entire genre.

Drinking and doing drugs are two of the fastest ways to die in a horror film. This is in part the horror genre's role in passing along moral traditions that reaches all the way back to the horror story and the original versions of many fairy tales. Society has enacted laws about what age drinking becomes acceptable and has for the most part limited the chemicals that one can put in their body. Those who break with these societal rules within the horror film must be punished for them. This convention, while present in the 1970s, entered fully into the genre in the 1980s,
the same decade the War on Drugs began. It is unsurprising that such a convention came to the forefront in that political climate and took no time in establishing itself as one of the most prominent excuses for killing characters in the horror film. In this film many of the characters drink in the final sequence. While in a traditional horror film all those who drank would end up dead, in this case only two who are linked to drinking die, Stu and his girlfriend Tatum. Tatum's death, although one of the most memorable within the film, does provide her with some moments of resistance before her demise. Tatum goes to get more beer for Stu from the garage and there the killer enters. Initially Tatum thinks it is a joke, but after being cut on her arm she fights back. Tatum beats the killer with any object she can reach, the refrigerator door, beer bottles, her fists, and does real damage to him. She is almost able to escape before the killer traps her in a cat door, in the garage door. The killer then raises the garage door, killing her in the process. This death is one of the least gory in the film and Tatum was able to inflict damage on the killer herself. While this is a small moment of resistance, that Tatum mocks the killer using conventions of the horror genre and almost survives is a change. That her death is not as graphic as others within the film, even after her aggressive attack on the killer, is important. Stu again breaks the rules and is punished for them, and for his role in the murders. Randy, on the other hand, is shown as being completely drunk, to the point that he doesn't notice the killer standing right behind him, even as he calls out to Jamie Lee Curtis in Halloween on the television to look behind her. While he is shot, Randy survives the film despite his trespass.

150 This moment is one of the most meta within the film. The character of Randy, played by Jamie Kennedy, is shouting "Jamie behind you, behind you Jamie" ostensibly to Jamie Lee Curtis on the television, but if the audience knows who the actors are it is also his character calling out to himself. This double cinematic reference is one that the audience of horror films and Scream were aware of at the time of release.
The final rule that is closely tied to the morality present in these films is that you will die if you have sex. Sexuality and the death for sex outside of marriage has been prominent in the horror film all the way back to *Psycho*. In *Scream* one of the major plot points is that Sydney won't have sex with Billy in part because her Mom had a reputation for sleeping around. In the film Sydney takes Billy up to a bedroom and initiates the act. Following the encounter and several deaths while they were busy Sydney and Billy get dressed to return to the party. The sequence begins with a medium shot of Sydney brushing her hair and Billy on the floor putting his shirt back on. He asks her if she is ok, and she says that she is fine. There is a close up on the bedside phone as Sydney places the brush back. The film cuts to a close up of Sydney as she asks Billy who he called when he was arrested. The film cuts to a medium shot of Billy as he replies that he called his Dad. The film returns to Sydney and she says he didn't. She saw the Sheriff call his father. The camera returns to Billy and he says he didn't get an answer. Throughout this interaction the characters are not looking at each other. The camera shifts to Billy's point of view and we see Sydney's back as she continues to get dressed. He asks her if she still thinks it was him. Returning to Sydney she turns and the film returns to the medium two shot as she says that it would have been clever for him as the killer to throw her off by calling her from jail. Billy stands and leans menacingly towards Sydney as he asks her what he has to do to prove he is not the killer. Sydney reacts in a close up, ostensibly to Billy's approach, with fear. She begins to move as the camera pulls back from Billy's close up and the killer is revealed behind him, about to strike. Sydney warns him, and he turns towards the killer, and is immediately slashed. Sydney screams and Billy turns to her and reaches out, before apparently dying. The killer begins to chase Sydney, leading to the final moments of the film.
There are several things in this sequence that are important. The first is that Sydney, even after deciding to have sex with Billy, is suspicious. This is one of her most enduring traits throughout the franchise: she is always smart. Sydney never leaves a weapon behind, never actively puts herself in bad situations, and is also smart about her actions. This is a dramatic shift from even the normal Final Woman. In many of the films the Final Woman while able in the end to defeat the killer, also places herself in those situations. This tradition goes all the way back to Sally in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, when she chooses to go off into the night to find her friends rather than getting help. Sydney is thrust into the role and acts in a reasonable manner throughout the series and this film.

The next thing of note is that seemingly Billy dies for his transgression of having sex, while Sydney does not. In the end Billy does die, so he like Stu is a male who breaks the rules and is killed for it. This gender divide in who is able to break the rules and live is important. Both Sydney and Gale break multiple rules of survival and live. The killers, both male, break the rules and die. Only Randy is able to be male, break the rules, and survive. Randy is emasculated throughout the film, and repeatedly his attempts at courting Sydney are mocked. While he is outwardly a male he is aligned with the female in the film through his lack of masculinity, similarly to Franklin from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.\(^\text{151}\) Even in the total body count for the film the males outnumber the females, something that is very different from previous entries into the horror genre. Casey, Tatum, and Sydney's mother are the only female deaths. Casey's boyfriend, the principle, the camera man, Stu, and Billy are the male deaths. That the film makes the male victims outnumber the female almost 2:1 shows that the film is not only aware of the horror conventions, but is actively attempting to move away from them. The last key component

\(^{151}\) Randy is killed in the second film for mocking the killer over the phone. In the third film through a video tape he left behind he remarks that he shouldn't have lost his virginity, suggesting that in the end he too is a male who is killed for having sex outside of marriage.
of this sequence is Sydney. As a Final Woman she fulfills the role completely. However, she is able to be sexually active and not be punished for it. While many horror films kill the female immediately after she has had sex, often while she is still naked as an object of male desire, Sydney is never naked onscreen and is able to both initiate sex and live. This moment of resistance is one that no other Final Woman is allowed, and one that falls in line with the changing representation of women. Part of the Third Wave was allowing women to make their own choices about life and sexuality without societal repercussions for non-traditional choices. Sydney by breaking not only many of the rules, but the most repeated one of sex leading to death, makes her one of the most important Final Women of the genre.

*Scream* and its sequels continue to outline the rules of the genre and break them. Sydney, Gale, and Dewey all survive not only this film but its three sequels. In each one they continue to break the rules and outsmart the killer. Sydney, having participated in the deaths of many of the killers herself, is actually at the point where if there is another sequel she will have a higher kill count than any of the previous killers. That there are two female leads, of different ages, that survive the franchise is a complete anomaly within the horror genre. Their presence within the horror genre and that they came into existence in the 1990s along with Third Wave feminism is telling. While the horror genre has always been poised as the most self-referential genre, Clover notes years before *Scream* was released:

> A strong prima facie case could be made for horror's being, intentionally or unintentionally, the most self-reflexive of cinematic genres. From titles and posters to images of eyes, and from tales of blindness or paravision to plots involving audiences looking at (audiences looking at) horror movies, horror talks about itself.

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152 The closest comparison is Ripley, who has also appeared in four films. However Ripley dies in the third film, and it is a clone in the fourth so while the character in some ways continues she has not lasted as long as Gale and Sydney.

From the co-founder of the new age of horror, *Peeping Tom*, and culminating in *New Nightmare* and *Scream* the horror genre is one that has been aware of the mechanisms of viewing, cinema, and later its own conventions as a genre. In part what makes *Scream* interesting is its intention to go against the genre. This is a partial explanation for the frequent and powerful moments of resistance provided to Gale and Sydney. Socially in the 1990s post-structuralism and deconstructionist thought were popular methods of critique that were used by Third Wave feminism. While there is not direct link between Clover and Craven that both are using this moment in time to explore the roles of gender in the horror film is interesting. That Gale is able to use her sexuality with Dewey and not be judged or punished, and given Sydney's sexual freedom, active voice, and control over her actions throughout the film, *Scream* is filled with moments of resistance that have a relationship to the Third Wave.
Conclusion

"My suggestion is that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time." The representation of gender within the movies is one means by which gender becomes defined in the modern world. By watching and identifying with someone onscreen an audience member will learn and see gendered acts repeated. What constitutes a gendered act changes as society evolves. Gender then is not dissimilar from genre in that both are a series of conventions that are repeated and change over time in tune with cultural shifts. The convergence of gender and genre in the horror film is especially important because the target audience is young people who are still in the process of creating their own gender identity. The danger is that for the most part the horror genre is abusive to women and idolizes male killers. This thesis has shown that there are moments of resistance for women in the genre. These moments remain in the minority when it comes to representation of gender in the horror film.

Identifying the moments of resistance serves as one means to track the representation of women throughout the decades investigated in this thesis. In tracking strong characters, their motivations, and actions, in a genre that is ultimately aggressive towards women we can begin to see the impact that society plays in creating and maintaining representations of women. The Second and Third Wave of Feminism and the backlash against women in the 1980s played out over many genres and countless movies released in those years. In being able to place these films in their historical context and follow how the broader movements provide the filmmakers with character templates we can begin to see the impact a "low genre" can have.

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The Final Woman is perhaps the most lasting of the gendered genre conventions from the horror film. In these characters, from Sally in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to Sydney in *Scream*, the Final Woman has served as the brightest beacon for female representation in the horror film. These women provide a role model that is more than just another lamb being led to slaughter. In their strength we can also see how the Final Woman has changed as the perception of women has changed. Ripley in *Alien* provides a different set of ideas and moments of resistance than Ripley in *Aliens*. Carrie faces drastically different problems than Nancy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or Heather in *New Nightmare*. Beyond the Final Woman, Mrs. Voorhees from *Friday the 13th* and Clarice Starling from *The Silence of the Lambs* are on almost completely different ends of the spectrum when it comes to the representation of women. However these disparate characters are all united in their place within the horror canon. Through the evolution of their representations there are repeated moments of resistance and new moments created for the women based on the larger societal moments of the times in which the films were made.

While we are currently in the Third Wave of feminism if this thesis continued into the next decade of the 2000s it would focus on the evolution of Third Wave ideologies in the new millennium and how those evolving values effected the representations of women within the horror genre. The horror films of note in the 2000s include *Ginger Snaps* (John Fawcett, 2000), *Scream 3* (Wes Craven, 2000), and *Hard Candy* (David Slade, 2005). *Ginger Snaps* is one of the few horror films written by a woman, and follows two sisters as they mature into womanhood while one becomes a werewolf. *Scream 3* concludes the original *Scream* trilogy and continues the meta-horror tradition by having most of the action take place on the *Stab* film set, the series of movies within the *Scream* universe that are based on the lives of Sydney, Gail, and Dewey.
*Hard Candy* takes many of the genre conventions and removes the men from positions of power while giving ultimate power to the female protagonist. These films all continue to strengthen the representation of women within the horror genre from the foundation laid in the decades discussed in this thesis.

As a part of the traditional dichotomy the masculine has not been the primary focus of this work, however it is important to take a moment and evaluate the male role models of the horror film. In the horror film it would be dangerous to say that the men have it easier than the women. When it comes to the representations of men within the genre, there aren't many positive role models for the men. The men often have the power in the genre, in part because they are the killers, but those men who do not kill are themselves targets. The men who do kill, from Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to Ghostface in *Scream*, while having the power over life and death, for most of the film are all lacking in some way. Beyond their deformations, be they physical or mental, these male characters are all killers. In giving the audience what they want from a horror film they also create a series of gender representations that are troubling, to say the least. They show that men can and must maintain power over women, with the ultimate expression of this power coming through killing. These implications about the male role are almost as disturbing as the treatment of women throughout the majority of the genre.

If the gender implications are resoundingly negative for both men and women throughout the genre then what can the purpose of a work like this thesis be? The first purpose is attempting to find and give strength to the underdog. Horror as a genre is an underdog, and the women of horror even more so. In finding those examples of women who are able to stand for themselves against male oppressors and not only survive but thrive in the horror film this thesis is attempting
to be a champion for all the women of the genre. The second purpose is that through the examination of the historical moments of these films when combined with the portrayal of women in these movies we can begin to see the potential role the Feminist movement played in those representations. In creating a cultural and historical context for the films the moments of resistance for the characters take on a stronger meaning. More than that the context begins to provide insight into why these films and characters have endured for decades. Finally, this thesis sought to shine the spotlight more brightly on the good within the genre. The horror film has rightly been taken to task for its representations of gender. However both men and women have continued to see these films in theaters and at home so there has to be something more than just punishment for trespasses and the cheap thrill of the kills. In the women and films examined strong women and character moments have risen to the top of the crop. These characters are able to fight not only their antagonists within the films but also the larger societal restrictions placed on women. In standing up to the patriarchy and its avatars these women are providing gender representations that fight back. They fight against the killers and survive. They also fight against gender roles and attempt to carve their own niche in which they can live and thrive. This is the ultimate goal for all the feminist movements. To find a space for women that is equal to men, where they can live, thrive, and play a role in the way younger generations form their own gender identities. While the horror film may be an unlikely place to find such a space the women from the films discussed have done so. By opening up a genre that is steeped in gender representations and motivations to the possibility of strong feminist characters and identifying those moments of resistance where they are able to take their own power this author hopes to have opened a new doorway into the thinking about gender and the horror film. As one author states about the philosophical possibilities of getting lost: "Leave the door open for the unknown,
the door into the dark. That's where the most important things come from, where you yourself came from, and where you will go.” While not written about the horror genre this idea is one that is central to this thesis. In the darkness of the horror film finding strong women is a task that is difficult. But when those women are found and through understanding their place in film history a new understanding of the genre, and its gender representations can be found. The future is always in motion and unknown, as is the darkness. However with the insight gained from this type of study we can be certain that the horror film will continue to use gender as a means to create terror and tension in the audience. There is hope that in the darkness of a movie theater the women of the genre will continue to be able to step out, find moments of resistance, and provide a light in the dark for the feminist audience members of the horror film.

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