

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS
TRABALHO DE CONCLUSÃO DE CURSO
BACHARELADO – TRADUÇÃO INGLÊS E PORTUGUÊS

Caroline Postay dos Santos

FINAL GIRL RESIGNIFIED:
the case of *Halloween*'s Laurie Strode

Porto Alegre

2021

Caroline Postay dos Santos

FINAL GIRL RESIGNIFIED:
the case of *Halloween's* Laurie Strode

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras – Tradutora Inglês e Português.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Claudio Vescia Zanini

Porto Alegre

2021

CIP - Catalogação na Publicação

dos Santos, Caroline Postay
Final Girl resignified: the case of Halloween's
Laurie Strode / Caroline Postay dos Santos. -- 2021.
84 f.
Orientador: Claudio Vescia Zanini.

Trabalho de conclusão de curso (Graduação) --
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Instituto
de Letras, Bacharelado em Letras: Tradutor Português e
Inglês, Porto Alegre, BR-RS, 2021.

1. Halloween. 2. Slasher. 3. Final Girl. 4. Carol
J. Clover. 5. Male gaze. I. Zanini, Claudio Vescia,
orient. II. Título.

Caroline Postay dos Santos

FINAL GIRL RESIGNIFIED:

The case of *Halloween's* Laurie Strode

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras – Tradutora Inglês e Português.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Claudio Vescia Zanini

Aprovado em: Porto Alegre, 14 de maio de 2021.

BANCA EXAMINADORA

Prof. Dr. Elaine Barros Indrusiak (UFRGS)

Prof. Dr. Raphael Albuquerque de Boer (FURG)

Prof. Dr. Claudio Vescia Zanini (orientador)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Agradeço à minha família, aos meus amigos, ao meu namorado e, principalmente, ao meu orientador pelo apoio prestado nos últimos meses. Este trabalho não seria possível sem vocês.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é verificar o tratamento dado pelo filme *Halloween* (dir. David Gordon Green, 2018) às convenções do filme *slasher* presentes no filme *Halloween* (dir. John Carpenter, 1978) no que tange à caracterização das personagens femininas como vítimas ou como *Final Girls* (CLOVER, 2015). Para isso, realizou-se uma análise detalhada do filme de 1978 para mapear os elementos relacionados à estrutura (DIKA, 1990; CLOVER, 2015) e ao *male gaze* (MULVEY, 1975). Em seguida, foi feita uma análise comparativa entre os filmes de 1978 e de 2018, a fim de verificar em que medida os elementos identificados foram mantidos ou subvertidos. O primeiro filme possui distinções claras de valor entre as personagens “transgressoras” e a *Final Girl*, cujo comportamento virginal é considerado elevado pelas convenções do *slasher* clássico que o filme de Carpenter inaugura. A sequência de 2018 se apropria dessas convenções para subvertê-las ou para estimular o conhecimento prévio do público espectador, punindo as vítimas por motivos quase nunca relacionados ao seu comportamento sexual, ressignificando, assim, a *Final Girl*. Com uma abordagem ativa e colaborativa, a nova *Final Girl* utiliza o poder do seu olhar e a rede de apoio estabelecida com as mulheres de sua família para se proteger e compartilhar o fardo do trauma.

Palavras-chave: *Halloween. Slasher. Final Girl. Carol J. Clover. Male gaze.*

ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to verify how *Halloween* (dir. David Gordon Green, 2018) approached the conventions of the slasher film presented in *Halloween* (dir. John Carpenter, 1978) regarding the characterization of female characters as victims or as Final Girls (CLOVER, 2015). For this purpose, a detailed analysis of the 1978 film was conducted to identify elements related to structure (DIKA, 1990; CLOVER, 2015) and to the male gaze (MULVEY, 1975). Then, a comparative analysis of both films was carried out to verify the extent to which the identified elements were maintained or subverted. The first film presents clear distinctions of value between the “transgressive” characters and the Final Girl, whose virginal behavior is considered elevated by the classic slasher conventions that Carpenter's film originated. The 2018 sequel appropriates these conventions to subvert them or to incite the public's prior knowledge, punishing the victims for reasons almost never related to their sexual behavior, thus resignifying the Final Girl. With an active and collaborative approach, the new Final Girl uses the power of her look and the support of the women in her family to protect herself and share the burden of her trauma.

Keywords: Halloween. Slasher. Final Girl. Carol J. Clover. Male gaze.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Annie undressing in <i>Halloween</i>	17
Figure 2 - Lynda after having sex with her boyfriend in <i>Halloween</i>	18
Figure 3 - Marcie after having sex with her boyfriend in <i>Friday the 13th</i>	18
Figure 4 - Brenda playing strip poker in <i>Friday the 13th</i>	18
Figure 5 - Tina being attacked after having sex with her boyfriend in <i>A Nightmare on Elm Street</i>	19
Figure 6 - Leatherface in the last shot of <i>The Texas Chain Saw Massacre</i>	23
Figure 7 - Stretch in the last shot of <i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2</i>	23
Figure 8 - Judith and her boyfriend making out on a couch.....	28
Figure 9 - Point-of-view shot of the knife	28
Figure 10 - Judith dead on the floor	29
Figure 11 - Laurie Strode, the Final Girl	30
Figure 12 - Point-of-view shot of Laurie and Tommy	31
Figure 13 - Laurie looking out the window	32
Figure 14 - Point-of-view shot of Michael	32
Figure 15 - Point-of-view shot of Michael's car	34
Figure 16 - Laurie, Lynda, and Annie looking at the car	34
Figure 17 - Laurie looking at the children	35
Figure 18 - Laurie after smoking	36
Figure 19 - Michael staring at Lindsey's house	38
Figure 20 - Point-of-view shot of Annie	39
Figure 21 - Laurie carving pumpkins	40
Figure 22 - Annie after being strangled.....	41
Figure 23 - Michael watching Lynda and Bob	42
Figure 24 - Michael killing Bob	43
Figure 25 - Michael killing Lynda.....	44
Figure 26 - Terrorized Laurie Strode.....	45
Figure 27 - Laurie by Tommy's house.....	46
Figure 28 - Michael's face	47
Figure 29 - Laurie Strode eliminating the power of her gaze.....	47
Figure 30 - Point-of-view shot of Tommy's backyard.....	48
Figure 31 - Dr. Loomis realizing that Michael is gone.....	48

Figure 32 - Dana and Aaron visit Michael at Smith's Grove Sanitarium	50
Figure 33 - Dave, Vicky, and Allyson	52
Figure 34 - Allyson looking out the window	53
Figure 35 - Laurie standing outside Allyson's school	54
Figure 36 - Michael observing Dana and Aaron at the cemetery	55
Figure 37 - Michael inside the car in the background	56
Figure 38 - Michael killing someone in the background	56
Figure 39 - Dana's terrorized face	58
Figure 40 - Point-of-view shot of Vicky	60
Figure 41 - Clothesline in <i>Halloween</i> (2018)	61
Figure 42 - Michael in <i>Halloween</i> (1978)	61
Figure 43 - Vicky's terrorized face	62
Figure 44 - Vicky's body	63
Figure 45 - Vicky covered by the ghost-like white sheet	64
Figure 46 - Dave's body	64
Figure 47 - Point-of-view shot of Michael's silhouette	65
Figure 48 - Laurie's arsenal	66
Figure 49 - External area of Laurie's house	68
Figure 50 - Laurie and Karen holding hands	69
Figure 51 - Michael realizing that Laurie's gone	70
Figure 52 - Point-of-view shot of Laurie's backyard	70
Figure 53 - Karen's childhood gun	71
Figure 54 - Karen looking at her gun	71
Figure 55 - Karen after shooting Michael	72
Figure 56 - Laurie hiding in the shadows	73
Figure 57 - Karen, Laurie, and Allyson looking at Michael	74
Figure 58 - Michael trapped in the basement, consumed by fire	74
Figure 59 - Karen, Laurie, and Allyson being led to safety	75
Figure 60 - Allyson holding Michael's knife	75

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	10
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	14
2.1 THE SLASHER FILM	14
2.2 THE VICTIMS	16
2.3 THE FINAL GIRL	20
2.4 VIEWER IDENTIFICATION	24
3 ANALYSIS	27
3.1 <i>HALLOWEEN</i> (1978)	27
3.2 <i>HALLOWEEN</i> (2018)	49
4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	77
REFERENCES	82

1 INTRODUCTION

The horror genre has been the barrier-breaking of the seventh art since its beginning. Georges Méliès, pioneer filmmaker born in 1861, is said to have directed the first horror movie, *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896), or *The Haunted Castle*, in which a devil terrorizes the people who visit the castle where he resides. By 1910, horror movies had been directed by Spanish, Japanese, and American filmmakers, and in 1910 the first adaptation of Mary Shelley's classic novel, *Frankenstein*, was released. In the 1930s, one of the most important film production companies related to horror opened its doors: Hammer Film Productions, based in London. It became known for its adaptations of famous gothic stories in the form of films such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *The Mummy* (1959) and *Horror of Dracula* (1958).

What all these movies have in common is the boldness of addressing subjects usually ignored by society and other movie genres, be they about repressed desires or one's fear of oneself. This boldness would be taken to a whole new level (both in content and form) by Alfred Hitchcock, famous British director born in 1899. Known as the Master of Suspense, he became one of the most important names in the film industry by directing a number of thrillers, such as *Rebecca* (1940) and *North by Northwest* (1959). In 1960, Hitchcock shocked both audiences and critics with the release of one of his major films, *Psycho*, which told the story of crossdressing killer Norman Bates. While Hammer Film was previously able to explore the more physical and often metaphorical aspects of monstrosity, Hitchcock transformed it into something more blatantly rooted in reality. *Psycho* became notorious for one of the most iconic scenes in horror history: the shower murder scene. It shows Marion, the main character, being stabbed to death in the shower by a shadowy figure, with Bernard Hermann's distinguished score playing over it. It arguably became one of the most referenced and best-known scenes in cinema.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* became a turning point in the history of cinema. Before *Psycho*, violence was not explicit. After it, murder became a form of entertainment¹ (78/52, 2017). The entertaining characteristic of murder would be further explored in the next decade and taken to the extreme in the 1980s. Borrowing from the basic structure of *Psycho*, a new subgenre started to take its most prominent shape: *the slasher film*. Instead of using corn syrup to simulate blood and black-and-white footage to ease its graphic imagery², the slasher went not one, but several steps further. Over-the-top and extremely bloody special effects took over

¹ As stated by writer Bret Easton Ellis in the documentary *78/52*.

² Techniques used by Alfred Hitchcock in *Psycho*.

the screens, attracting an audience of, according to Carol J. Clover (2015), majorly teenage boys, who were all eager to watch and re-watch a masked killer chase after lustful adolescents. As the author observes, the formulaic aspect of the slashers is what guaranteed, at least for a time, its box office success, and its popularity is one of the aspects that rendered the genre worthy of analysis by many scholars (CLOVER, 2015, p. 23).

As basic as the slasher's premise may seem on the surface, one aspect surely stands out — the grand survivor, perhaps even hero, is a girl. Clover's fundamental work on the horror genre, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Slasher Film* (2015), coined the term that would be fully embraced by academics and genre enthusiasts alike – the *Final Girl*. While Clover's approach is focused on the identification of the male audience with the female characters in slasher, demonic possession, and rape-revenge films, the essay in which the author addresses slashers and conceptualizes the Final Girl, *Her Body, Himself*, became a thing of its own, stealing, as the author herself admits, the focus of the entire book.

As insightful as Clover's analysis may be, it was written more than 30 years ago³. In the preface to the book's 2015 edition, the author acknowledges that her statement might no longer resonate with today's slashers, as the genre has reinvented itself. What this also tells us is that as formulaic as the genre may seem, it still sells. A few authors have explained this phenomenon with the fact that horror movies, especially B movies⁴, are not expensive to make and are extremely easy to profit from (DIKA, 1990; CLAYTON, 2015). Additionally, the uncensored ground of horror films enabled directors to show graphic imagery that would elicit people's abject curiosity and excite their senses, besides providing an opportunity for the audience to experience “a catharsis, a release from their own fears of bodily injury, or a release from the social, or political tensions of the day,” (DIKA, 1990, p. 2), all in the safe environment of a movie theater.

Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* (1974) might be seen as precursors of the slasher film. In *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), Leatherface and his family capture and kill a group of adolescents, whose bodies are later discovered by the “heroine”, Sally. She survives the family of killers after undergoing extreme physical and psychological torture. In *Black Christmas* (1974), a group of sorority sisters are stalked through the phone by a mysterious voice and later killed by the owner of that voice. A voice and a point-of-view camera showing us the killer's perspective is all we get, as we never see his face. Jess, the sole survivor, mistakes her boyfriend for the killer and kills

³ *Her Body, Himself* was originally published in 1987 in *Representations*.

⁴ Low-budget commercial films.

him, wrongfully believing she has eliminated the threat. Although there are some obvious similarities between the two films and the canonical slashers, such as the male killer, his female victims, and the Final Girl, Sally is more of a victim-survivor than an actual Final Girl, as she never effectively fights her perpetrators. Jess, on the other hand, is hardly virginal: in fact, she is pregnant and wants to have an abortion.

Both aforementioned films certainly influenced directors such as John Carpenter and Sean S. Cunningham in giving the subgenre its most prominent shape. When Michael Myers took over the screens in 1978, we were introduced to the film that would be considered the first *de facto* slasher: John Carpenter's *Halloween*. This is the first time we see a masked killer terrorize the homes of suburban United States while chasing after a girl that would eventually subdue him. It is also when the well-known "do not have sex", "do not drink", and "do not do drugs" triad of horror films was unconsciously formed. Following *Halloween*'s success, Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980) and Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) were released, bringing new aspects⁵ to the genre while still reinforcing original tropes. By the late 1980s, the genre took a downturn and started to fade away. For Clover (2015, p. 26), its decline became evident with the self-parodic aspect of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) and the release of the satirical slasher *Buckets of Blood*. It was not until 1996, when Wes Craven released *Scream*, that the genre became relevant again. Being as innovative as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *Scream* (1996) was aware of something the previous films could not be: the slasher rules. By adopting metanarrative, Craven wrote characters that not only were aware of slasher tropes but also used them to commit murder or stay alive.

The next period to see a revival of slasher was the early 2000s up until 2010, as sequels, remakes, and some original films flooded the screens. *Scream 3* (2003) was released, as well as *Halloween: Resurrection* (2002) and *Jason X* (2001); *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *Prom Night* (2008), *My Bloody Valentine* (2009), *Black Christmas* (2006), and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010) were a few remakes of classical slashers; whereas *Wrong Turn* (2003) provided a new story for audiences. It is clear from this extensive list that the subgenre never went out of style. It becomes even clearer if we recognize the fact that now, over 40 years since the release of *Halloween*, we are again experiencing the rise of slasher films. In 2018, we saw the direct sequel to Carpenter's *Halloween* (with the same name as the first film, it asked us to forget about all the other sequels in the franchise); in 2019, there was a second *Black Christmas*

⁵ The killer in the first *Friday the 13th* is actually a woman; the killer in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Freddy Krueger, dwells more on the realm of dreams, and the Final Girl, Nancy, has a boyfriend and acts in a very proactive manner.

remake, this time directed by a woman; and we are still expecting to see *Halloween Kills* (2022), *Scream 5*, and Nia DaCosta's *Candyman*.

Considering the continuous presence of slashers in cinema and the new wave of sequels and remakes, the objective of this work is to analyze the evolution of the original Final Girl since her rise on screen, passing by the coining of the term by Clover in 1987 to understand if gender representation and audience identification have changed. As stated by film scholar Laura Mulvey in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), the body we see on screen is usually female, and we see it objectified through a male gaze. We are, through camera perspective, manipulated into a masculine position that gazes at the female image. For Clover (2015), slashers managed to do something different: they are structured in a way as to make male viewers shift identification from the killer to the Final Girl in the end of the movie.

To achieve this objective, our analysis will occur in two stages. First, we will conduct a detailed analysis of *Halloween* (1978) through the lens of Dika's, Mulvey's and Clover's theories of representation/identification. We intend to explore the structure and tropes of the slasher film to understand how gender representation and identification occur regarding the characterization of female characters as victims or Final Girls. Afterwards, a comparative analysis between *Halloween* (1978) and *Halloween* (2018) will be carried out to identify what aspects changed in terms of point of view, gender-based violence, and active/passive behavior. Through a summary of our findings, we intend to answer the following questions: is the Final Girl still differentiated from other female characters through a system of value and devalue? Does she still endure a symbolic process of phallicization by addressing the killer on his terms? And finally, are we, as an audience, still masculinized in the end by her figure?

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The slasher undoubtedly owes a great deal of its form to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), a film released prior to more blatant proto-slashers such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Black Christmas* (1974). While *Psycho* may have elevated murder to a form of entertainment, the slasher mastered it in a series of repetitive, yet incredibly successful films. Even though the latter does not carry the same level of critical acclaim as its ancestor, it would be untruthful to disregard it as one of the most relevant film (sub)genres, as it constantly finds its way back to the movie screen. As authors have constantly pointed out, horror films work as a mirror of society's current fears and anxieties, and slashers in particular "present us in startlingly direct terms with a world in which male and female are at desperate odds but in which, at the same time, masculinity and femininity are more states of mind than body" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 22). For Clover (2015), the slasher can tell more about the sexual attitudes of a certain time than any other production considered of quality. Looking back at other paramount works of gender representation in film, such as the ones by Dika (1990), Mulvey (1975), and Williams (1991), this section intends to present a comprehensive picture of concepts, theories, and analyses related to female representation in the slasher film. It will be divided into four parts: the slasher film, the victims, the Final Girl, and viewer identification.

2.1 THE SLASHER FILM

The genre known today as slasher has a series of elements that can be traced back to *Psycho* (1960), from the psychotic killer to the sexually active, beautiful female victims, being properly reinvented and established with the release of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween* (1978) (CLOVER, 2015). Petridis (2014) proposes three periods of slasher films: classical, postmodern and neoslasher. Classical slashers were released in the 1970's and 1980's and include the previously mentioned films that paved the way for the entire subgenre; postmodern slashers are films that approach the subgenre from a metanarrative style, such as *Scream* (1996) and *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997), in an attempt to innovate a worn-out formula; and, finally, neoslashers are the slashers released throughout the 2000's, which consist mostly of remakes. However, long before the genre was properly named, let alone divided into different periods, authors used terms such as "teenie-kill-pic," "violence-against-women," "stab and slash," and "splatter" to describe the type of films in which a masked killer terrorized and killed a group of lustful teenagers.

In *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (1990), Dika identifies a consistent corpus of films that can be categorized as “stalker films,” an earlier term created by the author to “emphasize the process of looking, a distinguishing formal characteristic of these films, rather than defining them in terms of their major narrative action” (p. 5). She observes that the subgenre “represents more than just a plot variation on that larger form” (p. 13), meaning that the stalker film has such a degree of internalized conventions, both in form and content, that it must be analyzed according to these conventions instead of as a variation of horror films in general. While illustrating the failure of authors such as Robin Wood and John McCarty in presenting a proper corpus and system of classification for these films, Dika explains that mere repetition does not qualify as “distinguishing characteristics of the form” (p. 9), that is, just because a certain element (e.g., “promiscuous” sexuality, psychotic killer) is used in a great number of films, it does not mean that this element is constituent of the genre’s form.

Consequently, Dika (1990) first chooses two examples, namely *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, that are best representative of the stalker subgenre in aspects of technicality, content, and popularity and then identifies the main elements that are constituent of form in these films. The elements identified by the author happen chronologically in two different moments in time: the past and the present event. In summary, the past event comprises a guilty wrongful action committed by the members of the young community, a loss experienced by the killer, and the slaughter of the young community by the killer. The present event begins with the commemoration of a past event that leads to the reactivation of the killer’s force. Subsequently, the killer reidentifies the guilty members in the new young community, who are warned by a “seer” of the old community of the dangers they are about to face. The young community ignores the seer’s warning and are stalked and killed by the killer, one by one. Finally, the heroine (Final Girl) first encounters her dead friends and then the killer, whom she will battle and eventually kill. Even though the heroine survives, she is not necessarily free, as the killer will most likely return.

Likewise, Clover (2015) identifies six main categories within the genre: killer, terrible place, weapons, victims, Final Girl, and shock. The terrible place is the source of all evil; it is where the killer’s family lived and where the main traumatic event originally happened (e.g. the Bates mansion and the old Myers’ house in Haddonfield). The weapons are never guns, they are always phallic-shaped objects that simulate a sort of penetration of the victim, such as axes, knives, and ice picks, to mention a few. The victims are constituted by a group of both teenage boys and girls, though mostly girls, who are all sexual transgressors of sorts. Finally, the Final

Girl is “abject terror personified” (CLOVER, 2015, p. 35). She is the only one who confronts the killer and survives long enough to either be rescued or to kill him herself. While most of these can be differently figured in different films (killers can be humans, supernatural creatures, even animals; the terrible place can be a house, tunnel, hotel; the weapons change with each killer), “the victim is eternally and prototypically the damsel” (CLOVER, 2015, p. 42).

2.2 THE VICTIMS

In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), Mulvey coined the term “male gaze” while addressing the way pleasure in looking has been constructed in classic Hollywood cinema. According to the author, “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (MULVEY, 1975, p. 11): classic cinema works under a patriarchal apparatus that puts the audience in a masculine position that gazes at their object of desire on-screen, the figure of the woman. In this way, viewers identify with the male protagonists (“bearers of the look”) and project their fantasies onto the female characters, who are coded with “to-be-looked-at-ness”.

Passive and active roles have also shaped narrative structures. As bearers of the look, male figures have the role of forwarding the story. They cannot be sexually objectified, since “man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like” (MULVEY, 1975, p. 12), thus they are able to achieve an active position and make things happen. Consequently, by identifying with the male figure, the viewer also shares his look: when the character gazes at the female figure, so does the spectator. By taking the female figure under their gaze, spectator and protagonist alike can possess her. However, this possession presents a paradoxical problem. In psychoanalytical terms, the female figure represents the lack of the penis, which eventually creates a fear of castration (loss of power) in men. This fear is made evident through the gaze, in which the lack of the penis is visually ascertainable (MULVEY, 1975). According to Mulvey (1975, p. 13-14):

The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the film noir); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star).

The avenues exposed by Mulvey (1975) are divided in scopophilia and voyeurism: the former “builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself,” while the latter derives pleasure “in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with

castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment” (p. 14). The avenue chosen in the slasher film is voyeurism, entailing the devaluation and consequent punishment of the victims, which is also what separates them from the Final Girl. As Dika (1990) further elaborates, the victims are usually played by attractive, less-known actors who are unexperienced, increasing their devalued aspect. More significantly, these characters are overwhelmingly interested in sex, they tend to not be interested in school, and usually pursue opportunities to engage in intimate contact with their boyfriends. When we see them after they have engaged or when they are engaging/thinking about engaging in sexual activities, it is their bodies that are on display (Figures 1-5), which provides “the viewer with a degree of visual interest, but has further lowered the girls’ value in that they only exist as objects” (DIKA, 1990, p. 75). What becomes evident, then, is that the devaluation of the female victims of the slasher film comes from their “to-be-looked-at-ness,” which works in direct contrast to the male killer’s “bearing of the look.” By being devalued, they are also liable to punishment.

Figure 1 - Annie undressing in *Halloween*



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:43:25).

Figure 2 - Lynda after having sex with her boyfriend in *Halloween*



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:07:02).

Figure 3 - Marcie after having sex with her boyfriend in *Friday the 13th*



Source: Digital copy of *Friday the 13th* (00:45:02).

Figure 4 - Brenda playing strip poker in *Friday the 13th*



Source: Digital copy of *Friday the 13th* (00:47:12).

Figure 5 - Tina being attacked after having sex with her boyfriend in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*



Source: Digital copy of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (00:17:17).

If cinema's display of sexualized female bodies is what triggers men's unconscious fear of castration, it is also cinema's representation of women as devalued objects who are liable to punishment that resolves this anxiety (DIKA, 1990, p. 68). Although premarital sex can be seen as one of the main reasons for these characters' devaluation, Dika (1990) observes that the victims from the classical slashers are in a different social context from their predecessors. While Marion's transgression in *Psycho* (1960) was very much in accordance with the taboos of the 1960's, Lynda, Annie, Marcie, and the others are inserted in a context of change in sexual attitudes (the 1970's). The Final Girl is also inserted in this same context, but unlike the victims, she does not engage in any sexual activity and is never represented as a sexualized body. Consequently, she is never punished for this particular behavior.

For Dika (1990), "it is primarily [the victims] mannish or aggressive attitude which is deemed unacceptable by the film" (p. 73). The sexual revolution of the 1970's guaranteed that the characters from classical slashers are not judged solely by their sexual activeness, but by their attitude toward it. Considering how the genre has always been a fertile ground for gender discussion, Dika (1990) further explains how the slasher portrays this new behavior as what would be considered male and then punishes the girls who act accordingly. The fact that they want no-strings-attached sex all the time could "be very threatening to the male viewer, but since *Halloween* is a vehicle that strives to ensure gratification, their presentation is manipulated to temper this threat" (DIKA, 1990, p. 73). Consequently, the girls are represented as a parody of the "new girl," who likes sex and "shirks the responsibility of her traditional female role" (DIKA, 1990, p. 73) to get it. Adding their sexual attitude to their disinterest in school, their

consumption of alcohol and cigarettes, and their generally outspoken personality, they are characterized as ridiculous and unattractive (non-feminine). Through their actions, they become undesirable and, consequently, expendable: “[t]hey are devalued objects that the killer will, almost justifiably, kill. Annie and Lynda are not developed, realistic characters. Instead, they function primarily as social types. They are ‘new women,’ sexually aggressive but ridiculous, and so, easily expendable.” (DIKA, 1990, p. 74)

Also in contrast to the Final Girl, the victims are not watchful. By being placed in opposition to the killer’s bearing of the look, they automatically lack the power to see, which will further increase their devaluation and consequent punishment (DIKA, 1990). This inability is further extended by not providing the victims with any point-of-view shot. Regarding Carpenter’s *Halloween*, Dika observes that besides not being granted practically any point-of-view shots, Lynda and Annie are almost always shown through Michael’s and Laurie’s. The only time we see from their point of view is when Michael is driving past them on the street; Annie aggressively shouts for him to slow down and Lynda calls him cute (even though she cannot see his face) (DIKA, 1990, p. 76):

The girls are, in this way, both literally (in terms of the formal structure of the film) and figuratively blind, incapable of seeing the menace which threatens them. Symbolically castrated, their humiliation will be re-enacted in their subsequent murders. They will never see the killer as he strangles them from behind in a grotesque parody of the sexual act they so avidly sought, but were never equipped to adequately deliver. Their deaths are their final blinding and their ultimate devaluation.

In summary, there are several elements both within and outside the films that qualify characters as valued or devalued. External elements include the actors’ attractiveness, talent, and recognition; filmic elements include the characters’ sexual behaviors and, mostly, their attitude toward it. While victims are usually played by extremely attractive yet untalented actors, the Final Girl is played by an actress with more range. Romantic interests and sexual freedom are inherent to victims, since the Final Girl, as we will see, has no business in dating.

2.3 THE FINAL GIRL

If broad attention has been paid to the female-targeted violence in the classical slasher, little or none was paid to the phenomenon of the female victim-hero (CLOVER, 2015). As previously mentioned, the Final Girl is the sole survivor of the bloodbath perpetrated by the masked killer and usually the one to take him down. Unlike her friends, she holds a higher moral ground in the community, being characterized as smart, quiet, and virginal. While Dika

(1990) and other scholars had already pointed out this fact, Clover was the one to baptize her, using Laurie Strode as the original model.

The figure of the Final Girl began to take shape back in Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) with Sally. In fact, Clover (2015) describes the evolution of the Final Girl from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* to *Halloween* as from passive to active: while Sally spends the last thirty minutes of the film being tortured, running, falling, and mostly screaming until she is rescued by a truck driver, Laurie has a chance to fight back. Although she too spends the last minutes of the film screaming and running and is saved by a male figure, she manages to escape twice by first stabbing Michael with a knitting needle and then with a hanger-turned-weapon.

The change from passive to active, which happened in the span of four years, led to more active Final Girls, including those who were able to kill the killers themselves. Nancy (Heather Langenkamp), from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), catches Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund) in a bunch of elaborate traps set by herself after both her boyfriend and her father (a police officer) turn out to be useless. Stretch (Caroline Williams), from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986), takes her tormentors under her investigative gaze (usually reserved for male characters), chases them, is caught, tortured, flees, is caught again, and eventually defeats them (CLOVER, 2015). Christensen (2011), in fact, considers Laurie an antifeminist character and argues that Nancy would have been a better model for the Final Girl as, instead of going through a symbolic process of masculinization, she is able to address Krueger on her own terms, using her wit and imagination to trap him. Brunet (2020), on the other hand, believes that by categorizing violence and the use of weapons as masculine attributes, Christensen's argument further "narrows the already restrictive boundaries of acceptable expression of feminine rage" (p. 47).

The Final Girl's position as the main character comes with some requirements: she is virginal (or, in Stretch's case, at least sexually and romantically unavailable), smart, shy, observant, resourceful, and dresses in a conservative manner. She is "watchful to the point of paranoia" and registers "small signs of danger that her friends ignore" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 39); she also never engages in sex talk and rarely demonstrates interest in dating. If the opposite behavior is what rendered her friends devalued, then the Final Girl is rendered *valued*. In fact, she is separated from the rest of her friends through oppositions of "valued/devalued" and "strong/weak." By being valued, the Final Girl is capable of action: unlike her friends, she can see and move the story forward, just like the killer. In this context, being capable of action means being able to use violence and, therefore, being strong (DIKA, 1990).

If, as we have demonstrated, the gender of the victim is (mostly) fixed as female, the same cannot be stated for the killer and the Final Girl. Although the killer is almost always figured as male and his “phallic purpose” (CLOVER, 2015, p. 47) is undeniable (as he uses knives or chainsaws to penetrate the victims’ bodies), he has been represented as sexually incapable, as a virgin, transvestite, transsexual, and as sexually ambiguous. As for the Final Girl, her characterization as boyish is one of the key components of her character (CLOVER, 2015, p. 40):

Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself. Lest we miss the point, it is spelled out in her name: Stevie, Marti, Terry, Laurie, Stretch, Will, Joey, Max.

In fact, Clover (2015) argues that her gender is compromised from the start by a series of elements: “masculine” interests, sexual reluctance, apartness from other female characters, and even her name. On the cinematic apparatus, her “unfemininity” is expressed through her active use of the investigative gaze, “normally reserved for males and punished in females when they assume it themselves” (CLOVER, 2015, p. 48). By looking for the killer and then *at* him, the Final Girl often brings him into our vision for the first time. In the end of the film, when she finally has to address him, she must do it on *his* terms. When she takes the knife or the axe or the chainsaw, she turns the phallic symbols on him and becomes herself phallicized. Clover (2015) illustrates her main argument by quoting Carpenter’s response to the criticism that *Halloween* actually punishes female sexuality (MCCARTHY, 1980, p. 23):

They [the critics] completely missed the boat there, I think. Because if you turn it around, the one girl who is the most sexually uptight just keeps stabbing this guy with a long knife. She's the most sexually frustrated. She's the one that killed him. Not because she's a virgin, but because all that repressed energy starts coming out. She uses all those phallic symbols on the guy... She and the killer have a certain link: sexual repression.

For Clover, the link is more than just sexual repression; it is also shared masculinity, represented by the phallic symbols, and shared femininity, represented by the literal or symbolic castration of the killer by the Final Girl as she mans herself and unmans him (CLOVER, 2015). Stretch’s possession of the chainsaw perfectly illustrates this process: in an extremely symbolic last shot, we see her dancing in the sunshine, holding the chainsaw over her head, just like Leatherface in the first film (Figures 6 and 7). The classical Final Girl is triumphant by becoming phallic. By the end of the film, she possesses the killer’s weapon and the main

characteristic that gendered him male in the first place: violence. The roles, it seems, have changed.

Figure 6 - Leatherface in the last shot of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*



Source: Digital copy of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (01:21:45).

Figure 7 - Stretch in the last shot of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*



Source: Digital copy of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (01:37:02).

What appears on the surface, then, as a feminist development, is discovered as a “grotesque expression of wishful thinking” (CLOVER, 1992, p. 53), as the cost of surviving is endless psychological and physical torture, followed by the phallicization of the Final Girl as

she must appropriate the killer's phallic weapon and address him on his terms. Her character development further highlights her gender fluidity, as "she transforms from the helpless child who is traditionally gendered feminine (passive, emotional, sensible) to an autonomous adult who is traditionally gendered masculine (active, resourceful, in control)" (HORVAT, 2018, p. 20).

2.4 VIEWER IDENTIFICATION

According to Clover (2015), cross-gender identification has only been explored regarding the identification of the female viewer with the male character. Using Mulvey's theory of the "male gaze," the author asks the following question: "But if it is so that all of us, male and female alike, are by these processes 'made to' identify with men and 'against' women, how are we then to explain the appeal to a largely male audience of a film genre that features a female victim-hero?" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 43). To better illustrate her argument, the author explains that insofar male figures are presented, none are quality material. The only viable male figures for male spectators to identify with are the boyfriends or schoolmates, who are usually underdeveloped and often die early. As for authoritarian figures of order, both parents and police officers always prove to be useless: they either do not believe the girl's cry for help or are too incompetent to effectively help her. The last option would be the killer, but he is visually hidden from us for most of the film. When we do finally see him, his figure is never appealing, as "he is commonly masked, fat, deformed, or dressed as a woman" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 44).

The Final Girl, then, seems to be the best choice for the spectator. We follow her from the beginning, and she is the only character to have any level of psychological development. She has all the previously mentioned qualities, which help her quickly realize that something is wrong, and it is through her point of view that we see the horrors of the story unfold. We follow her gaze as she encounters her dead friends, we are paralyzed when she faces the killer for the first time, and we are victorious when she defeats him (CLOVER, 2015). Still, Clover (2015) highlights how the camera sometimes works in a way as to make the viewer share the killer's look during the first part of the film. In fewer but significant moments, we see through his eyes and we hear his breathing; the unique soundtrack also alerts us of his presence. The author then asks us to momentarily accept that point of view equals identification, even though "the relation between camera point of view and the processes of viewer identification is poorly understood," as directors such as Steven Spielberg and Alfred Hitchcock have shot through the perspective of birds and sharks, indicating that some aspect of this relation might be "pro forma" (CLOVER,

2015, p. 45). Viewer identification, then, first sides with the killer and then shifts once the Final Girl is further developed (CLOVER, 2015, p. 45-46):

Our closeness to him wanes as our closeness to the Final Girl waxes—a shift underwritten by story line as well as camera position. By the end, point of view is hers: we are in the closet with her, watching with her eyes the knife blade pierce the door; in the room with her as the killer breaks through the window and grabs at her; in the car with her as the killer stabs through the convertible top, and so on. And with her, we become if not the killer of the killer then the agent of his expulsion from the narrative vision. If, during the film's course, we shifted our sympathies back and forth and dealt them out to other characters along the way, we belong in the end to the Final Girl; there is no alternative.

Dika (1990) further analyzes the point-of-view shot of the killer. Taking the shower scene from *Psycho* (1960) as a reference, the author explains that Hitchcock first shot from the perspective of the killer as we watch (from a figuratively congruent position with the killer) Marion in the shower; and then another shot identifies the reverse field of the filmed actions, showing us an outline of the killer's figure (from the victim's perspective) but keeping his identity hidden in the shadows. The opening scene in *Halloween* (1978), on the other hand, never shows the victim's perspective, keeping the identity of the killer completely secret but also failing to “verify the physical presence of the looker” (DIKA, 1990, p. 62). While this would appear to let the viewer completely identify with the killer, Dika argues that the opposite is true, as the lack of acknowledgement of the killer's identity figuratively puts the viewer in “a spatially congruent position with him but not in a narratively congruent one” (1990, p. 63).

Viewers, therefore, identify with the vision of the killer but not with his character because they do not know anything about him. By allowing the viewer to identify with the look but not with the looker, the film lets the viewer participate in the killer's voyeuristic action (investigate the woman) without carrying the same level of culpability or responsibility. Since the killer's identity, motivation, and intention are unknown, the viewer is incapable of identifying with him and, consequently, is not responsible for his actions (DIKA, 1990). This argument seems to further indicate that the Final Girl is indeed the main point of identification for the viewer of the slasher film, especially if we consider that the revelation of Michael's identity further frees the spectator from any responsibility. If *Psycho*'s revelation that the killer is actually Norman, a character whose frustrations we followed for the past hour, *Halloween*'s revelation is that the killer is an innocent-looking boy we had never seen up to this point. Norman's revelation is shocking, while Michael's is a “blank statement of fact” (DIKA, 1990, p. 65). Although audiences can still cheer the killer on in the beginning of the film, it appears that this is as deep as the connection gets.

Clover's argument follows, then, that if viewers can identify with both sexes, the sexes themselves should be interchangeable. Questioning the lack of better female killers and more male victims, the author indicates that the reason may lie on the issue of representation itself: killers are male and victims are female because "bodily fright derives not exclusively from repressed content, as Freud insisted, but also from the bodily manifestations of that content" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 47). In *Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess* (1991), Linda Williams states that, in *Halloween* (1978), Jamie Lee Curtis serves as "the more contemporary version of the terrorized woman victim" (p. 5), as the victim's suffering seems to have a more central role in relation to the spectacle of the monster. We see her crying, screaming, falling, and jumping, while Michael never speaks. After all, the figure of the damsel in distress only works if it is female.

The Final Girl, then, is feminine insofar as to act out the terrors inflicted upon her (through screams and cries), but not so much as to "disturb the structures of male competence and sexuality," working as a "congenial double for the adolescent male" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 51). By being spared for her good behavior, the Final Girl becomes active (becomes able to use violence) to the point of appropriating the phallic power to herself (e.g., taking the killer's weapon and using it against him) (WILLIAMS, 1991). For Clover (2015), this symbolic process of phallicization is what "solves the femininity problem" (p. 59): while classic horror films solved it by eliminating or replacing the female characters with masculine representatives (e.g., killing Marion halfway through *Psycho*), the slasher solves it by "regendering" the Final Girl instead of eliminating her: "we are, as an audience, in the end 'masculinized' by and through the very figure by and through whom we were earlier 'feminized'" (p. 59).

3 ANALYSIS

As we have demonstrated, the female victims of the classical slasher film occupy two major roles, namely, victim and Final Girl. *Halloween* (1978) originated the model and influenced all subsequent films of the genre. The victims are devalued because of their lack of vision (power) and are later punished for it, which also renders them liable to sexual objectification. Conversely, the Final Girl has the power of vision and is capable of moving the story forward, taking others under her investigative gaze. She is punished, however, exactly for possessing the gaze, and must endure endless psychological torture as she sees all of her friends dead. By the end of film, she is faced with the task of defeating the killer, usually through the symbolic process of “manning” herself and “unmanning” him (CLOVER, 2015).

The following analysis will occur in two stages. Firstly, we will analyze *Halloween* (1978) in detail to identify how the elements described in the previous section work within the filmic narrative. Then, we will conduct a comparative analysis between *Halloween* (1978) and *Halloween* (2018), drawing mostly from our conclusions in the first stage, to identify whether there has been any change in female representation in the slasher film regarding the characterization of the characters as victims or Final Girls.

3.1 HALLOWEEN (1978)

John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978) tells the story of child murderer Michael Myers, who, after spending 15 years in a mental facility, escapes and returns to Haddonfield, a town in the state of Illinois. There, he stalks and kills a group of teenagers until he eventually faces off with the Final Girl, Laurie Strode. In an honest attempt to make money, producer Irwin Yablans and director John Carpenter spawned a formula that would survive decades and still find its way to the movie screen more than 40 years later.

The film begins in 1963 with a wide shot of a house. The camera begins moving toward it and up to the front door. Through the door’s window frame, we see a boy and a girl making out, and the camera follows them to the living room. Peeking through the window, we now see them making out on the couch (Figure 8). There is a sudden noise, and the boy asks whether they are alone; the girl responds that Michael is somewhere in the house. The couple then goes upstairs to the bedroom of the girl’s parents, and the camera follows them outside the house. We see a shot of the upstairs window and, when the lights go out, an eerie score begins playing.

The camera goes inside the house, directly into the kitchen, and an arm suddenly pops on the screen. The arm opens a kitchen drawer and grabs a shining knife (Figure 9).

Figure 8 - Judith and her boyfriend making out on the couch



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:03:18).

Figure 9 - Point-of-view shot of the knife



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:04:24).

The spectators are now aware that they are sharing someone's view. The score becomes more menacing, and the view approaches the stairs. There, we see the boy coming down from the bedroom, putting on his T-shirt, and saying he has to leave. When he does so, we follow the view up to the second floor. On the top of the stairs, there is a clown mask on the floor; the hand picks it up and puts it on. The camera is now obscured by the mask, and we only see through the eye holes. There are clothes on the floor and a naked girl sitting on the dresser, brushing her hair. The camera approaches her and, when she finally turns toward it, she screams "Michael!?" (00:06:09). The spectators are now aware that they are sharing Michael's view,

though they still do not know who he is. We barely see Judith's face, and Michael begins to stab her. The eye holes focus on her breasts, which are partly covered by her hands, and shortly on her face. She moans and falls to the ground, dead, naked, and with blood all over her chest (Figure 10). Michael leaves the bedroom and exits the house through the main door as a car is arriving. Two figures approach the camera, and a male voice calls Michael's name. The camera shifts from point-of-view to objective shot and we see the male figure removing the clown mask from a child (dressed as a clown) holding a knife. The camera begins slowly moving away from the child, showing a wide shot of him, his parents, and the house. The scene ends.

Figure 10 - Judith dead on the floor



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:06:21).

The *Psycho*-inspired opening scene, as we have previously explained, fails to provide any deeper means of identification besides that of the view itself. The spectator participates in the scene without being responsible for it, as killer/spectator identification has not fully formed. Instead, what this scene actually offers us is a glimpse of the way the slasher film exploits voyeurism: by presenting “a thinly disguised re-enactment of the primal scene itself, or more often, to show its variant in the presentation of illicit sexuality or violence” (DIKA, 1990, p. 24). Dika further explains that although sex is consensual between the parents, the child views it as an act of violence; the slasher film literalizes this misunderstanding through actual acts of violence or illicit sex. When Michael returns to Haddonfield 15 years later, he will proceed to punish those who engage in “inappropriate” sexual conducts.

The following scene opens on October 30, 1978. Dr. Loomis is driving with a nurse to Smith's Grove Sanitarium, in Illinois, where they will transfer 21-year-old Michael Myers to the Hardin County courthouse to face trial for his crimes. When questioning the nurse's

experience in transporting patients, she answers that the only thing that bothers her is when they start speaking gibberish. Dr. Loomis says that she does not have to worry about it because Michael has not spoken in 15 years. When going over the instructions, Dr. Loomis refers to Michael as “it,” to which the nurse asks, “Don’t you think you could refer to ‘it’ as ‘him’?” (00:08:43). Dr. Loomis’ depersonalization of Michael is constant throughout the film, often referring to the killer as “pure evil.” This highlights Michael’s image as a powerful force rather than a relatable human, further distancing him from the spectator. When they arrive at Smith’s Grove Sanitarium, they see several patients wandering outside the facility. Dr. Loomis exits the car to find out what is happening while the nurse stays inside waiting. A man climbs on top of the car and, when she rolls down the window to investigate the noise, a hand suddenly grabs her face. Although both Dr. Loomis and the nurse are in a scary situation, it is the nurse we see being attacked, fighting, and screaming, while Dr. Loomis manages to maintain his calm and think fast throughout the entire ordeal. It is a classic damsel-in-distress situation.

The next day is Halloween and we are back to Haddonfield. The same eerie score from the opening scene is playing, and the camera is showing a wide shot of the street. It moves toward a house, from which we see a young girl leaving — she is Laurie Strode. Laurie is dressed in modest clothing: thick pantyhose, long skirt, turtleneck sweater and a cardigan (Figure 11).

Figure 11 - Laurie Strode, the Final Girl



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:12:12)

Her father, a real estate agent, asks her to drop off a set of keys at the old Myers’ house. We follow her to the house through a series of wide shots; halfway there, she meets Tommy, who we soon understand is a child she often babysits for and is going to babysit on Halloween

night. It is clear from the way she treats him that she enjoys, to some degree, her job as a babysitter. When Laurie tells Tommy that they are going to the Myers' house, Tommy tells her she is not supposed to go there because it is a spook house. As Laurie approaches the doorstep, the camera changes to a point-of-view shot from inside the house. When she leaves, a menacing score suddenly starts playing and a figure partly obscures our view — Michael has returned to the Terrible Place (Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Point-of-view shot of Laurie and Tommy



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:14:08)

Contrary to what Dika (1990) describes in her order of events, Laurie is ignoring a warning from a member of an even younger community. Dismissing Tommy's warnings that the house is haunted because something terrible happened in it as a child's irrational fear or mere urban legend, Laurie climbs the front steps and is on Michael's view for the first time. The film's voyeuristic theme is constant and conscious, as it pulls the spectator into an ambiguous game. What initially seems an objective shot is soon revealed to be the killer's view, forcing the spectator into a voyeuristic position that observes Laurie through Michael's eyes. While spectators might not be responsible for the killer's actions, they are definitely complicit, as they stand next to Michael, gazing at his victims. The first time we see through Laurie's perspective is in the classroom. She is looking out the window when she notices a strange figure (Michael) staring at her (Figures 13 and 14).

Figure 13 - Laurie looking out the window



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:16:15).

Figure 14 - Point-of-view shot of Michael



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:16:17).

Laurie, unlike her victim friends, has the power of vision and can take Michael under her gaze from the beginning. This immediately puts her at an advantage, subconsciously preparing her for the final battle. The teacher notices that Laurie is distracted and asks her a question regarding the class subject, which she answers without hesitation. Laurie, so far, has been characterized as the sweet, smart, reserved girl. She enjoys babysitting, dresses modestly, and walks around carrying a bunch of books. She is also watchful and actively uses the investigative gaze, thus forwarding the story through her point of view. After Laurie answers the question, she turns her gaze back to the window, but Michael is gone. We can hear the teacher's voice saying that "fate is immovable, like a mountain. It stands where man passes away. Fate never changes" (00:16:40). Laurie, it seems, is destined to confront Michael, just like her friends are destined to die at his hands.

After the Final Girl has been properly introduced, it is time to meet her friends. Under the chants of cheerleaders, we see Laurie leaving school with Lynda. The girl is smoking and talking about her obligations as a popular teenager: learning new cheers, getting her hair done, and going to the school dance. Laurie, on the other hand, has nothing to do except study and babysit. Annie suddenly joins the girls and express her frustration with her boyfriend, who was grounded and will not be able to meet her that night. Laurie says she thought Annie had babysitting duties, to which Lynda responds that Annie only babysits to have a place to meet her boyfriend and have sex. As was mentioned in the previous section, the victim of the slasher film is punished for neglecting “the responsibility of her tradition female role” (DIKA, 1990, p. 73), represented in this case by Annie’s neglect of her babysitting role. As we have pointed out, Laurie seems to enjoy taking care of Tommy, reinforcing her maternal characteristics, which, according to Horvat (2018), is also evident when Laurie tries to ease Tommy’s fears about the Myers’ house. Annie, in comparison, can be seen as self-absorbed and selfish for using her babysitting job as an opportunity to have sex with her boyfriend.

If the contrast between Laurie and her friends was not extreme enough, Laurie suddenly realizes that she forgot her Chemistry book at school. Lynda answers that “who needs books anyway? I don’t need books. I always forget all of my books. I mean, it doesn’t really matter if you have your books or not” (00:21:45). As Lynda goes on about not needing any books, Laurie’s attention is directed to the street. From her point of view, we see the same car from the school window passing by. Noticing Laurie’s expression, the girls follow her gaze. Although they can now see the car, they are not as perceptive as Laurie. Lynda naively asks if that is Devon Graham and says she thinks he is cute, and Annie boldly calls the driver a jerk and screams that “speed kills” (00:22:06). Michael abruptly stops the car, and the girls’ expressions change to worry (Figures 15 and 16). Laurie reprimands Annie, saying that one day she will get them in real trouble. This is the only shot from the girls’ point of view, and it only exists because it originated from Laurie. When Michael speeds away, Lynda and Annie go back to talking about their plans. Laurie’s use of the investigative gaze is in full display in this scene as she pays attention to her surroundings regardless of her friends’ shallow conversation, further contrasting their characterization.

Figure 15 - Point-of-view shot of Michael's car



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:22:11).

Figure 16 - Laurie, Lynda, and Annie looking at the car



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:22:14).

After dropping Lynda off at her house, Annie and Laurie continue walking. As if making sure viewers fully understand the point, the film further illustrates the victims' lack of vision as Annie looks down to her purse while Laurie looks forward and sees Michael. He is partly hiding behind a bush, staring at them. When Laurie tells Annie to look at Michael, he is already gone. Laurie tells her that it was the same man from the car, which leads Annie to confront him. However, as Annie does not possess the power of looking and, consequently, of moving the story forward, she does not find anyone when she looks behind the bush. Still, she pretends he is there and tells Laurie that the man wants to take her out. When Laurie approaches the bush and sees that he is actually gone, Annie says: "Poor Laurie! You scared another one away. It's tragic, you never go out. You must have a small fortune stashed from babysitting so much" (00:24:53). Laurie responds that is because guys think she is too smart.

When Laurie gets home and goes up to her bedroom, she looks out the window and unexpectedly sees Michael. He appears in one wide shot, standing in the backyard of her house and looking at her. The camera goes back to Laurie and, when it returns to the backyard, Michael is gone. Laurie, clearly scared, backs away and closes the window. The phone suddenly rings and, when she picks it up, she hears strange noises. When the phone rings again, Annie answers and says she had her mouth full, hence the strange noises. Laurie says she thought it was an obscene phone call, to which her friend responds, “Now you hear obscene chewing. You’re losing it, Laurie” (00:27:55). According to Harper (2004), Carpenter’s intention in characterizing Laurie as an awkward virgin was to approximate her to Michael in terms of dysfunction and repression. This scene seems to reinforce this statement, as Laurie’s sexual repression/frustration is evident to the point that even her mostly clueless friends notice it.

Later that day, Laurie is sitting on the corner of the street, holding a pumpkin while waiting for Annie to pick her up. She stares at the kids on the street dressed for Halloween with tenderness (Figure 17), just as she did earlier in the film with her neighbor’s children. Authors such as Horvat (2018) have noted that Laurie’s maternal instincts are highlighted through her interactions with Tommy, and this particular scene reinforces it. Annie finally arrives and, when Laurie enters the car, she hands her a marijuana cigarette. Laurie, naïve as she is, looks as if she has no idea what to do with it. As we have seen, doing drugs is part of the classical slasher film triad and is reserved for victims. Even though Laurie does try it out, she has a disgusted look on her face during the whole experience, plus a coughing fit (Figure 18). Just as any other teenager, she wants and tries to fit in, but doing drugs is clearly not for her.

Figure 17 - Laurie looking at the children



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:29:03).

Figure 18 - Laurie after smoking



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:32:01).

When Annie, referring to the telephone incident, asks if Laurie was still spooked, Laurie denies ever being spooked in the first place. She explains she saw someone standing on Mr. Riddle's backyard, to which Annie replies that it was probably Mr. Riddle himself. "He was watching me," (00:31:33) says Laurie, and Annie, surprised by her comment, says that he is 87 years-old, implying some sort of sexual disability. As we have explained, the slasher is not so much about the sexual act itself but about its displacement on other elements, such as violence and voyeurism. Laurie, smartly enough, answers that "he can still watch" (00:31:37). This conversation, as trivial as it may seem, sums up one of the major themes of the slasher: the pleasure in looking.

The subject changes to the school's dance. Laurie wants to know what Annie is going to wear, and Annie says she did not know Laurie thought about "things like that" (00:34:05). We have already addressed Laurie's nearly inexistent social life, especially in terms of dating, but she clearly looks upset in the scene. When Annie realizes it, she shifts her tone from ironic to comprehensive and encourages Laurie to ask someone to go to the prom with her. "You could do that, I couldn't" (00:34:20), says Laurie, positioning Annie in the role of the modern woman, who reverses gender roles and can ask boys out, and herself in the role of the conservative one, who could never dare to do such a thing. It could be argued that Laurie's *apparent* disinterest in dating, however, comes from a place of insecurity rather than moral high ground, which could better characterize the Final Girl in terms of social reclusiveness and virginity. This insecurity, in fact, is also self-sabotaging, as Laurie constantly dismisses signs of danger (after the backyard incident, she lays on her bed and tries to convince herself that the situation is ridiculous).

While the girls experience the last peaceful moments of their lives, Dr. Loomis continues his search for Michael. After arriving in Haddonfield and encountering an abandoned truck with Michael's sanitarium clothes in it, he heads to the city's cemetery in search of Judith Myers' (Michael's sister) grave. Upon discovering that the tombstone is missing, the doctor acknowledges that Michael has finally "came home", thus proving what he has been saying all along: Michael has plans to resume what he started 15 years ago. While the motive, so far, has not been completely clear, we learn in the 1981 sequel that Laurie is actually his sister, and he is back to Haddonfield to finish the job. This particular piece of information will not be considered for further analysis, since it is not available in the first film and is disproved in the 2018 sequel. From there, Dr. Loomis goes after Annie's father, Leigh Brackett, who is a police officer, to inform him of what is happening. Brackett is responding to a store robbery when Annie and Laurie, on their way to their babysitting houses, see him. They stop to talk to him, and he tells them that someone, probably kids, stole "some Halloween masks, a rope, and a couple of knives" (00:32:50). Although Dr. Loomis has not briefed him on the situation yet, we can already notice a certain level of dismissal in his behavior. He quickly attributed the robbery to kids, even though actual knives were stolen, and he failed to notice the smell of marijuana in the car (or at least failed to mention it). This will eventually turn into incompetence as the film progresses, a common characteristic of figures of authority in slasher films.

Annie and Laurie are approaching their destination. A wide shot shows the girls' car on the road, and the killer's score starts playing as his car appears behind them. The shot changes to point-of-view and we are now sharing the killer's view. He stops a few meters behind them and watches as Laurie exits the car and enters Tommy's house. He then continues following Annie to Lindsey's house, parks his car in a nearby street and walks to the house (the camera changes from point-of-view to objective shot). Michael is standing on the street, partly hidden by a tree, and observes as Lindsey's parents open the front door and leave. Like his parents 15 years ago, they left their daughter with a "misguided" teenager who was only looking for an opportunity to have sex (Figure 19).

Figure 19 - Michael staring at Lindsey's house



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:36:22).

After Dr. Loomis speaks with Brackett, both men head to the old Myers house, where we learn more about Michael's "personality." When they enter the house, they find a recently killed dog inside. Dr. Loomis immediately blames Michael, but Brackett thinks it must have been an animal, since a man could not possibly do such a thing. Not surprisingly, Dr. Loomis answers that Michael is not a man. Dr. Loomis is the only character capable of telling Michael's backstory, as he has known him for 15 years. He describes Michael as devoid of reason, conscience, and understanding of life or death, good or evil and right or wrong. He says that when he met him, Michael was a 6-year-old child with a "blank, pale, emotionless face, and the blackest of eyes. The devil's eyes" (00:39:22). Dr. Loomis spent the following years trying to understand him and then trying to keep him locked up, because, according to his assessment, he was pure evil. When Brackett says he wants to alert the radio and television stations, Dr. Loomis says it is best if his men keep their mouth shut and their eyes open. His plan is to wait for Michael at the original Terrible Place, as he is convinced Michael will return there. Although Dr. Loomis is extremely aware of the danger Michael represents, he is powerless to prevent the tragedies from unfolding.

At Tommy's house, Laurie is preparing for Halloween night. The phone suddenly rings, and she picks it up – it is Annie. While Laurie is occupied talking to Annie, Tommy looks out the window and sees a strange figure standing on Lindsey's porch. He tries to warn Laurie that the "boogeyman" is outside, but when she looks at the porch, Michael is gone. This moment in particular is very interesting because Laurie, up to this point, was always able to see Michael. This time, however, she has something else on her mind: Annie called to say that she spoke to Ben Tramer (the boy Laurie likes) and that he got really excited when she told him that Laurie

was attracted to him. Laurie becomes immediately embarrassed and says she cannot believe Annie did that. She dismisses Tommy's worries and turns her attention back to the phone; she desperately wants Annie to call the boy back and say she was joking. Laurie's watchfulness and investigative look, it seems, are instantly compromised when she turns her attention to "futile" subjects such as boys. The camera changes to a point-of-view-shot and, this time, we know it belongs to the killer because we can hear his breathing (Figure 20). He is looking at Annie, who is on the phone with Laurie. She spills some water on her clothes and, instead of just drying them with a towel, takes them off (Figure 1). As we have explained, female victims are devalued characters whose bodies are on display for audiences to gaze at through the view of the male characters, and this time is no different.

Figure 20 - Point-of-view shot of Annie



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:43:01).

Michael is still looking at Annie from the porch when he accidentally drops a vase. Annie hears the sound but quickly dismisses it. The family's dog starts barking at Michael and suddenly stops. For us, it is implied that Michael killed him, for Annie, he probably just found a "hot date" (00:44:14). Considering all the other scenes we have already analyzed, we could argue that Laurie would have investigated the noises, thus reinforcing her investigative gaze and her capacity to forward the story. Annie, on the other hand, lacks the power of vision and, therefore, of advancing the narrative. Her role, unlike Laurie's, is not to investigate, or suspect, or be watchful. Instead, she must meet her fate in blissful ignorance. While Annie is in the washing room being unknowingly observed by Michael, her boyfriend Paul calls Lindsey's house. The girl runs to the washing room to get Annie and finds her stuck in the window in an attempt to get out of the room (the door closed and got stuck). They go back to the house and

Annie finally speaks to her boyfriend: he wants to let her know that his parents left and, although he is grounded, they can now meet. The conversation is completely sexual: when Annie says she cannot pick him up because her clothes are in the wash, Paul answers that she “won’t need them” (00:50:03), to which she replies that this (sex) is all he ever thinks about. Paul says that that is all *she* always thinks about, and Annie says they should be doing “these things” instead of just talking about them.

Annie promptly dismisses her babysitting duties and drops Lindsey off at Tommy’s house, across the street, so she can go pick up Paul. Michael has been watching the whole time. In contrast, Laurie is in the kitchen, wearing an apron and carving up a pumpkin like the ideal babysitter (or mom) (Figure 21). Not only does she “honor” her babysitting duty, but she also becomes responsible for Annie’s. When Annie goes to her car and tries to open the door, it is locked. She goes back inside the house to grab the keys and, on her way back to the garage, stops in front of the hallway mirror to brush her hair. Distracted, she does not notice that when she tries to open the door without using the keys, this time it opens. When she enters the car, however, she immediately notices that the windshield is blurry. Annie has ignored all the signs up until now, only to start noticing them when it is already too late: Michael jumps from the back seat of the car and starts strangling her as the killer’s score begins playing. Annie’s gasps sound like moans and, after some time, Michael finally slashes her throat, killing her. Annie slowly falls back into the seat with her mouth open in a round shape (Figure 22). Although the scene is bloodless and Annie’s body is not on display, the context of her death, the symbolic moans and, ultimately, her face as she dies guarantee its sexual undertone.

Figure 21 - Laurie carving pumpkins



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:51:45).

Figure 22 - Annie after being strangled



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:53:31).

Lynda, on the other hand, is still alive. After Annie's death, the camera shows her in a car with her boyfriend Bob, drinking beer and talking about sex. This is apparently all couples have to talk about. They arrive at Lindsey's house, expecting to find Annie. Her absence, however, does not stop them from carrying on with their plan: much like Judith and her boyfriend, they start making out in the living room's couch. The camera moves away from them, showing a wide shot of the living room. As the spectator already suspected, Michael is standing there, watching (Figure 23). Lynda calls Laurie, who tells her that Annie went out to pick up Paul but should have been back by now. The new information excites the couple, who believe they have the house all to themselves, but worries Laurie. Lynda and Bob are too busy with each other to even consider that something might have happened to their friend, but Laurie's overall instincts tell her that something is not right. In fact, we could consider that Laurie's maternal instinct in particular play a role in this scene, as she fears for her friend's safety.

Figure 23 - Michael watching Lynda and Bob



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:00:38).

Lynda and Bob waste no time and readily go to the bedroom upstairs. The camera shows their clothes scattered on the floor and the couple on the bed, kissing and moaning. The phone rings and Bob stops, distracted. They decide to take the phone off the hook and resume their activity and, as they do so, Michael's shadow hovers over them. As soon as Bob is done, he gets off Lynda, exposing her breasts. She lights a cigarette, offers him one, and asks if he wants a beer – Bob says yes, assuming that she was offering to go get it. When he does not take the hint, Lynda says more affirmatively: “Go get me a beer” (01:04:14). As Dika (1990) suggests, Lynda's behavior in this scene could be considered masculine, or at least unfeminine, as traditional gender roles would dictate that she should get a beer for Bob, so much so that that was his initial thought. In the kitchen, Bob is startled by some noises. Although he is a victim, he is male, and therefore can use the investigative gaze (in a limited and, ultimately, pointless way). Believing that Lynda is pranking him, Bob starts opening the kitchen's cabinets to find her. When he opens the last one, Michael jumps out and starts strangling him. The entire scene is extremely dark, and Bob does not moan like Annie (Figure 24). When Michael finally stabs and kills him, he does not make a sound.

Figure 24 – Bob hanging from the wall after Michael stabbed him



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:05:37).

After Michael is done punishing Bob, he goes after Lynda. From the bedroom where she is waiting for her boyfriend, we see a point-of-view shot of the door slowly opening to reveal a figure in white sheets wearing Bob’s glasses. Like Bob, Lynda believes this is a prank. She tries talking to “Bob”, but when her comments fail to cause any reaction, she tries something else: she sits up and exposes her breasts, asking if he sees anything he likes (Figure 2). Nothing. The scene seems to suggest that Lynda is the most clueless of all, as she continues to make fun of the situation to the point of looking ridiculous. Dika (1990) used this scene to illustrate Lynda’s lack of value, from her fake orgasm to her overall “aggressive” attitude in bed. “Bob’s” silence finally annoys her to a point she quits her behavior and gets out of bed to call Laurie. She puts on her shirt but leaves it open, so her breasts are still partly exposed. A menacing score starts playing and we see the ghost figure approaching her from behind. When Laurie answers the phone, Michael grabs the chord from Lynda’s phone and starts choking her with it. Like Annie but unlike Bob, she begins moaning (gasping for air) with her mouth open in a round shape (Figure 25).

Figure 25- Michael killing Lynda



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:08:10).

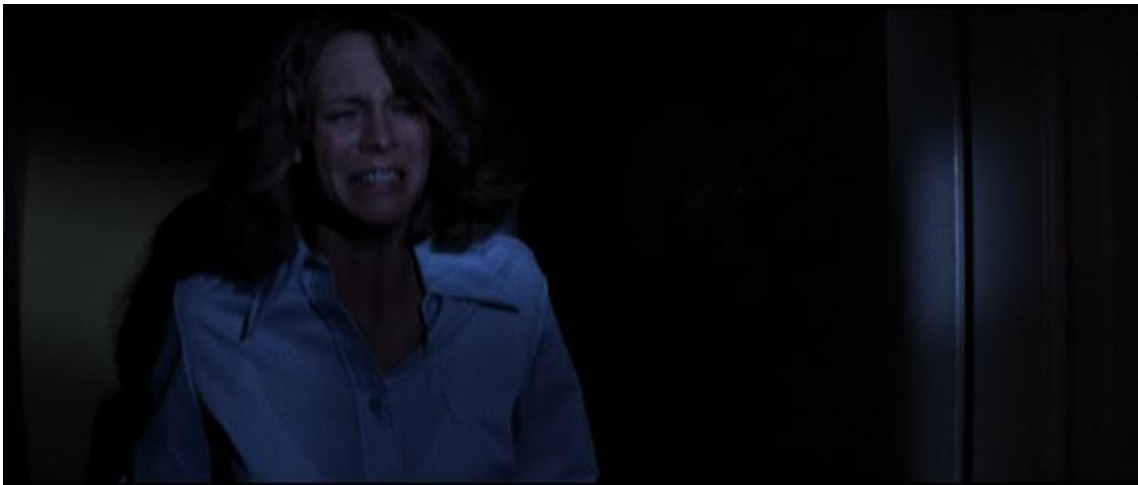
Although Laurie initially thinks the moans are a joke, she becomes worried when all sounds cease. She hangs up the phone, looks out the window, and sees a light turning on; when she calls back, no one answers. The score is growing more suspenseful, and Laurie clearly knows that something is wrong with her friends. She goes upstairs to check on the kids and then goes to Lindsey's house. Inside the house, all lights are off, and everything is quiet. Laurie is obviously worried but calls out to her friends and asks them to stop doing whatever they are doing – she thinks they are playing with her. She goes upstairs and enters the main bedroom. The camera shifts to her point-of-view shot and an electric score starts playing. Laurie sees Lynda lying on the bed under Judith Myers' tombstone, dead. We hear Laurie weeping and, when the camera turns back to her, we can see that she is terrified. She cowers in the corner of the bedroom's closet, shielding herself from the scene, when Bob's body suddenly falls from the ceiling (as if it were hanging from somewhere) right next to her. Laurie screams and backs away to the other side of the room. The closet's door next to her opens, and she sees Lynda's body. She runs away screaming and crying.

As Clover (2015) described, the Final Girl is cursed with the role of encountering her dead friends one by one. Laurie does not have time to process the situation, as she finds one body after the other and is soon after attacked. We experience terror through her face, which is in focus throughout the entire sequence. Williams' (1991) argument that Laurie is the modern version of the "terrorized woman victim" is evident in the last 15 minutes of the film as Laurie's predestined role to face Michael is finally fulfilled. The film's climax depends on the heroine's strong emotional response and, more importantly, on she effectively being female, since abject

terror on the part of the male character would not be as effective (or effective at all) (CLOVER, 2015). The trope of the “damsel in distress,” as the name suggests, is reserved for females.

Completely traumatized, Laurie leaves the bedroom but stops at the door to cry. Her surroundings are dark, but one convenient stream of light brightens her terrorized face (Figure 26). Michael emerges from the darkness of the door and slashes her arm. Laurie screams, turns around, and falls down the stairs (point-of-view shot). We are now in the position of victims. In an objective shot, we see her squirming and moaning at the bottom of the stairs. When Michael starts walking toward her, she gets up and runs. Laurie is smart – although in an altered state, she knows to close and lock the doors behind her and to never run into enclosed spaces. Laurie quickly gets out of the house and starts screaming for help in the street. Either because they are scared or because they think it is a Halloween prank, the neighbors ignore her. It would not have made much difference anyway, since we know that she is the one supposed to face him. Although Laurie has proven to be smarter than her female counterparts, she is still at Michael’s mercy. She is completely helpless when she reaches Tommy’s house and realizes she does not have the keys. She is forced to wait by the door, completely exposed, for Tommy to come down the stairs and open the door (Figure 27).

Figure 26 - Terrorized Laurie Strode



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:17:03).

Figure 27 - Laurie by Tommy's house



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:19:32).

Laurie is now inside the house, a place where she is at an advantage because of her dominance of the domestic sphere (HORVAT, 2018). As we have illustrated, Laurie's maternal instincts were explored on numerous occasions, from her apparent desire to have children to her protectiveness of Tommy. This is also reflected on her choice of weapons: a knitting needle and a hanger. The first time she uses one, she is hiding by the sofa with the knitting needle on her hand. When Michael jumps from behind and attacks her, she immediately sticks it in his neck. He falls back and drops his knife. Instead of keeping the weapon to herself, Laurie grabs his knife but quickly tosses it aside, thinking he is dead. Laurie clearly does not understand something Tommy already knows and promptly tells her: you cannot kill the boogeyman.

Laurie goes upstairs to check on the children and, as she is talking to Tommy, we see a shadow approaching her from behind. The children see Michael and scream, and Laurie runs with them to the bedroom. First making sure they are safe, she hides them in the bathroom and looks for a hiding place for herself. Showcasing her smart thinking, Laurie opens the bedroom's balcony door to mislead Michael into thinking she escaped through there and, instead, hides in the closet. Michael enters the bedroom, erect knife in hands, and looks for her. He quickly approaches the closet and manages to break the door. As he tries to stab her, Laurie grabs a hanger and turns it into a pointy weapon, which she uses to stab him in the eye. Michael drops the knife and, as he struggles to free himself from the broken closet door, Laurie grabs it and uses it to stab him. It seems, however, that she has not learned from her recent mistake and drops the knife near his body as soon as she exits the closet. She instructs the kids to go get help and stays behind, resting herself on the door's frame. As we have pointed out in other scenes,

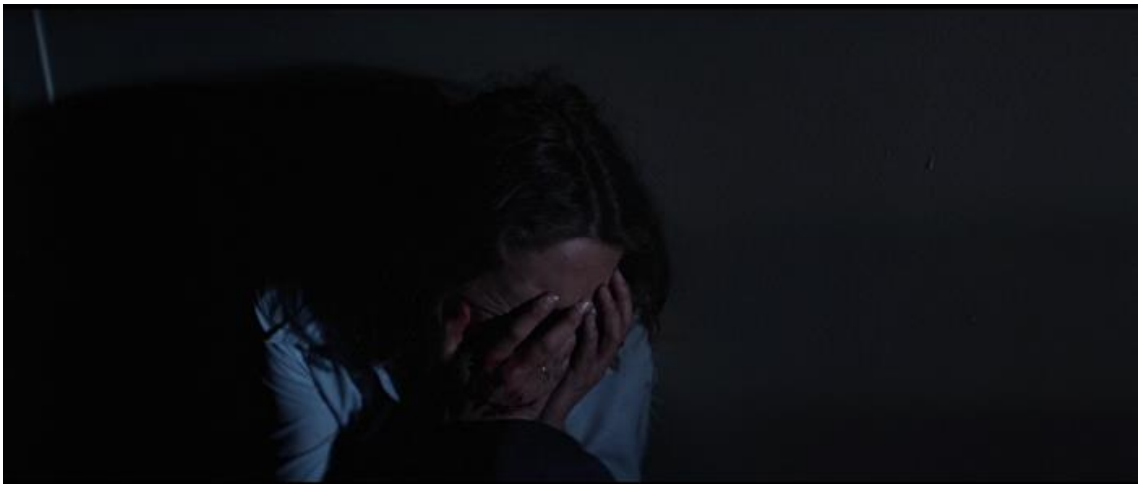
Laurie often tries to dismiss signs of danger and shut down her investigative look. Instead of keeping an eye on Michael, Laurie is facing away from him and fails to see him rising. Michael grabs her from behind and starts choking her.

Figure 28 - Michael's face



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:27:04).

Figure 29 - Laurie Strode eliminating the power of her gaze



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:28:21).

Luckily for her, Dr. Loomis had abandoned his post at the Myers' house after finding Michael's car in the neighborhood. He spent the rest of the night walking around the streets, looking for the killer, when he saw the children running away from the house and screaming. He enters the house and reaches the top of the stair as Laurie is being choked. In their struggle, Laurie pulls Michael's mask, revealing his deformed face (Figure 28). Although Laurie's power of the gaze is such that she is the only one capable of actually looking at him, she does not defeat him. Michael puts the mask back on and Dr. Loomis shoots him. Laurie is sitting on the

floor, crying, while Dr. Loomis keeps shooting at Michael until he falls from the bedroom's balcony. Thinking everything is over, "Laurie covers her mouth with her bloody hands and shuts her eyes, choosing to eliminate the power of her own gaze" (HORVAT, 2018, p. 26), this time, for good (Figure 29). Dr. Loomis walks to the balcony and looks down only to find that Michael is gone (Figures 30 and 31). We see a series of wide shots of the house and hear Michael's breathing: his view is omnipresent and is he is bound to return.

Figure 30 - Point-of-view shot of Tommy's backyard



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:28:03).

Figure 31 - Dr. Loomis realizing that Michael is gone



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:28:07).

Although Laurie is saved through male agency, "to focus on just who brings the killer down, the Final Girl or a male rescuer is [...] to miss the point" (CLOVER, 2015, p. 39). Having experienced the passage from childhood to adulthood, which "entails a shift from feminine to

masculine” (CLOVER, 2015, p. 50), all horrors cease as the Final Girl effectively becomes phallicized and we, as the audience, are masculinized.

This analysis was able to demonstrate how *Halloween* (1978) uses several resources to inform us of the killer’s presence, from the score to the point-of-view shots. These resources involve us in a voyeuristic exercise in which we anticipate events that are unknown to the victims. Through the killer’s perspective, the spectator gazes at devalued characters whose bodies are on display and are, therefore, expandable. The victims are punished for their attitude toward sex, while Laurie is elevated by her virginity and overall “properness.” By introducing characters that are a parody of what they represent (the “modern woman”) or who are incompetent in their jobs as saviors (police officers, parents) and a killer who is deformed and lacks other means of identification (besides point-of-view shots and score), the Final Girl presents herself as the primary point of identification for the spectator.

As discussed in the Theoretical Background section, pleasure in viewing is constructed primarily for the male spectator, so victims and Final Girl (to the extent her femininity is explored) alike function as the primary embodiment of fear for being female. As we will show in the next part of our analysis, this particular convention changed drastically in the modern slasher film.

3.2 HALLOWEEN (2018)

Although *Halloween* (1978) gained several sequels throughout the years, *Halloween* (2018) was written as the original film’s direct sequel. It backtracked some major information provided by the other films, such as the fact the Laurie was Michael’s sister, that she had (other) children and, more significantly, that she died. It was directed by David Gordon Green, but Jamie Lee Curtis returned to reprise her role as Laurie Strode, besides working as an executive producer alongside John Carpenter, who also produced the film’s score.

The plot of *Halloween* (2018) is quite similar to that of the first film. After spending 40 years in Smith’s Grove Sanitarium, Michael escapes and returns to Haddonfield to confront Laurie, who has been waiting for him all these years. The first film ended with Laurie eliminating the power of her gaze, but, as we will see, not only does she get it back, she fully exercises it. Tackling modern subjects such as the true crime phenomenon and podcasts, the film begins with two journalists, Dana and Aaron, visiting the sanitarium. Michael’s new psychiatrist, Dr. Sartain, accompanies them to the sanitarium’s courtyard, where the patients get their breath of fresh air, and they stop a few meters away from Michael. Impatient to get

closer to his subject, Aaron asks if he can approach Michael to get a sense of his awareness. Dr. Sartain tells him to make no mistake: Michael not only is aware, but he has also been watching them the whole time.

Michael's lack of speech is overcompensated by the power of his look. As we pointed out in the analysis of *Halloween* (1978), the film's final message is about Michael's omnipresence. Catering to the spectators' needs, Michael's movement originated mainly from his role as bearer of the look and forwarder of the story, especially considering that the opposite is not possible. Most characters were incapable of gazing back at him, so the spectator was only aware of him through his and Laurie's point of view. This time, Michael is shackled and on display for those with access to look at him. His face, however, is turned away from the characters and from the camera, not only reinforcing his role as the ultimate bearer of the gaze, but also as a supernatural force (Figure 32). The absence of a face with which the spectator can identify or at least be aware of further incapacitates him as a relatable character, which is in accordance with the first film. When Aaron removes the Halloween mask from his purse and shows it to Michael, Michael almost turns around to look at it. Aaron says, "You feel it, don't you, Michael?" (00:05:56), and the other patients in the courtyard start acting erratically. The mask, reunited with its owner, revives the evil power that has been kept dormant all these years.

Figure 32 - Dana and Aaron visit Michael at Smith's Grove Sanitarium



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:05:18).

The next stop in the journalists' itinerary is Laurie's house. They speak of Laurie as Michael's counterpart and question whether one monster has created another. In fact, Laurie is as close to Michael as she has ever been. If in *Halloween* (1978) they shared masculinity and femininity, they now share violence and isolation. Just like Michael, Laurie lives in a recluse

house surrounded by iron bars, barbed wire, and cameras, scared of the day her perpetrator would return. When the journalists arrive at her house, they offer her money for an interview and she lets them in. Just how justifiably paranoid Laurie is is illustrated by the “private property” plate on her fence and the four different locks on her front door.

The short conversation is enough to show us Laurie’s development. When she is questioned by Aaron on whether the boogeyman is real, she promptly asks him if *he* believes in it. Aaron says he believes in “Michael Myers, deranged serial killer” (00:12:08), but not in the boogeyman; Laurie says he should. If the boogeyman was once a child’s fear, it is now Laurie’s trauma, and if she was once an innocent, recluse teenager, she is now a grown woman with a story to tell. Twice divorced and in a rocky relationship with her daughter, Laurie describes herself as a basket case. It is clear that although she tried to move on, Michael’s presence has hovered over her entire life. The journalists proceed to ask her questions about the events of Halloween night, but when they realize she is not willing to talk about them, Dana changes the subject to Laurie’s daughter. She shamelessly asks how long it took to regain custody after the state claimed her an unfit mother. Laurie is shaken by the question but does not shy away: “I didn’t. But you already knew that” (00:13:27), she answers as she shows them the door. As a last effort, Aaron tells her that they saw him. He explains they tried but failed to talk to Michael and that she is the only person he would speak to. He then suggests that she sits down with him and tells him everything she has always wanted to say. What Aaron does not know is that Laurie is planning to meet Michael, just not to have a conversation.

The next scene introduces us to Laurie’s family. They are planning to celebrate the fact that Allyson, Laurie’s granddaughter, has joined the National Honor Society. When Allyson asks her mother, Karen, if she remembered to invite Laurie, Karen blatantly lies that she did, but that Laurie is not coming. Allyson is smart and does not believe her mother. When talking to her friends about it, she explains that her entire family freaks out during this time of the year (Halloween), and that the infamous night has defined Laurie’s life ever since. Were this the first instalment of a new slasher series, Allyson would probably be the Final Girl. She is the first of the young community to be introduced and, just like Laurie, she is smart and perceptive. The similarities, however, seem to go only this far. In complete opposition to Laurie, Allyson has a boyfriend and dresses in the exact same manner as her female friend, Vicky (Figure 33). As we have observed, the classical slasher film classifies characters as either valued or devalued according to their behavior: victims dressed more provocatively and had boyfriends while the Final Girl dressed conservatively and did not have a dating life. *Halloween* (2018), however, comes after a long list of slashers that have already perverted several of the genre’s tropes. In

the 1980's, Nancy (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*, 1984) had a boyfriend; in the 1990's, Sidney (*Scream*, 1996) took it one step further and lost her virginity.

Figure 33 - Dave, Vicky, and Allyson



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:16:29).

But this is not a new franchise, and Laurie is still the Final Girl. It appears, however, that her role is not bound by the same set of rules as before. If young Laurie's maternal instincts are what made her capable of protecting Tommy, old Laurie's trauma is what apparently rendered her an unfit mother. If young Laurie was school-focused, old Laurie tells her granddaughter to travel instead of going to college. If young Laurie was surrounded by friends, old Laurie is isolated from everyone, her family included. It appears that the Final Girl is removed from the tightly woven structure of the slasher film, and the new young community, as we will see, serves as a modern surrogate for the slasher tropes that we have discussed. It is important to remember that this film implies previous knowledge from the spectator of both the first film and slasher films in general. As Dika (1990, p. 29) discusses, the slasher film in general functions as a game in which the central goal is to answer the following questions: where is the killer and when will he attack? This happens through a series of conventionalized and predictable elements, such as type of shot (e.g., point-of-view), sounds (e.g., killer's breathing), and character classification (e.g. victim or Final Girl). The modern slasher, therefore, finds itself in a tricky situation: it must fulfill viewers' expectation while also subverting them. It has to maintain a certain level of conventionalized elements that are basic to the slasher formula and still appeal to an audience who is mostly removed from the political context of the 1970's and who has different values regarding sex.

The next scenes further illustrate the argument. We are introduced to Allyson's boyfriend, Cameron, and his friend Oscar. They are the typical slasher victims, superficial and mostly annoying, and the skilled spectator can spot them early on. The boyfriend, as we know, has a 40-year-old history of dying early in the film, but only after the goofy best friend. Paralleling the first film (Figures 13 and 14) and further playing with the spectator's awareness, Allyson is now the one looking out the window (Figure 34) while Laurie stands where Michael once stood (Figure 35). Is Allyson supposed to carry Laurie's burden just as Laurie has been carrying Michael's? When they meet outside to talk, Allyson tells Laurie that her hiding and preparation, which eventually cost her her family, were for nothing. Laurie answers that as long as the way she raised her daughter means that she is prepared "for the horrors of this world" (00:20:29), she can live with her daughter's hate. As Zhou (2019) observes, Michael "represents the fear and anxiety women sense when walking down the street on a dark night" (p. 22), and the 2018 film in particular addresses the way this knowledge is passed down from generations. Now, it becomes clearer that Laurie's maternal instincts did not go away but were rather adjusted to her new reality.

Figure 34 - Allyson looking out the window



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:19:23).

Figure 35 - Laurie standing outside Allyson's school



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:19:26).

A few hours before Michael's transfer, Laurie is preparing herself back at the house. We see her handling different guns and practicing target in several dummies in her backyard. When the time comes, she drives to the sanitarium and parks outside the garage where Michael is boarding the bus. Laurie looks upset and, fearing he will escape just like 40 years ago, she has a gun. When the bus leaves without any incidents, Laurie screams in relief. Taking advantage of the power of her gaze, Laurie actively seeks Michael and tries to stay one step ahead of him the whole time. She does not ignore signs or dismisses her investigative gaze; instead, she listens to a 40-year-old feeling that he would escape again. Afterwards, she decides to go the restaurant where her family is celebrating Allyson's achievement. After gulping down a glass of wine, Laurie sits down and starts crying. She says she saw "the Shape" and wanted to kill him. Her daughter and son-in-law seem to be more worried in getting her out of there than actually helping her, and Laurie leaves. Allyson is the only one to go after her and console her. In the parking lot, Karen (Laurie's daughter) tells Allyson that she is glad Allyson got to see that, as she never got to tell her about her childhood. Karen says she learned to shoot and fight when she was 8 years-old and that she spent years trying to get over the paranoia Laurie projected on her.

Laurie's paranoia, however, proves to be right when the sanitarium's bus crashes and Michael escapes. Free for the first time in 40 years, Michael seems to be retracing his steps. The first victims are a young boy and his father, who unfortunately came across the accident and decided to stop and look. When the dad fails to return to the car, probably having been dispatched off-screen, the boy decides to go look for him. He encounters Dr. Sartain inside the bus and, startled, accidentally shoots him. Scared, he runs back to the car. While he tries to start

the car, Michael jumps from the back seat and starts choking him, just like with Annie. Except there are no moans this time.

The journalists' next destination is Judith Myers' grave. Through a series of objective shots, we see them standing over her grave, describing her murder in graphic detail for their podcast as flashbacks from the original scene appear on the screen. Shortly after, we are made aware of Michael's presence through a close-up shot (Figure 36) in which he appears observing them from a distance. Determined to get his "identity" back, Michael follows them from the cemetery to a gas station and the bloodbath begins. As we have explained, the power of looking is reserved for Michael, as he gazes at others, and for Laurie, as she gazes at him. The other characters from the original film were never given the chance to return Michael's gaze because they lacked the power of looking. Dana's and Aaron's roles, however, are more complicated. The very nature of their job implies that they use the investigative gaze, and they choose to use it against Michael. What they fail to realize and will eventually cost their lives is that Michael is off limits.

Figure 36 - Michael observing Dana and Aaron at the cemetery



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:33:34).

At the gas station, the spectator has several blurry glimpses of Michael in the background, including when he arrives and parks right next to journalists (Figure 37) and when he kills two of the station's employees (Figure 38). The journalists, however, are completely oblivious to his presence. Dana is caught off guard by Michael when using the bathroom and, as soon as she realizes what is happening, she screams for help and evades the killer for a few seconds until Aaron comes to her rescue. When Aaron opens the door, he is first stunned by Michael's presence, but quickly hits him with a pipe. Michael barely flinches. He grabs Aaron

by the hair and repeatedly bashes his head against the bathroom stall where Dana is hiding and against the bathroom wall. Aaron suffers through most of the beating with only a few grunts. Dana, on the other hand, plays the role of the terrorized victim woman perfectly. She screams, kicks, and cries as we witness and feel her terror. As soon as Michael is done with Aaron, he enters the stall and grabs Dana by the neck, choking her to death while Aaron watches.

Figure 37 - Michael inside the car in the background



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:35:32).

Figure 38 - Michael killing someone in the background



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:36:18).

The film has clearly increased the element of gore. While *Halloween* (1978) was extremely subtle in its use of blood, *Halloween* (2018) has to fulfill the modern spectator's crave for it. The "perverse pleasure of film viewing," as Williams (1991) calls it, has long been displaced from the slasher film onto other genres or medias. The advancement of the Internet has, for the past 20 years, made it extremely easy to access graphic footage of fatal accidents

and murders online. Found footage films brought a whole new level of realism to cinema, inviting viewers to believe that what they are watching is real, and the emergence of the torture porn subgenre no longer entertained the chase of the kill and whether characters would survive, but rather how much torture they could endure. Although the argument that film viewers can satisfy their perverse pleasures elsewhere can seem contradictory, the fact is that not only do they expect the slasher film to still be gruesome, but they expect it to live up to the realistic standards found in snuff videos and torture porn films. When it was announced that the 2019 *Black Christmas* remake would be the first version of the film to not receive a R rating, but a PG-13 instead, fans were extremely annoyed by the news. Addressing the fact that the film is majorly directed at young women during the #MeToo era, writer April Wofe defended the rating on Twitter:

Here's the deal: We wrote it with an R in mind. When they did the test screenings, [it] was clear that this movie needed to be available to a younger female audience because the subject matter is timely. Also, I want to indoctrinate girls into horror. Doesn't make it any less vicious!⁶

Regarding gender roles, Dana was put in the classic position of damsel in distress while Aaron was her designated failed hero. She is the one whose terrorized face is on display during the killings (Figure 39), and Aaron's death, although more gruesome, is quicker and involves less psychological torture. Considering the characters have not engaged in any sexual activity, there is no doubt that their transgression is of another kind. The killers of slasher films have always eliminated those in their way regardless of their sexual behavior, but the extreme violence in the journalists' deaths seem to indicate that they are indeed being punished for something else. As already stated, the power of looking is not reserved for characters like them, yet their profession requires it. By appropriating the investigative gaze and actively searching for Michael, they are eventually punished for it, just like Laurie in the first film. They try to take him under their gaze in more than one occasion and, when they do finally face him, they suffer the ultimate consequence.

⁶<https://www.indiewire.com/2019/11/black-christmas-writer-defends-pg-13-rating-test-screenings-1202189408/>

Figure 39 - Dana's terrorized face



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:39:45).

When Laurie hears on the news that Michael has escaped, she promptly gets ahead of the situation. She locks all the doors and makes sure that all traps are working. She goes to her daughter's house and surprises them with a gun when they arrive; she wanted to know whether they were prepared in case of a break-in, and they failed. Her son-in-law Ray becomes angry and asks her to leave, arguing that it is his house and that he is perfectly capable of taking care of his family. What he fails to understand is that Laurie's behavior is a consequence of her trauma. Instead of dismissing the warning signs like she did when she was young, she is now preparing for every possible outcome and wants her family to be just as ready. She knows not to trust her safety in the hands of others and has taught her daughter the same. Although Laurie was rescued by a man in the first film, the long lists of slashers that came after *Halloween* emphasized how useless boyfriends, husbands, fathers, and police officers are when it comes to facing the killer.

It is finally Halloween night. The camera focuses on two children trick-or-treating when Michael suddenly runs into them. The killer's score starts playing. Michael enters the shed of the house in front of him and a point-of-view camera shows him grabbing a hammer. The camera changes to objective shot as Michael enters the house, showing a woman preparing food in the kitchen. She leaves the frame as Michael enters the kitchen and approaches her. Far from our view, we hear a gasp and a sudden strike. The strikes continue and we hear the woman grunting. After she has been killed, Michael drops the hammer and grabs a kitchen knife, his signature weapon. The camera follows him out of the kitchen, and we see the woman lying on a table, covered in blood. Still in objective shot, we follow Michael to the next house. We hear a woman inside talking on the phone. "I'll keep my doors locked" (00:47:36), she says, unaware

that Michael is already watching her through the front window. As she hangs up the phone, he enters through the back door. A wide shot shows her walking to the window where he was standing just a few seconds ago and Michael approaching her from behind. He grabs her by the hair, stabs her through the neck – knife lodged in the throat – and leaves the house.

The slaughtering of the two women appears to be completely random, and indeed it is. What we must consider is that the body count in slasher films has greatly increased over the decades. While the first film of the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* franchises displayed 6 and 10 kills in total, respectively, the last installment of each series had 17 and 25 kills. As discussed previously, the modern spectator expects a certain amount of gore and blood, and a practical way of delivering new and elaborate deaths is through flat, supporting characters whose development is unnecessary. More devalued than the Final Girl's friends – the classical slasher victim –, they do not have names, personalities, or even lines. Their sole purpose is to be killed off as soon as they appear, fulfilling the audience's expectations.

As Laurie prepares herself to confront Michael, Allyson, Cameron, and Oscar are having fun at their school's Halloween party. Although Allyson followed in her grandmothers' footsteps regarding school, her social life is closer to Lynda's and Annie's, Laurie's friends in the 1978 film. In another attempt at subverting tropes, Vicky, Allyson's closest friend, is the one to actually stay home babysitting. She tells Allyson that she and Cameron should drop by later and that Dave is already on his way with marijuana. Allyson answers that it is a school night and they should not smoke too much. Allyson and Vicky are the hybrid version of Laurie and her friends: they do not ignore their responsibilities (babysitting, not getting high on a school night), but they also date and have a busy social life. Vicky differs from Annie in one major aspect: although she is also meeting up with a boy (with whom she plans to share intimacy), she genuinely cares about the child she is babysitting. The 1978 film displays Annie as Lindsey's babysitter, who only takes the job so she can have a place to meet her boyfriend Paul.

Unfortunately, Vicky's hybridity is not enough to save her. As if sensing she is about to commit a sexual "transgression," Michael is already at the house waiting to kill her. Instantly devalued, she is submitted to Michael's gaze as he watches her from the backyard through a point-of-view shot of the kitchen window and we hear his breathing (Figure 40). When she takes the trash outside, Dave appears out of nowhere and startles her. They go inside and he shows her his new tattoo: "10/31/2018," a date they will remember for the rest of their lives. Dave and Vicky are kissing on the couch when she hears a noise and asks him to investigate it. As Dave is about to go upstairs, Julian (the boy being babysat) shows up and claims, just like

Tommy years ago, that the boogeyman is in the house. Although they clearly do not believe the child, Vicky says she will check it out. Julian is apprehensive and wants her to send Dave first, but Vicky convinces him saying that she is strong and will protect him by fighting off the boogeyman.

Figure 40 - Point-of-view shot of Vicky



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:53:42).

Vicky enters Julian's bedroom while he waits outside. We suddenly hear her "confronting" a man, and the camera zooms in on Julian, who looks terrified. Vicky's acting is convincing and, as Julian's expression grows more worried, so does ours. After a while, she jumps out of the bedroom and says "Gotcha" (00:56:40). Meanwhile, Dave is smoking at the backyard when he notices that the shed's door is open and decides to investigate it. The camera follows him, but stops for a few seconds on a clothesline (Figure 41), immediately evoking the clothesline scene from the first film (Figure 42) and playing with the spectator's expectation: is Michael there, watching? Back at the bedroom, Vicky is still trying to reassure Julian that there is no one in the room. As a last request, he asks her to close the closet's door. Vicky tries to, but something seems to be keeping the door from closing and, as she soon as she opens it to see what is is, the camera's angle changes and shows Michael inside the closet. He raises his knife and slashes Vicky's arm, making her fall. Michael raises his arm to stab her again, but she gets up and throws a chair at him.

Figure 41 - Clothesline in *Halloween* (2018)



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:57:13).

Figure 42 - Michael in *Halloween* (1978)



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:26:58).

Vicky runs out of the bedroom and, for a moment, we think she will escape. But when she slips and falls in the hallway, Michael grabs her legs and tries to drag her back to the bedroom. Like Dana, she calls her male counterpart for help. Dave is in the garage playing with a motorcycle, but quickly runs to her rescue. He enters the house, and the camera shows Vicky's terrified face in close-up (Figure 43). The next shot shows her holding on to the floor, scratching her nails, and squirming. Michael drags her back to the bedroom and repeatedly stabs her in the back. Vicky stops screaming. Dave is considering whether he should go to her rescue or not, but when everything goes quiet, he grabs Michael Myers' signature kitchen knife and runs upstairs.

Figure 43 - Vicky's terrorized face



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (00:58:50).

The police's radio station reports a domestic disturbance at 707 Meridian Avenue, and both Hawkins and Laurie (who has access to the police's radio station through piracy) speed off to the location. When Hawkins arrives at the scene, he follows the blood stains on the wall and on the stairs to Julian's bedroom. There, he sees a figure covered by a ghost-like white sheet, sitting on a chair next to the aquarium. He slowly approaches the figure and uncovers Vicky's dead body. Her face is hidden by her hair and her clothes are completely bloodstained (Figure 44). Hawkins gasps in surprise and Laurie hears him from outside the house. She looks up to the second floor windows and sees Michael in one of them. They stare at each other for a few seconds before Laurie shoots him, only to discover it was his reflection on a mirror. Inside the house, Michael crosses Julian's bedroom and Hawkins goes after him, but first finds Dave hanging from the wall on the first floor with a knife on his neck. Laurie and Hawkins meet outside, but Michael is gone.

Figure 44 - Vicky's body



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:02:10).

Vicky's and Dave's deaths emulate, in some aspects, Lynda's and Bob's from the first film. The ghost-like white sheet covering Vicky (Figure 45) is similar to the one Michael used to kill Lynda (Figure 25), and Dave, although killed off-screen, is found hanging from the wall by the knife on his neck (Figure 46) just like Bob hanged from the wall by the knife on his gut (Figure 24). The sexual "transgression," however, is not the same, since Vicky and Dave do not actually have sex. As a sort of "reward," they are granted more dignified deaths: Vicky gets to keep her clothes on and they are both killed off-screen (we only discover that Dave is dead after Hawkins finds him; as for Vicky, although the scene of her death is shown, the camera focuses on Michael). Another interesting aspect is that while Vicky gets to play the role of damsel in distress, she is also granted the capability of fighting for herself. Unlike Annie and Lynda, who were unaware of Michael's presence and were attacked from behind, Vicky was able to shortly take him under her gaze and fight him off. But just like the journalists, she suffered the ultimate consequence for it. The kills, however, are not as sexually motivated as in the first film.

Figure 45 - Vicky covered by the ghost-like white sheet



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:02:05).

Figure 46 - Dave's body



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:02:56).

As Dr. Sartain points out, Michael “only knows how to keep moving and to keep killing” (1:04:05), and he quickly moves on to his next target. Allyson and Oscar are on their way home after Allyson caught her boyfriend (Cameron) with another girl at the Halloween dance. She is venting to him about how Cameron makes her look like an idiot, and Oscar tells her that she deserves better. Misreading the situation as if Allyson were sending him signals, Oscar tries to kiss her. She brushes him off and says that her not being with Cameron anymore does not mean she wants to be with him and leaves him behind while he tries to justify his behavior by being drunk and horny. They had taken a short cut through their neighbors’ backyards, and as Oscar gets ready to continue his way home, he sees a figure on the lawn, mistaking it for the house owner. The backyard lights suddenly go out and, when they turn on again, the figure is now by his side (Figure 47). Oscar becomes agitated and says he is just leaving, but everything goes

dark again. When the lights turn back on, Michael strikes. Oscar screams and runs away, and the scene cuts to Allyson hearing his screams. Oscar runs and tries to jump over the house's gate but gets stuck by his costume's cape. Michael walks toward him and stabs him in the back. Allyson becomes suspicious of Oscar's silence and runs back to see if he is okay but finds him impaled by one of the gates's pointy ends. Michael steps into the frame and, upon seeing him, Allyson screams. Like young Laurie, she runs to the street and screams for help, but this time the neighbors come to her rescue – she does not have to face things by herself. They call the police and Hawkins, accompanied by Dr. Sartain, take her to Laurie's house.

Figure 47 -Point-of-view shot of Michael's silhouette



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:10:35).

Laurie, Karen, and Ray are already at Laurie's house, waiting for Allyson to arrive. They go down to Laurie's basement, which is constructed underneath a secret passage in the kitchen and is stacked with food and, more importantly, several guns (Figure 48). She hands a revolver to Ray and a shotgun to Karen and grabs a shotgun for herself. Armed, they now wait for Michael. On their way to Laurie's house, Hawkins, Allyson, and Dr. Sartain encounter Michael waking on the street. Hawkins runs him over and he and Dr. Sartain get out of the car to check if he is dead. Hawkins says he wants to shoot Michael in the head, but Dr. Sartain stops him by stabbing him in the neck. He then removes Michael's mask and puts it on himself. He drags Michael, who is unconscious, to the police car and places him on the backseat next to Allyson. Although Michael is not wearing his mask, the camera never shows his face, and Allyson completely avoids looking at him. It has now become clear that Dr. Sartain's motives are driven by his wish to understand Michael. All the years he spent studying Michael led him to theorize that Michael's and Laurie's fear of becoming prey and ensuing predatory behavior

is what has kept them alive this whole time, and he wants to see how they react to each other in the flesh. The notion that Laurie and Michael are “different sides of the same coin” is further explored in the last 30 minutes of the film.

Figure 48 - Laurie's arsenal



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:14:19).

Another reason why Dr. Sartain wants to see Michael in an “uncontrolled environment” (loose on Halloween night) is the fact that he has never heard Michael speaking. Allyson quickly uses that information to her advantage and lies that Michael has spoken one word to her. Dr. Sartain asks what word it was, but Allyson says she will only tell him if he lets her go. Dr. Sartain’s curiosity gets the best of him and he questions whether Michael said his sister’s name. When he pronounces the name “Judith,” we suddenly hear Michael’s breathing and see his hand moving. It is as if, just like the mask, Judith’s name carries some sort of powerful trigger. Michael immediately regains consciousness and kicks the back of Dr. Sartain’s seat, pressing him against the front of the car. Although Allyson is by his side, Dr. Sartain is the only target of Michael’s rage, who proceeds to drag him out of the car while Allyson seizes the opportunity to escape. Outside, Dr. Sartain looks at Michael and asks him to say one word. Michael responds by smashing his head with his foot, which we see in graphic detail. The subplot of Dr. Sartain’s hidden motives is in accordance with the journalists’ wish to understand Michael as a human being. Dana, Aaron, and Dr. Sartain disregard Laurie’s suffering because they want a glimpse of Michael’s mind. *Halloween* (2018), however, never fails to remind them that this is Laurie’s story by punishing these characters and focusing on Laurie’s trauma, besides returning Michael to the position of incarnate evil: “Michael Myers murdered five

people and he is a human being we need to understand?” (00:12:46), Laurie asks early in the film.

At Laurie’s house, Laurie is preparing for Michael’s arrival. Ray is by himself in the living room when he notices the police’s car on the security cameras. He grabs the revolver and goes outside to see if they found Allyson. Upon no reply, he approaches the car and opens the driver’s door, only to find a dead police officer with his colleague’s severed head on his lap. Ray, completely shocked by the image, fails to notice Michael approaching him from behind and is choked to death. As we described earlier in the analysis, Ray was convinced that he could take care of his family. Instead of listening to the one person who had faced Michael once before, he disregarded Laurie’s precautions as baseless paranoia. In the end, Ray (and the police officers, who are also quickly dispatched) proves to be just as useless as most males in the history of the slasher film, and Laurie knew better than to leave her daughter’s safety in his hands. As Ray is being choked, he accidentally fires a shot from his gun. When Laurie and Karen hear it, Laurie heads to the first floor and calls out Ray’s name. Michael hears her voice and turns toward it; Laurie sees him outside through the door’s glass. She immediately locks the door and tells Karen to go downstairs to the basement. Although Karen might have ignored Laurie’s warnings all these years, her face now says she believes them. They look at each other as if saying goodbye, and Karen locks herself in the basement.

What the 2018 film shows us is that Laurie has tried her best to stay ahead of Michael and to not be caught off guard like 40 years ago, monitoring his every location and turning her house into a giant trap. The last 20 minutes of the film perfectly illustrate their dynamic, as both become prey and predator. The journalists question in the beginning of the film whether one monster had created another. I would argue the contrary: Laurie’s humanity is highlighted as we understand that she spent her entire life trapped in her trauma, trying to make sure that she and her family are safe. Her protectiveness of her daughter was not a result of her being an unfit mother, but rather of unconditional love: she sacrificed their relationship for Karen’s safety. Distrusting the state’s capacity to keep Michael locked up for the rest of his life, Laurie prayed for his escape so she could kill him and finally put an end to her nightmare. For the sake of comparison, in *Scream 3* (2000), final girl Sidney (Neve Campbell) changes her name and isolates herself in a location unknown to all her friends. She works as a crisis counselor from her home, helping women who are victims of abuse. After having to face another round of Ghostfaces (the franchise’s killer), the film ends in an extremely positive note, with Sidney and her friends happy and free – that is, at least until the announcement of *Scream 4*. *Halloween* (2018) has a similar approach to trauma in terms of self-isolation, but Laurie’s perpetrator has

been the same all along. While Sidney always manages to kill her (very human) aggressors, Laurie has never felt the peace of knowing her tormentor is actually dead.

The final confrontation begins with Laurie waiting by the front door, trying to locate Michael outside. He breaks the door's glass and grabs Laurie's head, smashing it several times against the door, and then places his hand on her mouth and raises her from the ground. Laurie, struggling to breath, raises her shotgun and shoots Michael's hand, blowing off two of his fingers. We see alternate scenes of Karen in the basement, screaming for her mother. She is shown pacing around and crying with a terrified look on her face. The basement's passage begins to slowly open, and Karen readily points her shotgun to the entrance. It is Laurie. She joins her daughter in the basement and uses the switch to light up all external lights (Figure 49). Michael has thrived in the dark, hiding in the shadows and approaching his victims from behind, and Laurie takes that advantage away from him. As mother and daughter hear Michael entering the house, Laurie looks at Karen and says, "I was wrong to raise you the way I did, but at least I can protect you. Nothing will happen to you" (1:26:56). We believe her.

Figure 49 - External area of Laurie's house



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:26:33).

The final confrontation differs from the first film from the beginning, as Michael must address Laurie on her terms. Now, he is the one entering the house, and she is the one waiting for him inside. Just like in Tommy's house, Laurie has the advantage of being familiar with her surroundings, except this time they are equipped with traps and guns rather than knitting needles and hangers. As Brunet (2020) observes, Michael "must navigate the house that Laurie and her daughter (prior to being taken by Social Services) constructed as an elaborate trap" (p. 54) for him. Laurie and Michael begin a game of "cat and mouse" in the shadows, as Michael hides

and Laurie goes after him. As we will see, she is the one to investigate closets and balconies, and Michael is the one to take the weapons from her. They face each other as equals in their willingness to use violence, but “although Laurie sometimes uses Michael’s tricks against him, she is not forced to the emotionless, impersonal, and compulsive depths of his monstrosity,” she is rather “driven by a desire to protect herself and her loved ones, and every action she has taken in the past forty years has been informed by this desire” (BRUNET, 2020, p. 55-56).

By hiding in the basement and, therefore, being deprived of their view, Karen and Laurie listen to Michael’s footsteps to track his location. Moments before Laurie decides it is time for *her* to go after him, a powerful scene shows Laurie and Karen holding hands (Figure 50). Laurie prepared herself to face Michael on her own, just like 40 years ago, and Ray’s and Karen’s dismissal of her warnings further reinforced this notion. Now, she does not realize that her daughter is by her side and that she might not have to face Michael alone. She lets Karen’s hand go, leaving her behind.

Figure 50 - Laurie and Karen holding hands



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:27:51).

Laurie goes upstairs and begins her active hunt for Michael. In yet another nod to the first film, the first location Laurie investigates is a closet, further playing with the possibility that their roles are reversed. She opens the closet’s door, but there is no one inside. Laurie continues searching for him in every room of her house. Once she clears a room, she presses a button that automatically locks the door, preventing Michael from hiding there. Moving on to the final floor, she enters her bedroom, which is incredibly similar to the bedroom in Tommy’s house: there is a balcony and, on the other side of the room, a closet. In fact, there is even a model of Tommy’s house in the corner of the room. She points her shotgun and flashlight to

the manequins stored in the bedroom (that she uses for target practicing) and Michael jumps from behind one of them. He grabs Laurie's shotgun and suffocates her with it, but she quickly frees herself. She grabs a hunting knife hidden in her trousers and jabs at him, but Michael once again takes the weapon from her and stabs her with it. He proceeds to grab Laurie by the neck and throws her off the balcony. Allyson enters the house in this exact moment, and Michael reacts to the door's noise by looking back. When he turns around, Laurie is no longer there (Figures 51 and 52): just like Michael (Figure 30), she has become indestructible.

Figure 51 - Michael realizing that Laurie's gone



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:34:11).

Figure 52 - Point-of-view shot of Laurie's backyard



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:34:15).

Karen, hearing her daughter's voice, opens the basement's passage for her and they both hide as Michael descends the stairs. Once he realizes where they are hiding, he grabs the fireplace poker and tries breaking the basement's passage open. Karen looks at the guns hanging from the basement wall and sees her initials carved in one of them (Figure 53). The look on her

face indicates that she does not want to use it, but knows it is their only chance of survival (Figure 54). The score becomes more intense and prepares us for what is about to happen as Karen takes her childhood gun. She tells her daughter to stay back and points the shotgun at the basement's entrance. Michael finally breaks the entrance open but stays out of frame. Instead, the camera shows Karen's face in close-up: she is crying and looks completely terrified. As time passes and Michael fails to show himself, Karen's hands begin shaking and she seems to lose her courage. Finally, she breaks down and calls out to her mother for help. "I can't do it. I'm sorry, I can't do it" (01:37:09), she says as she lowers her gun. Michael, thinking she has finally given up, seizes the moment to attack, but as soon as Karen lays her eyes on him, she completely recomposes herself and puts on a serious face (Figure 55). "Gotcha" (01:37:15), she says right before shooting him in the face.

Figure 53 - Karen's childhood gun



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:36:16).

Figure 54 - Karen looking at her gun



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:36:19).

Figure 55 - Karen after shooting Michael



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:37:20).

Karen's manipulation of her emotions is one of the best examples of how the film subverts classic tropes. Since the beginning, she is characterized as someone who is incapable of dealing with a threat as poignant as Michael to a point we expect her to eventually die. She ignores her mother's concerns and dismisses the need for personal protection. At Laurie's house, she is justifiably scared for the safety of her mother and her daughter, but these moments of genuine fear in which she cries and trembles make us (purposefully, we have learned) see her as weak. When she sees her childhood gun on the wall, however, a switch turns in her head and she remembers all the training she received as a child. The truth is that Karen has both the ability and capacity to confront Michael, and Laurie was right to say that nothing bad would happen to her. Laurie, Karen, and Allyson are all motivated by the wish to protect each other and they do not depend on anyone else to do so. The difference, however, is that they do not have to do it alone. One of the key characteristics of the classical Final Girl is that she is the *sole* survivor of the killer's bloodbath (as it is indicated by the term), which is a consequence of her valued status. By "allowing" the three women to survive, the film automatically implicates that something has changed regarding the classification of female characters. As Brunet (2020, p. 50) observes, *Halloween* (2018) refuses to perpetuate the standards that deemed her worthy of survival and condemned her friends to death

by not requiring Laurie, Karen, or Allyson to stand on their own against Michael and, by extension, refusing to elevate one expression of womanhood or femininity over

another. The Strode women's bond as grandmother, mother, and granddaughter is key to their survival, but their reliance on one another does not stem from an individual weakness in any of them.

The author's claim that the film does not "elevate one expression of womanhood or femininity over another" is evident through the way with each Strode woman deals with the situation. While Laurie kept track of Michael and actively went after him, Karen ignored the severity of the situation until she had to directly deal with it. As for Allyson, she is constructed from a more interstitial approach: we see her running, falling, crying, and being captured but also actively fighting back and standing her ground. She is not as passive as young Laurie, but she is not as resourceful as *A Nightmare on Elm Street*'s Nancy or *Scream*'s Sidney. The same extends to Dana and Vicky. Although both women are placed in the role of damsels in distress and fatally punished by Michael, the sexual implication in their deaths is either minimal or nonexistent. In addition, they die for the exact same reason as their male counterparts: Dana and Aaron are killed for going after Michael and being in his way, and it could be argued that Vicky and Dave were a means to increase Michael's body count while also alluding to a classical trope. The fact that they die shortly after making out on the couch cannot be ignored, but by keeping them from actually having sex, the film seems to suggest that their deaths might not be related to the old valued/devalued character system.

Figure 56 - Laurie hiding in the shadows



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:37:23).

After being shot, Michael falls and the camera zooms in on the darkness behind him. Laurie's face comes into focus and she raises his signature weapon against him, stabbing him in the back (Figure 56). They fight for a few seconds until Laurie kicks him down the basement

stairs. Allyson and Karen run out of the basement but, before Karen is completely free, Michael grabs her foot. Allyson searches the area around her and finds the knife Laurie used on Michael. She grabs it and repeatedly stabs him with it. Michael lets Karen go, and Laurie triggers one of her devices, trapping him in the basement. Laurie turns on the gas, and the camera shows that the pipes in the basement are exposed. Michael is standing on the stairs, staring at them as Karen explains to Allyson that Laurie's house is a trap rather than a cage. Laurie lights a flare gun and, before throwing it in the basement, says goodbye to Michael. The three generations of women look as the flames consume him (Figures 57 and 58).

Figure 57 - Karen, Laurie, and Allyson looking at Michael



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:39:08).

Figure 58 - Michael trapped in the basement, consumed by fire



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:39:17).

The flames spread to the other rooms as the camera reveals several exposed pipes throughout the house. The sequence ends in Laurie's bedroom, showing the model of Tommy's house burning down, signalling that their story has finally come full circle as both house and

Michael apparently turn to ashes. The Strode women escape and ask a driver for help; Allyson turns around and looks at the house one last time. The next scene shows that the basement is completely on fire, but Michael is nowhere to be seen. We do not hear his breathing. At first, this sequence seems to work in complete opposition to the first film: if *Halloween's* final message in 1978 is that Michael cannot be defeated, the 2018 movie apparently points to another direction. The film ends with mother, daughter, and granddaughter in the back of a pickup truck, being led to safety (Figure 59). They look exhausted and angry, but they are also looking forward. The expression on their face tells us that they went to hell and back and that they could do it again. The camera zooms in on Allyson, and the last shot of the film is of Michael's bloody knife in her hand (Figure 60).

Figure 59 - Karen, Laurie, and Allyson being led to safety



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:40:30).

Figure 60 - Allyson holding Michael's knife



Source: Digital copy of *Halloween* (01:40:39).

Once the credits are over, however, we finally hear Michael's breathing. Stevens (2019) writes that although *Halloween* "represents a turn toward a more critical depiction of female trauma", the ending suggests "that the victimization is far from over; Michael's breathing suggests further trauma of not only one, but three final girls, as Laurie, her daughter, and her granddaughter have survived Michael's attack" (p. 35). Having fully resignified the Final Girl, *Halloween* (2018) will continue to explore the roles of its now three heroines in the upcoming film *Halloween Kills* (2022).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Halloween Kills (2022) is set to be released next year, and some promotional material has already been released. A photo⁷ shows Michael standing on the porch of the burning house, holding the fireplace poker, and it appears to be raining. A 32-second clip⁸ shows the aftermath of the previous film: the Strode women are in the back of the pickup truck when several firetrucks are seen heading toward Laurie's house. Laurie snaps out of her cathartic state and screams at them to let the house burn. Another 30-second clip, released by John Carpenter on his Twitter account on October 29, 2020⁹, shows Michael's bandaged hand picking up his mask as we hear Laurie's voice saying that "next Halloween, when the sun sets, and someone is alone... he kills." A few random snippets show that the Strode women will be back, and that this time the entire town might be after Michael.

Halloween (1978), along with the other slashers released in the 1970s, originated the tropes the genre would become known for. Although on the surface it seemed to approach gender in a seemingly straightforward manner, several scholars soon pointed out the fact that the sole survivor was a girl. Clover (2015) further elaborated this notion by conceptualizing the Final Girl and implying that viewer identification happened in two different instances, as spectators first sided with the killer and then with the Final Girl. This shift also entailed the gender fluidity of the character, with the audience first being "feminized" by Laurie's struggles and then "masculinized" by her phallicization and consequent triumph.

The sequel, at first, differs in some major aspects: not only do we not share the killer's view in the opening scene, we partly take him under our gaze while he is shackled and exposed. In a seemingly reversion of values, the spectacle of the monster is, for the first time, no longer second to the spectacle of the victim. I would argue that viewer identification regarding the character of Michael is a little more complicated: if, in the first film, his character was a novelty whose actions were unknown to the audience, in the sequel he has already reached cult status. The figure of Michael Myers is, arguably more than the figure of Laurie Strode, larger than life. As much as we want to see Laurie freed from the dangers that Michael represents, we know that there cannot be one without the other. If, at first, we are glad to see Michael paying for his

⁷ <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/news/halloween-kills-is-about-paranoia-misinformation-and-crowd-panic-exclusive-image/>

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHhZDYVoV7w&ab_channel=UniversalPictures

⁹ <https://twitter.com/TheHorrorMaster/status/1321940339599372293>

crimes, we grow increasingly excited as he escapes from the sanitarium and, in one of the most climatic scenes of the film, reclaims his mask.

On the other hand, this excitement is heavily underlied by the expectation of seeing Laurie effectively defeat him, as with each character Michael slays, the closer he is to getting to her. Carpenter's *Halloween* took mythical proportions by featuring a superhuman killer against a seemingly helpless adolescent who defended herself with improvised weapons; as the logic goes, Green's *Halloween* was headed to the same direction and beyond, as Laurie was more prepared than ever. By introducing Laurie as a traumatized character who has waited her entire life to face Michael on her grounds, the narrative of the sequel is, from the start, constructed around this anticipation. Our identification, then, is dishonest: we cheer Michael on *just* so we can cheer Laurie in the end.

Overall, *Halloween* (2018) still adheres to the basic formula of the slasher genre, but with a more elaborate narrative structure by including flashbacks, alternate sequences, and previous knowledge by the spectator. The "spectacle of the monster," as Williams (1991) calls it, is still mostly second to the spectacle of the victim (Figures 39 and 43), but the sexual motivation in their punishment is either minimal or nonexistent. Female victims are still damsels in distress, and male characters are still failed heroes, but gender dynamics is not as originally defined. We can infer from the fact that Dave was killed off-screen and found with the knife he grabbed for protection lodged in his throat (Figure 46) that he was far from posing a threat to Michael. Aaron, too, stood no chance: he was subdued as soon as he struck Michael and suffered a horrible death. On the other hand, Vicky and Dana confronted Michael face to face and put on a fight instead of being attacked from behind and dying over the sounds of moans.

As soon as Michael escapes the sanitarium, he is on a mission. The victims are either killed because they are on his way or as a means to increase the film overall body count. The young community's behavior is far from being "promiscuous," as they date and might even be sexually curious, but their interest in sex does not interfere in their obligations (Vicky does not shirk her babysitter role). Not only that, but their overall attitude toward sex is in accordance with today's standards and is not judged or explored by the film. Secondary characters are introduced and explored for their exapandability, which is also a direct result of the film's bigger budget in comparison to the first film.

By resignifying the victim, therefore, the film resignifies the Final Girl. Although Laurie is clearly still the central point of identification for the spectator, this process happens out of recognition rather than behavioral value. She is the one who had to face Michael 40 years ago,

and she is the one who has to face him again. She is narratively valued because this is her story, not because she holds some moral high ground over the other characters. In fact, Laurie is no longer an honorary student, or even an easily embarrassed adolescent, and has proven to be difficult to deal with. She is characterized as a flawed character whose fears alienated her from other people, which renders her even more relatable than in the first film.

Laurie's transformation from the "helpless child who is traditionally gendered feminine (passive, emotional, sensible) to an autonomous adult who is traditionally gendered masculine (active, resourceful, in control)" (HORVAT, 2018, p. 20) can be understood in literal terms if we consider that she indeed transformed from an adolescent (1978) into an adult (2018) who is *extremely* active, *extremely* resourceful, and as in control as she can be. She has appropriated and extended to others the violence that was so firmly kept from her in the first film. As Dika (1981) observed, young Laurie *can* use violence, but she does so only marginally, often dropping the knife shortly after using it. The problem here lies on whether this means that the symbolic process of phallicization experienced in the first film was simply extended to the sequel or whether traditional roles have also been resignified according to modern standards.

Horvat (2018) argues that if we consider violence to be an intrinsically male characteristic, we further narrow the "already restrictive boundaries of acceptable expression of feminine rage" (p. 20). If we deeply analyze the workings of the slasher film, we can reach the conclusion that violence is, more likely, required to deal with a superhuman killer. Young Laurie managed to evade Michael for a few minutes, but it was ultimately Dr. Loomis' gun that brought him down. Not only that, but in Clover's own words, "all phallic symbols are not equal, and a hands-on knifing answers [...] in a way that a shooting [...] does not" (2015, p. 32). The killer's weapon is seen as a phallic extension of himself, and when the Final Girl appropriates his weapon and uses it against him, she symbolically castrates him. Laurie, this time, uses both strength and tactic through a symbol that is rarely, or never, seen in the killer's hand. The symbolic castration still happens, as Michael is constantly stripped of his phallic symbols (e.g., when Dr. Sartain removes his mask or when Laurie attacks him with his knife), ultimately by Allyson, the Final Girl's granddaughter (Figure 60). But the Final Girls are not necessarily phallicized through this process.

The truth is that Laurie does not *need* to meet Michael on his grounds. As we have demonstrated, she has an arsenal of weapons at her disposal, combined with several elaborate traps that she set throughout her house. If, originally, "the emotional terrain of the slasher film [was] pretechnological," in which "victims sometimes avail themselves of firearms, but like telephones, fire alarms, elevators, doorbells, and car engines, guns fail in a pinch" (CLOVER,

2015, p. 31), this is no longer the case. Laurie has incorporated the legacy of several other Final Girls that came after her, from Nancy to Sidney and from Erin (*You're Next*, 2013) to Maddie (*Hush*, 2016). They have again and again defeated their assailants with both wit and violence, and they have all done in their own terms (Maddie, in particular, is a very interesting example: she is a writer who lost her hearing and is currently isolated in a cabin. When a masked killer sees in her the perfect victim, she outsmarts him using aspects related to her other senses as an advantage). Therefore, in my understanding, Laurie can and does use phallic symbols on Michael, but does not necessarily become "manned" by them, as she has already appropriated violence to herself. The audience, by identifying with her from the beginning, therefore is also exempt from the process of masculinization.

Another proof that this new technological terrain belongs to the Final Girls is the fact that they do not depend on male characters (Dr. Loomis, Tommy, Ray, policemen) to help them escape/survive. By fully exercising the power of her gaze and appropriating several means of protection, Laurie was able to extend these elements to the women in her family, removing herself from the burden of being the sole survivor. This is evident through Karen's manipulation of her emotions and overall pragmatism: when Ray dies, instead of falling apart, she quickly prepares to defend herself, her mother, and her daughter. Allyson, although still sharing some characteristics with the classical Final Girl, is extremely active and perceptive. She managed to escape dangerous situations by either standing her ground (e.g., leaving Oscar behind) or using useful information to her advantage (e.g., tricking Dr. Sartain into thinking Michael spoke to her). In fact, the time men came to her rescue, they put her in more danger than she was in initially, which, together with Ray's, Aaron's, and Dave's deaths, further perpetuates the trope of the useless male savior. This also resembles Clover's (2015) comparison of both *Texas Chainsaw* films, in which the Final Girl is, at first, "like Red Riding Hood, saved through male agency. In Part Two, however, there is no male agency; the figure so designated [...] proves so utterly ineffectual that he cannot save himself, much less the girl" (p. 38).

When Allyson is reunited with her mother and grandmother, the three women join forces to confront Michael. Fully resignifying the Final Girl, *Halloween* (2018) presents us with three heroines who find strength in unity. They are no longer at Michael's mercy; rather, they actively fight him with their own weapons, ultimately trapping him. *Halloween* (2018) succeeds in stating that although making active use of violence, the Strode women face Michael on their terms by making him navigate Laurie's elaborate traps and fall for Karen's acting. They use both wit and violence, as they should, to confront a killer that has proven (so far) to be indestructible. The last shot of the film seems to indicate that Michael's phallic power has

passed on to Allyson, but this problem is easily resolved by the character's overall gender fluidity. If we momentarily adhere to traditional gender roles, Allyson has been characterized as an honor student who has a popular social life (female) but who is also active, resourceful, and watchful (male). In one of the most classic damsel-in-distress situations, Allyson is seen running and screaming in the woods surrounding Laurie's house while wearing a male outfit. She and Cameron decided to go the Halloween dance dressed as Bonnie and Clyde, except Cameron was Bonnie and Allyson was Clyde, which means they "need not adhere so strictly to the vestments of their 'usual' genders because this kind of play, transgression, and disregard for hegemonic norms is not just commonplace but also celebrated in this time and place" (BRUNET, 2020, p. 53).

As for Laurie, she is no longer an innocent, scared young girl, but a grown woman who has fully grasped the "horrors of this world" and has appropriated several means of protection against them. This does not desquify her as a Final Girl, but rather updates the trope with elements that are consistent with the modern woman. Answering the journalist's questions, a monster did not create another. Although Laurie's behavior is obviously a direct result from the trauma Michael inflicted upon her, her actions are completely out of love. Once her daughter and granddaughter understand this, they find it in them to fight alongside her. They are prey and predator but, more significantly, they are not alone.

REFERENCES

- 78/52. Directed by Alexandre O. Philippe. United States: IFC Midnight, 2017. 1 DVD (91 min.).
- BRUNET, Peyton. "Once with a Knitting Needle, Once with a Hanger": Reckoning with and Reworking Carol J. Clover's Final Girl in Halloween (1978) and Halloween. **Popular Culture Studies Journal**, Chicago, v. 8, n. 1, p. 43-58, 2020.
- CHRISTENSEN, Kyle. The Final Girl versus Wes Craven's "A Nightmare on Elm Street": Proposing a Stronger Model of Feminism in Slasher Horror Cinema. **Studies in Popular Culture**, Daytona Beach, v. 34, n. 1, p. 23-47, 2011.
- CLOVER, Carol J. **Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film**. 1. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- DIKA, Vera. **Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the Films of the Stalker**. 1. ed. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990.
- FRIDAY the 13th. Directed by Sean S. Cunningham. United States: Paramount Pictures, 1980. 1 DVD (95 min.).
- HALLOWEEN. Directed by John Carpenter. United States: Compass International Pictures, Aquarius Releasing, 1978. 1 DVD (91 min.).
- HALLOWEEN. Directed by David Gordon Green. United States: Universal Pictures, 2018. 1 DVD (106 min.).
- HARPER, Jim. The conventions surrounding the slasher movie. *In*: _____ (org.). **Legacy of Blood: A Comprehensive Guide to Slasher Movies**. 1. ed. Manchester: Headpress/Critical Vision, 2004. p. 31-55.
- HORVAT, Ana. **Final Girl: Analysis of the Slasher Film Trope**. 2018. Thesis (Master's Degree in Humanistic Sciences) – Department of English, University of Zadar, Zadar, 2018.
- MCCARTHY, Todd. Trick and Treat: John Carpenter interviewed by Todd McCarthy. **Film Comment**, New York, v. 16, n. 1, p. 17-24, 1980.
- MULVEY, Laura. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. **Screen**, Glasgow, v. 16, n. 3, p. 6-18, 1975.
- PETRIDIS, Sotiris. A Historical Approach to the Slasher Film. **Film International**, Bristol, v. 12, n. 1, p. 76-84, 2014.
- STEVENS, Hannah Leigh. **The Last Breath is Hers: Reassessing Feminist Film Approaches to The Slasher Genre in the #MeToo Era**. 2019. Thesis (Master's Degree in Arts) – Department of English, North Dakota University of Agriculture and Applied Science, Fargo, 2019.

THE TEXAS Chainsaw Massacre 2. Directed by Tobe Hooper. United States: Cannon Group, 1986. 1 DVD (95 min.).

WICKAM, Clayton. **Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film**. 1. ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

WILLIAMS, Linda. Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess. **Film Quarterly**, Oakland, v. 44, n. 4, p. 2-13, 1991.

ZHOU, Maya. **Evolution of the Final Girl**: Exploring Feminism and Femininity in Halloween (1978-2018). 2019. Thesis (Degree in Bachelor of Arts) – Scripps College, Claremont, 2019.