

## Friday the 13th Anniversary Special Issue

Dawn Keetley

*Horror Homeroom*

### Cite this paper

Downloaded from [Academia.edu](#) 

[Get the citation in MLA, APA, or Chicago styles](#)

### Related papers

[Download a PDF Pack](#) of the best related papers 



[Journal of Popular Film and Television Final Girls and Terrible Youth: Transgression in 1980s Sl...](#)

Moham Mad

["Disability and Slasher Cinema's Unsung 'Children'"](#)

John Edgar Browning

[REANIMATING COLLECTIVE ECOLOGICAL NIGHT MARES IN FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI: JASON LIVES](#)

Matthew Jones

SPRING 2020



**FRIDAY THE 13TH**  
**AT 40**

EDITED BY ELIZABETH ERWIN AND DAWN KEETLEY



**COVER ART BY OZAN ERDI**

# TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

**6** EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

**16** "IT'S WORTH RECOGNIZING ONLY AS AN ARTEFACT OF OUR CULTURE:" CRITICS AND THE *FRIDAY THE 13TH* FRANCHISE (1980-2001)

Todd K. Platts

**26** PAMELA, JASON, ROY AND ZOMBIE JASON HATE WOMEN: AN ANALYTICAL LOOK AT THE POLITICS OF DEATH IN THE *FRIDAY THE 13TH* FRANCHISE

Cory Hasabeard

**36** THE EYES BEHIND THE MASK: HOW *FRIDAY THE 13TH* CHANGED POV IN SLASHER FILMS

Fraser Coffeen

**45** NED, TED, AND THE OTHER: MASCULINITIES IN THE *FRIDAY THE 13TH* FRANCHISE

Dustin Dunaway

55

“DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!”: THE BIRTH OF THE FINAL BOY IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE FINAL CHAPTER*

Ethan Robles

65

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL: QUEERING *FRIDAY THE 13TH* FRANCHISE

David Ruis Fisher

71

KILLING THE SAD FAT GUY AND THE PREGNANT LADY: UNCOMFORTABLE DEATH IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III - 3D*

Wickham Clayton

80

NO CLOWNING AROUND: THE GOTHIC AND THE COMEDIC ELEMENTS OF *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI: JASON LIVES*

Brian Fanelli

88

JASON GOES TO HIGH SCHOOL

Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

97

FREDDY AND JASON--THEIR NEW FULL-LENGTH FEATURE

Stella Castelli

106

TOO MUCH FREEDOM AT CAMP CRYSTAL LAKE:  
NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND *FRIDAY THE  
13TH: THE GAME* (2017)

Caitlin Duffy

114

SOMETHING IS WRONG AT CRYSTAL LAKE:  
MONSTROUS NATURE IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE  
FINAL CHAPTER*

Jason J. Wallin

125

REANIMATING COLLECTIVE ECOLOGICAL  
NIGHTMARES IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI:  
JASON LIVES*

Matthew Jones

134

THE ORIGINS OF CRYSTAL LAKE: CAPTIVITY,  
MURDER, AND AN ALL-AMERICAN FEAR OF THE  
WOODS

Wade Newhouse

144

JASON VOORHEES AS BACKWOODS BERSERKER

Kom Kunyosying and Carter Soles

153

INJURY, ISOLATION, AND IDLENESS: THE REAL  
HORRORS OF *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III*

Brennan Thomas

163

PEERING THROUGH THE TREES, OR, EVERYTHING I'VE EVER LEARNED ABOUT AMERICAN SUMMER CAMP FROM *FRIDAY THE 13TH PARTS 1-4* AND *THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB SUPER SPECIAL #2*

Erin Harrington

172

CONTRIBUTORS



[www.allmovies.ge](http://www.allmovies.ge)

EDITING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY  
LIANA AND MICHELE

# EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This special issue celebrates the complexity, artistry, and cultural value of the *Friday the 13th* franchise, and it does so against four decades of reviewers who have dismissed and decried it. Indeed, the first essay of the issue shows pretty starkly how wrong mainstream film reviewers can be about horror film. In “‘It’s worth recognizing only as an artefact of our culture:’ Critics and the *Friday the 13th* Franchise (1980-2001),” **Todd K. Platts** surveys those reviews of the ten films in the main *Friday the 13th* franchise that appeared in *Variety*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. What is apparent from this fascinating survey is that mainstream film critics have little insight or imagination when it comes to horror films. To anyone who knows these ten films, in all their diversity, it is stunning that critics can find nothing to say but the same thing about film after film. It seems these reviewers weren’t watching; they had the purported slasher formula so fixed in *their* heads (while all the time saying the films themselves did nothing but purvey that formula) that *they* failed to see how each film actually served up innovations.

A watershed moment in the history of slasher films and their reviewers, and *Friday the 13th* in particular, was the infamous campaign launched by Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert in their 1980 *Sneak Previews* TV broadcast; in this “special episode,” Siskel and Ebert devoted almost thirty minutes to excoriating what they called “women-in-danger” films.<sup>1</sup> *Friday the 13th* (1980) was Exhibit A—the prime example of this harmful subgenre, which, Siskel and Ebert proclaimed, was little more than a violent and nasty backlash against women’s liberation. Siskel and Ebert returned to *Friday the 13th* more than to any other film in this episode—three times—in order to illustrate their major points of discomfort. They show the scene in which Annie (Robbi Morgan) gets a ride to camp from a stranger, which, Siskel and Ebert argued, illustrated how these films punish women for an independence that would be celebrated in men. They show the scene in which Marcie (Jeannine Taylor) goes to the bathroom right after having sex with Jack (Kevin Bacon) in order to demonstrate their claim that the film linked sex with violence and conveyed the message, “Act this way, young



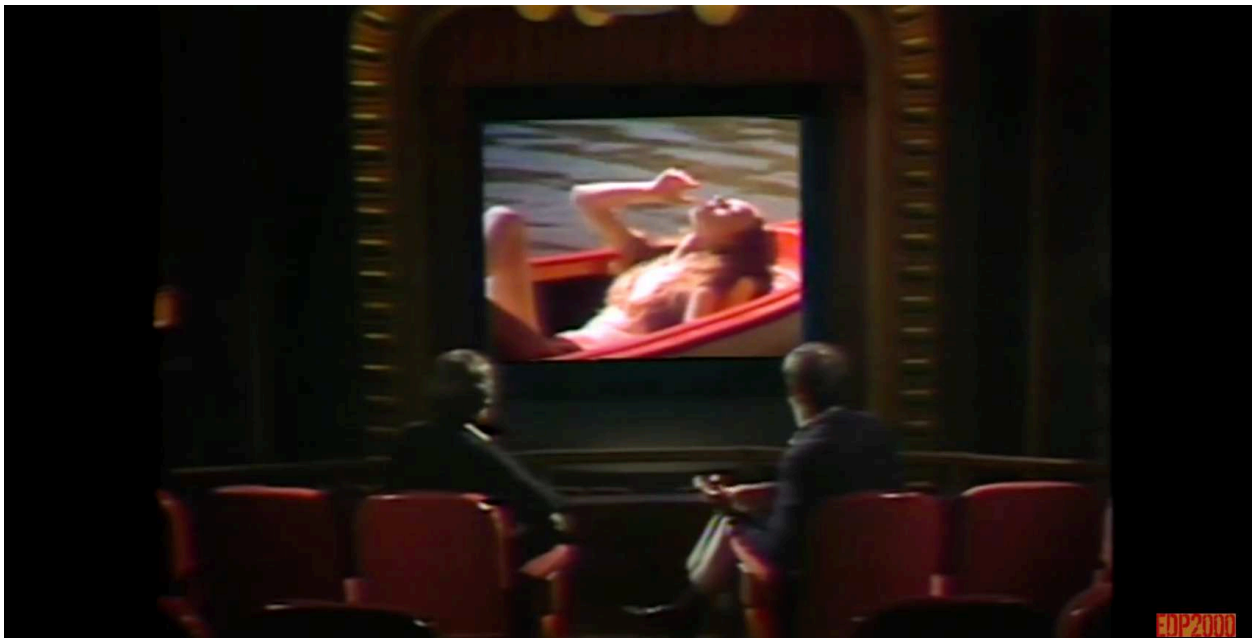
women, and you're asking for trouble." And they ended by screening the opening flashback scene of the film, the original murder of two camp counselors. Siskel uses this scene to support his assertion that the women-in-danger film can basically be boiled down to one image, "a woman screaming in abject terror."

Generally, the diversity and complexity of the essays in this special issue, along with the critical tradition on which it builds (which you can see in our bibliography), belie the argument Siskel and Ebert make. However, **Cory Hasabeard** conducted a fascinating overview of the kills in the *Friday the 13th* franchise (all 177 of them!) and comes up with some results—about the gender of the victim, the gruesomeness of the deaths, victim penetration, victim objectification, and how long the victim is shown to be in terror—that may well add support, after the fact, to what Siskel and Ebert claimed in 1980.<sup>[iii]</sup> Critics writing about *Friday the 13th* should definitely, going forward, reckon with Hasabeard's data, analysis, and conclusions.

Siskel and Ebert clearly fail, however, to recognize the artistry of *Friday the 13th*. This omission is all the more striking in that, in the last part of their show, they shift from castigating *Friday the 13th* and other "women-in-danger" films to lavishing praise on *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978). The reviewers admire Carpenter's film for its "artistry and craftsmanship" and for ensuring that "your basic sympathies are always enlisted on the side of the woman." Siskel and Ebert's praise of *Halloween* only highlights their refusal to see *Friday the 13th*'s complexity, including in the scenes they themselves adduce as evidence of its awful exploitative impulses. They don't acknowledge, for instance, that the killer of *Friday the 13th* is a woman, not a sexually frustrated man, that the film actually goes to some lengths to elicit sympathy for Annie and, later, for Alice (Adrienne King), or that the scene in which Marcie is stalked in the bathroom actually involves a series of complex and shifting point-of-view shots. **Fraser Coffeen**'s essay in this special issue traces the evolution of the point-of-view shot (specifically, the killer's point-of-view shot) within the horror genre in order to demonstrate how *Friday the 13th* upends

audience expectations. Siskel and Ebert are perhaps the first to identify what critics like Carol J. Clover and Vera Dika will soon explore further—that in these films, “we view the scene through the eyes of the killer.” It’s almost as if, Ebert continues, “the audience is being asked to identify with the attackers in these movies, and that really bothers me.” But it is worth comparing the discussion Siskel and Ebert have about the scene in which Marcie is stalked in the bathroom (17:30 – 19:35) to Coffeen’s analysis of its actual complexity. “Artistry can redeem any subject matter,” Ebert says. But not if you stubbornly refuse to see it, not if your prior assumptions blind you to it.

Here is the “Women in Danger” episode of *Sneak Previews*. You can see Siskel and Ebert’s discussion of the scene from *Friday the 13th*, in which Marcie is stalked in the camp bathroom, at 17:30-19:35.



To watch the video, click on the image.

Film critics have, of course, consistently found value in the slasher subgenre in general and the *Friday the 13th* films in particular. Perhaps no critic has done more to shape the conversation around the slasher film than Carol Clover, who took films that were, as she put it, “at the bottom of the horror heap,” and launched a complex analysis of their gender

politics.<sup>[liii]</sup> Clover coined the term “Final Girl” to describe the character who is “chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again”—who is “abject terror personified.” Yet she survives.<sup>[liv]</sup> The Final Girl is, Clover argued, both fear personified and the hero of her own story, thus serving as the ambiguously gendered point of identification for both female and male viewers. Through the Final Girl, the slasher film constitutes, Clover claims, “a visible adjustment in the terms of gender representation.”<sup>[lv]</sup> Not surprising, Clover adduces two Final Girls from *Friday the 13th* films to make her argument—Alice from the first and Ginny (Amy Steel) from the second.<sup>[lvi]</sup>

The contributions to this special issue join an ongoing and vibrant critical conversation, then, about gender in the slasher film.<sup>[lviii]</sup> And they join this conversation by exploring the *Friday the 13th* films, which have, to adapt Clover’s phrase, found themselves “at the bottom of the [slasher]heap,” languishing in the shadow of “better” films like *Halloween* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974). **Dustin Dunaway** uses R.W. Connell’s *Masculinities* and John Bowlby’s description of relationship attachment styles in order to explore the evolving formations of masculinity in the first four *Friday the 13th* films, arguing that *Part 2* and *Part III* doubled down on the masculine types featured in the first film, while *The Final Chapter* did something new. Dunaway ends by considering Jason as conventional masculinity’s abject negation. **Ethan Robles** continues Dunaway’s recognition of the distinctiveness of *The Final Chapter* but looks not at Ted and Jimmy but at the important character of Tommy Jarvis (Corey Feldman). Indeed, Robles argues that this 1984 installment represented the first incarnation of the “Final Boy” in the slasher subgenre. Finally, **David Ruis Fisher** details the narrative potential in queering the *Friday the 13th* films—including taking up the central fact that the franchise was booming during the 1980s, at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—and how such a reading creates a constructive form of representation.

The next set of essays in this special issue offer readings of specific entries in the franchise, highlighting their narrative and aesthetic innovations; in many cases, these essays consider

how various *Friday the 13th* installments evince an intriguing generic hybridity. **Wickham Clayton** has already offered an important analysis of the complexity of *Friday the 13th Part V: A New Beginning*,<sup>[viii]</sup> and here he argues for the distinctiveness of *Part III* in the ways it presents “uncomfortable death” and, at the same time, a complicated politics. **Brian Fanelli** then takes up *Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives*, exploring how this entry is distinctive in the ways it draws on the conventions of Universal’s Monster movies from the 1930s and 40s, mixing a Gothic seriousness with a significant comedic touch. **Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.** also explores the franchise’s genre hybridity, reading *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* as very much akin to the high-school sex comedy / romance (think *The Breakfast Club*). Despite the fact that it takes place (mostly) on a ship and (partly) in Manhattan, this installment is every bit a high-school film, Wetmore argues. **Stella Castelli** applies a vaudeville aesthetic framework to the titular characters in *Freddy vs Jason* and, in doing so, demonstrates how the relationship between these two iconic characters reads as purely performative. Lastly, extending beyond the films themselves, **Caitlin Duffy** explains how *Friday the 13th: The Game* incorporates and challenges narrative elements of the film in order to expand the storytelling potential of the cinematic franchise.

The next two essays, like those before, each take up a particular *Friday the 13th* film, but they both do so in the larger context of the ecological implications of the franchise, something that definitely warrants further analysis. *Friday the 13th* quite clearly and repeatedly associates Jason with nature: he is associated with the water, with storms, with forest. In his brilliant reading of the film’s roots in Mario Bava’s *A Bay of Blood* (1971)<sup>[ix]</sup>, Adam Lowenstein argues that both films evince a narrative drive to clear the landscape of characters: “Those humans whose lives disturb the landscape are methodically removed, until only the landscape itself and a token living (or perhaps undead) presence remains.” Lowenstein calls this the “pleasure of subtractive spectatorship,” and it encourages the audience to “integrate themselves with the landscape.”<sup>[x]</sup> In the first film, Mrs. Voorhees is

the force of “depopulation”—but then Jason takes over the task. Jason seems eerily bound with nature and inimical to the human, embodying an ecological critique.

**Jason J. Wallin** explores the connection of Jason and nature in a close reading of *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter*, noting that the “rising sense of dread evoked throughout the body of the film is composed largely through the ‘inhuman gaze’ of the camera withdrawn under the cover of the woods”—a strategy used, of course, in numerous installments of the franchise. Wallin provocatively, and convincingly, coins the term “eco-stalker” and goes on to connect the strain of monstrous nature running throughout *The Final Chapter* with consumer culture. **Matthew Jones** locates *Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives* as a similarly ecogothic text, beginning by pointing out how this particular entry in the franchise was released in the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Jones reassesses the iconic slasher as “a force of monstrous nature, the result of materialized fears stemming from environmental poisoning and mutation,” reading *Jason Lives* as a “collective ecological nightmare.”

The last set of essays address the franchise more generally in relation to US culture. **Wade Newhouse** offers an insightful analysis of how the *Friday the 13th* films draw on myths of frontier violence and female survival that have long been a part of the American tradition. Newhouse specifically reads the *Friday the 13th* films, especially their Final Girls, as a continuation of Mary Rowlandson’s 1682 captivity narrative and of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798), one of the first gothic novels published in the US. **Kom Konyosying and Carter Soles’** essay also reads the *Friday the 13th* films—and Jason in particular—within enduring American traditions, specifically the figure of the hillbilly and the more recently emergent figure of the “berserker,” which has become a powerful symbol of the Right. **Brennan Thomas** explores how *Friday the 13th Part III*, despite its 3D gimmick, is a topically relevant film exploring social issues reflective of a post-Vietnam America, specifically the era’s disenfranchised and displaced youth. And finally, **Erin Harrington** considers the reverberations of the first four *Friday the 13th* films, read

alongside *The Baby-sitters' Club Super Special #2*. This unlikely pairing, Harrington argues, discloses how both have demonstrably contributed to shaping views of American adolescence.

Some of these essays are personal, some are academic, some are both, but they each offer a new way to think about an important horror franchise that has been going strong for forty years. We hope you enjoy them!

---

Notes:

[i] Ebert also published an article that covered the arguments he and Siskel made on their show.

[ii] For other content analyses of the slasher film generally, see Cowan and O'Brien, Linz and Donnerstein, Sapolsky, Molitor and Luque, and Weaver.

[iii] Clover, 21.

[iv] Clover, 35.

[v] Clover, 64.

[vi] Clover, 38, 39-40.

[vii] See Dika, Lizardi, Pinedo, and Rieser for discussions of gender in the slasher film.

[viii] Clayton, 37-50.

[ix] Turnock (pp. 183-96) also analyses *Friday the 13th's* relationship to *Bay of Blood*.

[x] Lowenstein, 138.

## Bibliography:

- Budra, Paul. "Recurrent Monsters: Why Freddy, Michael and Jason Keep Coming Back." *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*, edited by Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg, University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Clasen, Mathias. *Why Horror Seduces*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Clayton, Wickham. "Undermining the Moneygrubbers, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love *Friday the 13th Part V*." *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*, edited by Clayton, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 37-50.
- Clover, Carol J. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Conrich, Ian. "The *Friday the 13th* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol." *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Cinema*, edited by Ian Conrich, I. B. Tauris, 2009.
- Cowan, Gloria, and Margaret O'Brien. "Gender and Survival vs. Death in Slasher Films: A Content Analysis." *Sex Roles*, 23, 1990, pp. 187-96.
- Dika, Vera. *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990.
- Ebert, Roger. "Why Movie Audiences Aren't Safe Anymore." *American Film*, vol. 6, no.5, March 1981, pp. 54-6.
- Hills, Matt. "Para-Paracinema: The *Friday the 13th* Film Series as Other to Trash and Legitimate Film Cultures." *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics*, edited by Jeffrey Sconce, Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 219-39.

Kvaran, Kara M. "You're All Doomed! A Socioeconomic Analysis of Slasher Films." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2016, pp. 953-70.

Linz, Daniel, and Edward Donnerstein. "Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: A Reinterpretation." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1994, pp. 243-46.

Lizardi, Ryan. "Re-Imagining Hegemony and Misogyny in the Contemporary Slasher Remake." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2010, pp. 113-21.

Lowenstein, Adam. "The Giallo/Slasher Landscape: *Ecologia del Delitto*, *Friday the 13th* and Subtractive Spectatorship." *Italian Horror Cinema*, edited by Stefano Bachiera and Ross Hunter, Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp. 127-44.

Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.

Petridis, Sotiris. "A Historical Approach to the Slasher Film." *Film International*, vol. 12, no.1, 2014, pp. 76-84.

Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. SUNY Press, 2016.

Rieser, Klaus. "Masculinity and Monstrosity: Characterization and Identification in the Slasher Film." *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2001, pp. 370-392.

Rockoff, Adam. *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986*. McFarland, 2011.

Sapolsky, B. S., F. Molitor, and S. Luque. "Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: Reexamining the Assumptions." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 80, no. 1, 2003, pp. 28-38.



Turnock, Bryan. "The Slasher Film." *Studying Horror Cinema*. Auteur, 2019, pp. 181-201.

Weaver, James B. III. "Are 'Slasher' Horror Films Sexually Violent? A Content Analysis." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1991, pp. 385-92.

# “IT’S WORTH RECOGNIZING ONLY AS AN ARTEFACT OF OUR CULTURE:” CRITICS AND THE FRIDAY THE 13TH FRANCHISE (1980-2001)

Todd K. Platts

It is no secret that critics loathed the films of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* franchise. For them, the films occupied what scholar Carol Clover termed “the cinematic underbrush” that were “[d]renched in taboo and encroaching vigorously on the pornographic.”<sup>[1]</sup> What remains a mystery, though, is exactly how reviewers expressed their disdain for the series and how this scorn evolved across the ten films of its initial run. In an attempt to add specificity to this riddle, this vignette will analyze reviews of each *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* installment from three of the most widely read contemporaneous sources for film coverage, *Variety* (the leading trade publication in film), the *Los Angeles Times* (headquartered near the hub of film production), and the *New York Times* (the newspaper of record), in order to catalog the films’ evolving reception.

In brief, the first two films (1980 and 1981) were written off due to their perceived lack of cinematic craftsmanship and their abundance of plot holes. By *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III* (1982) critics began asking why teenagers would keep returning to a site where so many had been slaughtered before, a theme that was sporadically evoked throughout the run. By *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – The Final Chapter* (1984), reviewers who were once horrified by the tropes of slasher films (e.g., set-piece deaths, killings after sex, the final girl) began making fun of them, sometimes tongue-in-cheek and sometimes with revulsion. This trend continued through the conclusion of the main series.

Before getting to the reviews, it is important to note that the analysis below turns a blind eye to other high-profile critics – most notably, the crusade against slasher (and violence-against-women) films launched by Chicago critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert. By narrowing the scope of reviews and lengthening the period of assessment, however, greater insight can be offered into how critics evaluated one of the most infamous franchises in one of horror’s most disreputable subgenres (the slasher) across a period extending beyond the initial outrage.

### **Horrible Horror Movies: Critics’ Initial Response**

The story of the original *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) might have impressed studios enough to spark a bidding war, but rank-and-file film reviewers saw a “silly, boring youth-g geared horror movie,”<sup>[ii]</sup> destined to “be in and out the marketplace quick.”<sup>[iii]</sup> Critics were unimpressed by all aspects of the film, even its twist ending which reveals Pamela Voorhees (Betsy Palmer), the mother of a boy who drowned at the summer camp years earlier, to be the killer. The *Los Angeles Times*’ Linda Gross noted that producer/director Sean Cunningham had “no respect for a good murder mystery” before mentioning that “the villain is as much of a surprise as a sunburn after a July 4th beach party.”<sup>[iv]</sup> Janet Maslin’s review for the *New York Times* broke protocols by revealing Betsy Palmer as the villain, “Miss Palmer plays the murderer, and by the time she has materialized on screen she has already killed a half dozen nubile young camp counselors, for reasons it would be futile to try to explain.”<sup>[v]</sup>

Reviews for *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2* (1981) continued to chide the films for their poor quality, but also included allusions to themes of sadism and violence against women in response to Siskel and Ebert’s late-1980 jeremiad. John Corry’s *New York Times* review captured both sentiments in one sentence, “[t]he plot is an excuse for joining together horrors, all of the sado-masochistic kind, and the acting is rudimentary at best.”<sup>[vi]</sup> *Variety*’s anonymous review took the most umbrage at the sequel’s presumed ineptness, “[a]s the ads say, the terror continues, but unfortunately nowhere near as skillfully as the first time out,” while

also mentioning that the film is “not very inventive” and “full of plot holes that make the action look absurd.” [vii] For her part, *Los Angeles Times* critic Linda Gross called *Part 2* a “scary, incredulous and ludicrous movie” that “defies cinematic conventions.” [viii] Corry was most vocal about the film’s problematic themes of violence, stating it “exists for no other purpose than to shock” and “it will be a close-run thing whether it will be fright, nausea or simple distaste that gets to you first.” [ix] The reviews from Gross and *Variety* were less condemning, choosing to dispassionately document the film’s transgressions. According to Gross, “people aren’t really looking for class in these movies.” [x] *Variety* was a bit more pointed “seeing yet another group of sexy, teen camp counselors gruesomely executed by yet another unknown (?) assailant” that “has stuck very closely with the successful formula.” [xi]

All critics thought *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III* (1982) was bad, but the real question was whether it was worse than the films that came before it. Linda Gross believed it to be “so terrible that *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 1* and *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2* don’t seem bad.” [xii] Janet Maslin disagreed, only slightly, seeing it as “a little better than Part 1 [and] and Part 2 even without 3-D” while also mentioning its reuse of plot devices: “it simply repeats things.” [xiii] *Variety* also spotlighted the series’ predictability “[t]o find out what exactly [happens], see parts I and II.” [xiv] *Variety* also presaged a theme in future reviews by pointing out the absurdity of returning to a camp with so many slaughters: “[w]hy the kids keep going back to this scene of annual mass murder is never explained: why the landlord keeps renting cabins to the kids, considering the mess they leave behind, is never explained either.” [xv]

### **Predictable Horror Movies: Critics Poking Fun at Slashers**

Though critics continued to express disgust with *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – The Final Chapter* (1984), they also started mocking the major premise of slashers – the systematic and creative murder of fun-loving, wayward youth. *Daily Variety*’s review, for instance, matter-of-factly

surmised the film's prospects, "followers of this particular mix of teenage sex and disembowelment should make the returns of this third sequel respectable." [xvi] *Los Angeles Times*' Kevin Thomas sarcastically puzzled over *The Final Chapter's* appeal—"young people regarded its incessant graphic slaughter as a laugh riot"—before lambasting Jason's modus operandi: "Jason slaughters them systematically, usually after they've had sex; it's as if they're being punished in perversely puritanical way." [xvii] Janet Maslin wryly quipped with reference to the subtitle, "a promise is a promise, or at least it ought to be" and then correctly observed that *The Final Chapter* actually "shows no signs of being the last in its none-too-illustrious line." [xviii]

This sarcastic style of teasing continued through the responses to the next six installments of the series: *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – A New Beginning* (1985), *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI: Jason Lives* (1986), *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VII – The New Blood* (1988), *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VIII – Jason Takes Manhattan* (1989), *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* (1993), and *Jason X* (2001). *Daily Variety's* review of *New Beginning* quipped that it "reiterates a chronicle of butcheries with even less variation than its predecessors." [xix] Kevin Thomas called the new installment "just one more nauseating sick joke" comprised of a "nonstop series of stabbings, slashings, impalings, stranglings and yet other means of killings." [xx] The most biting sarcasm about the fifth movie was saved for Vincent Canby's *New York Times* review, which jokingly observed that the narrative "appears to have been paced by a metronome – a joke followed by a murder followed by a joke followed by murder, until all but one of the featured players have been exterminated," before explaining that "[i]t's worth recognizing only as an artefact of our culture." [xxi]

*Jason Lives* saw one reviewer throw jabs at the audience of the series. Michael Wilmington of the *Los Angeles Times*, who also called the film a "sad excuse for a movie," speculated "[p]erhaps teen-agers will once more swarm like lemmings to the theaters for another rollicking night in the charnel house, giggling and gagging." [xxii] Caryn James, writing for the *New York Times*, maintained a negative focus on the storyline, "[t]een-agers with no

sense of history, they seem doomed to repeat the victims' roles in Jason's cut-'em-up rampage, because repeating history is what the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series is all about." [xxiii] Meanwhile, *Variety's* short, dismissive review conjectured that the declining returns for each new installment could mean that "Jason probably will be buried once and for all." [xxiv]

By *The New Blood*, the creative personnel behind the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series tried to throw a new wrinkle into that familiar plotline that critics so abhorred by pitting Jason against a young girl with telekinetic powers. Critics were not impressed. Kevin Thomas called it "Jason Meets Carrie" while also signaling tiredness toward *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>'s* cinematic world, "you'd think that as a summer resort Camp Crystal Lake would be about as popular as Chernobyl." [xxv] Thomas also made fun of Jason's puritanical motives, "[e]ach summer the presence of teen-agers making out triggers Jason's rampages, filling Paramount's coffers." [xxvi] Caryn James took a similar tone when referring to the film's final girl as "a Carrie clone named Tina, whose telekinetic powers should make her Jason's match." [xxvii] James further posited that *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* transformed from a slasher film "into a long-running serial about an oddball but familiar neighborhood." [xxviii] *Variety* seemed not to notice the change, saying *New Blood* contained the "[f]amiliar monster wreaking familiar havoc equals strong initial b.o." that was "formula in both content and execution." [xxix]

Whatever patience critics may have had for *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, if they ever had any, seemed to run dry with *Jason Takes Manhattan*, which tried to spice up the franchise by transporting Jason from the summer camp to the inner city. Responding to the change, Chris Willman's *Los Angeles Times* review flippantly noted "[t]alk about high concept, dude: Jason takes a road trip!" [xxx] *Daily Variety* joined Willman's sentiment "basically the same musty slice-and-dice formula, jazzed up by being moved from Crystal Lake to Gotham's mean streets." [xxxi] Caryn James joined the chorus by pointing to the film's use of the series

clichéd formula “he will never change and never die, not while cheap, dull ax-murder movies can yield one witty, misleading, probably lucrative commercial.” [xxxii] After *Jason Takes Manhattan*, Paramount would relinquish the series to New Line, the company behind the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise. Ultimately, New Line would only produce two films in the main series – *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* and *Jason X* – which joined Paramount’s outings with their terrible reviews. If anything, the reviews actually became more sarcastic. Speaking of *Jason Goes to Hell*’s subtitle, Michael Wilmington asked, “Does this mean that the filmmakers are really closing the circle? That the long, bloody and mostly dumb career of Jason, a rampaging hulk in a hockey mask who loves to kill lecherous teenagers *in flagrante delicto*, is finally over?” He answered his own question: “Don’t bet the cemetery on it.” [xxxiii] Wilmington also taunted other high-profile, if-waning slasher series, “If hell isn’t a series of *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* movies, repeated into eternity, then *Halloween*’s Michael Myers is a pacifist and *Elm Street*’s Freddy Krueger is a Nobel Peace Prize candidate.” [xxxiv] The ninth film’s subtitle also drew a joking comment from Stephen Holden’s *New York Times* review, who simply stated “[i]t’s about time.” [xxxv] Greg Evans of *Daily Variety* followed suit, “Jason goes to hell, and not a moment too soon.” [xxxvi]

*Jason X* drew equally derisive comments. Scott Foundas of *Daily Variety* captures the less-than-excited sentiment, announcing the new film as “the unfortunate 10<sup>th</sup> outing in the inexplicably long-running *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series.” [xxxvii] Similar feelings were expressed in the *New York Times*—“[the series was only] revived by the possibility of adapting the new digital special-effects technology to the old formula” [xxxviii]—and the *Los Angeles Times*—“it exists to show how many extravagant ways there are to eviscerate the human body.” [xxxix]

### **Nostalgia for the Bad Old Days**

For as castigated as the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series was, it is somewhat surprising that the original movies met with some qualified nostalgia in response to the 2009 remake, with at

least one critic arguing, “this new *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* has Jason, all right, but otherwise it’s missing nearly everything that made the original films work.”<sup>[xi]</sup> Indeed, despite the biting words of two decades of film critics, the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series has proven to be one of the most popular and beloved in all of horror. The characters were never able to kill Jason and neither, it seems, can all the bad reviews.

---

Notes:

[i] Clover, 187.

[ii] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*.”

[iii] Gross, “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*.”

[iv] Ibid.

[v] Maslin, “Film.”

[vi] Corry.

[vii] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2*.”

[viii] Gross, “Movie Review.”

[ix] Corry.

[x] Gross, “Movie Review.”

[xi] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2*.”

[xii] Gross, “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 3*.”

[xiii] Maslin, “Movies.”

[xiv] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – Part 3*.”

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – The Final Chapter*.”

[xvii] Thomas, “Movie Review: Bloody Violence.”

[xviii] Maslin, “Screen.”

[xix] “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – A New Beginning*.”

[xx] Thomas, “Movie Review: *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*.”



[xxi] Canby.

[xxii] Wilmington, "Movie Review."

[xxiii] James, "The Screen."

[xxiv] "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI."

[xxv] Thomas, "New Blood Flows."

[xxvi] Ibid.

[xxvii] James, "A New Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>."

[xxviii] Ibid.

[xxix] "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VII."

[xxx] Willman.

[xxxi] "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VIII."

[xxxii] James, "Another Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>."

[xxxiii] Wilmington, "Is It Really?"

[xxxiv] Ibid.

[xxxv] Holden.

[xxxvi] Evans.

[xxxvii] Foundas.

[xxxviii] Kehr.

[xxxix] Seymour.

[xl] Olsen.

## Works Cited:

- Canby, Vincent. "Film: A New *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*." *New York Times*, 23 March 1985, p. 11.
- Clover, Carol J. "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film." *Representations* 20 (1987): pp. 187-228.
- Corry, John. "The Screen: *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part II*." *New York Times*, 4 May 1981, p. C12.
- Evans, Greg. "*Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday*." *Variety*, 16 August 1993, p. 8.
- Foundas, Scott. "*Jason X*." *Variety*, 26 April 2001, p. 12.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*." *Variety*, 9 May 1980, p. 3.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2*." *Variety*, 6 May 1981, p. 21.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – Part 3*." *Variety*, 11 August 1982, p. 22.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – The Final Chapter*." *Variety*, 13 April, 1984, p. 3.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> – A New Beginning*." *Variety*, 22 March 1985, p. 3.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI: Jason Lives*." *Variety*, 6 August 1986, p. 15.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VII – The New Blood*." *Variety*, 18 May 1988, p. 16.
- "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VIII – Jason Takes Manhattan*." *Daily Variety*, 31 July 1989, p. 8.
- Gross, Linda. "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>: Encamped in Gore*." *Los Angeles Times*, 15 May 1980, p. I7.
- . "Movie Review: A Grim *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part II*." *Los Angeles Times*, 4 May 1981, p. H2.
- . "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 3 Even Worse*." *Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 1982, p. G6.
- Holden, Stephen. "Jason's End? You Gotta Have Heart." *New York Times*, 14 August 1993, p. 12.
- James, Caryn. "The Screen: Jason Lives in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI*." *New York Times*, 2 August 1986, p. 9.
- . "A New *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*." *New York Times*, 15 May 1988, p. 56.

—. “Another *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* Puts Jason in Times Square.” *New York Times*, 29 July 1989, p. 12.

Kehr, Dave. “Jason X.” *New York Times*, 26 April 2001, p. E14.

Maslin, Janet. “Film, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, Horror at Middle-Class Summer Camp.” *New York Times*, 10 May 1980, p. 14.

—. “Movies: *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III* – in 3-D Opens.” *New York Times*, 13 August 1982, p. C4.

—. “Screen: A *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* Sequel.” *New York Times*, 14 April 1984, p. 15.

Olsen, Mark. “MIA: The Bad Old Jason Vorhees.” *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2009, p. E4.

Seymour, Gene. “Future Shock at the Hand of Slasher Icon Jason.” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 April 2001, p. F12.

Thomas, Kevin. “Movie Review: Bloody Violence Mixed with Sex.” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 April 1984, p. G5.

—. “Movie Review: *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* – Again.” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 1985, p. G6.

—. “*New Blood* Flows Tediously at Crystal Lake.” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1986, p. H3.

Willman, Chris. “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*: A Side Trip to Manhattan.” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1989, p. D4.

Wilmington, Michael. “Movie Review: Jason Slashes Again in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI*.” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 1986, p. 6.

—. “Is It Really *Final Friday* for Murderous Jason?” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 1993, p. F5.

# PAMELA, JASON, ROY AND ZOMBIE JASON HATE WOMEN: AN ANALYTICAL LOOK AT THE POLITICS OF DEATH IN THE FRIDAY THE 13TH FRANCHISE

Cory Hasabeard

Like a lot of horror fans, I find slasher film kill counts and gore metrics to be a fascinating look at how the genre engages with spectatorship. An inventive kill may not be able to save a movie, but it can at least make it memorable. Films once forgotten, such as *Deadly Friend* (1986), *The Burning* (1981), and *Sleepaway Camp* (1983) are enjoying a resurgence in popularity fueled in no small part due to their creative death sequences. From basketballs imploding heads to gardening shears laying waste to a boat full of campers to curling irons being inserted into places they do not belong, inventive kills can provide just the right amount of shock and awe to keep audiences glued to their seats and can ultimately, save a film from the dust bin of horror obscurity.

*Friday the 13th* and its following nine sequels are filled with grizzly memory makers that straddle the line between perverse and comedic. Fans are unlikely to forget Kevin Bacon being stabbed through the back of the neck or the bloody spectacle of death by liquid nitrogen. These kills have endeared Jason, the Crystal Lake mutilator, to horror fans and have birthed one of the most celebrated and reviled franchises in horror cinema. In a recent rewatch of the franchise, I noticed that male characters seemed to die by far-less brutal means when compared to their female counterparts and that female characters were more likely to be penetrated in death. It was a startling revelation that made me question the gender dynamics at play in these kill sequences. Are women more likely to die on screen in a more gruesome way? Are the men less likely to be penetrated in their murder?

With these questions in mind, I set about quantifying what it was that I was seeing play out on my screen.

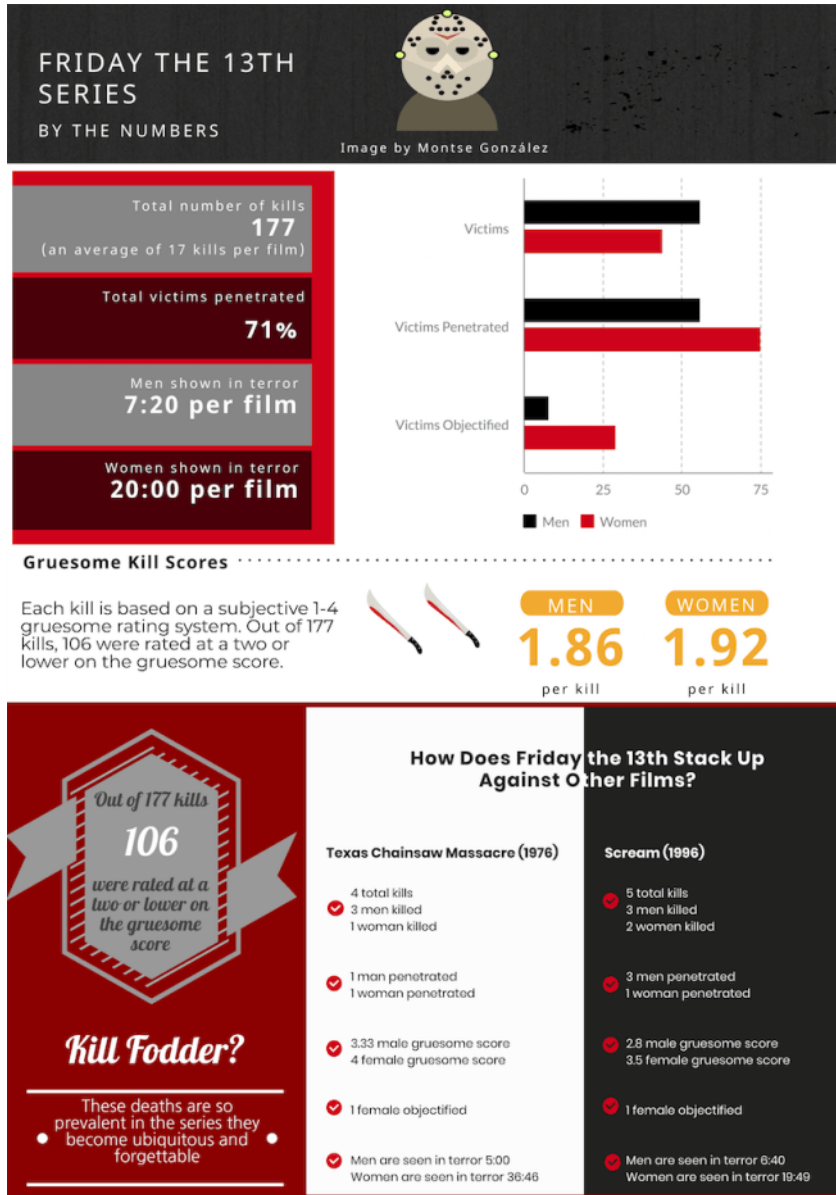
Existing scholarship has grappled with these questions to varying degrees. In his research examining whether slasher films classify as sexually violent, J.B. Weaver III concluded that there is no significant difference in the number of victims based on gender.<sup>[1]</sup> Similarly, the research of Burry S. Sapolsky, Fred Molitor and Sarah Luque found that 56% of victims in slasher films are male and that 33% of sexual moments are intertwined with violence.<sup>[2]</sup> Sapolsky, Molitor and Luque also accounted for the duration that victims were shown in terror and they discovered women were depicted in fear twice as long as men.<sup>[3]</sup> While these studies provide a concrete understanding of the gender dynamics at play in slasher films like *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, they fail to consider the implications when the means of death is directly tied to sex.

And so, I set about to conduct my own study of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* franchise. Keeping track of the total number of kills, I then examined each kill for the following: gender of victim, gruesomeness of death, victim penetration, victim objectification, and duration victim is shown to be in terror. What I discovered was more than a little surprising.

## **Findings**

### **Female characters are twice as likely to die as male characters.**

The total number of kills in the franchise is 177. I did not include any demise of Jason, but I did count any death depicted in a flashback, hallucination, or dream. Of the 177 victims 100 (56%) of them were men and 77 (44%) were women. My findings align with those of Sapolsky, Molitor and Luque but I wanted to dig deeper into the numbers in order to account for gender disparity in the cast. Of the 200 male characters in the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* franchise, 50% are killed. Of the 103 female characters, 74% are killed. In this franchise, a female character has only a 26% chance of survival.



**Female characters are more likely to die a gruesome death.**

How gruesome a scene reads is subjective but I attempted to quantify my findings using a zero through four rating system. When a murder was off-screen or out of frame, the kill received zero or one rating. The famous Kevin Bacon and liquid nitrogen scenes are examples of a four on the gruesome score. Male characters have an average gruesome score of 1.86 per kill. Women have an average score of 1.92 per kill. Out of 177 kills, 106 were rated at a two or lower on the gruesome

score. These deaths are so prevalent in the series they become ubiquitous and forgettable, but they are an effective way to increase the overall kill count. Several characters are brutalized out of frame, or off-screen. Women are significantly more likely to be murdered on screen. 74% of female victims are murdered on screen while men are killed on screen only 61% of the time. Many victims are characters never introduced to the audience. In *Jason Lives*, Jason Voorhees kills an unknown couple driving in the woods, a second

anonymous couple enjoying a picnic, and four victims from a business retreat unrelated to anything we had previously seen on-screen. Out of the 18 people killed in *Jason Lives*, we have only met 56% of the victims before their murder. Arguably, these eight characters are merely slasher fodder and are present simply to boost the kill count.

### **Female characters are objectified three times more than male characters.**

I subjectively kept track of the objectification of characters. I interpreted these depictions by looking for evidence of the male gaze. As it turns out, male victims are objectified 8% of the time and female victims are objectified 29% of the time.

### **Female characters are more likely to be killed via penetration.**

As I mentioned above, previous studies have examined sexual depictions and their relationship to violence. These studies found 33% of sexualized moments are connected to violence. There has yet to be a study that accounts for the means of death as sexual. Phallic objects and penetration are commonly used to kill in the *Friday the 13th* series and should be defined as sexualized violence. 75% of women and 57% of men are killed via penetrative death in the franchise.

### **Female characters are seen in fear nearly three times more than men.**

Lastly, I kept track of the length of time we watch a character in terror. Men are in terror for an average of seven minutes and twenty seconds (7:20) per film. Women are depicted in terror for an average twenty minutes (20:00) per film. Based on Sapolsky, Molitor and Luque's research, women take twice as long to die than men. In the *Friday the 13th* franchise, women are shown to be in terror nearly three times as long as the male characters. Notably, the Tommy Jarvis character significantly skews these numbers. In *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*, Jarvis is shown in a prolonged state of terror for nearly thirty minutes. The one female outlier is *Jason Lives* (1986), which depicts women in terror for five minutes and fourteen seconds (5:14). *Jason Lives* is also the only film in the franchise to show men in terror more than women. Women in *Jason Lives* are also depicted

as possessing agency, approaching danger with pragmatism and believing previous victims of Jason.

### **Discussion**

In considering the data, I believe that the numbers that offer the most insight concern the duration of time characters are depicted as being in a prolonged state of terror. Here, women are depicted in terror for longer, as well as being penetrated, objectified, and killed in gruesome fashion. And these numbers become more pronounced as the franchise develops.

The first installment of the franchise is inventive as a bloody whodunit. Sean S. Cunningham apes first-person shots from *Psycho* (1960) and *Halloween* (1978), but he also allows the characters to interact with the unknown killer. The camera lingers on would-be victims pleading for their lives and this creates a palpable sense of dread in the first film that preys upon the emotions of the audience.

As the franchise progresses, point-of-view shots shift from the maternal rage of Pamela Voorhees to the sexually curious Jason. Men are physically and sexually a threat to Jason and he has to dispatch the male characters as quickly as possible. Audiences are positioned to leer at female bodies throughout the films and to derive enjoyment from the agony expressed by female characters as they are stalked and then killed. In multiple installments, the Final Girl stumbles into a puddle, runs through the water, swims in a lake, or is chased through rain which forces wet cotton to cling to breasts. These creative choices reflect the male gaze and a directorial intent to sexualize female pain, terror, and violence. Often, the aforementioned depictions coincide with the Final Girl gaining agency. By doing this, the director undermines the autonomy of the character by transitioning her from victim of the attacker to victim of the male gaze. Statistically, every aspect of the film is slanted towards the objectification and punishment of the female body for the audience's enjoyment.



Watching the *Friday the 13th* franchise with fresh eyes was unsettling. My enjoyment of the films decreased and I was curious to see how it compared to 1974's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (*TCM*) and 1996's *Scream*. When compared against one another, the films reveal some contradictory characteristics. Both *Scream* and *TCM* have far fewer kills, but they elevate the brutality of the deaths seen on screen. All of the characters killed in both films are established before they are killed. With fewer kills, elevated brutality and an established victim pool, the audience is positioned to identify and empathize, rather than detach for entertainment's sake.

Another difference between *TCM* and *Scream* is the survival rate. In *TCM*, 66% of women survive and 73% of men survive, while in *Scream*, 70% of men survive and 80% of women survive. Compared to the *Friday the 13th* franchise, 50% of men live while a mere 26% of women survive. Interestingly though, *Scream*, *TCM*, and *Friday the 13th* all depict women in terror at a rate significantly greater than their male counterparts. *TCM* shows Final Girl Sally Hardesty in terror for a solid thirty-six minutes, thereby out-doing the most egregious *Friday* film by a full seven minutes.

Yet, while *Scream* and *TCM* have similar, if not worse, evaluation scores to that of *Friday the 13th* films, I would not hesitate to rewatch either movie. The same cannot be said for *Friday the 13th*. In *Scream* and *TCM*, the audience is positioned to feel the terror of the victims and this results in greater empathy for the characters and their plights such that when the camera shows the abject agony on Casey Becker's face as she flees from the masked killer, or Sally Hardesty's torment as she continually hits roadblocks in her attempt to escape, the audience empathizes with the victim and not the killer. As the following comparison of *Friday the 13th* and *TCM* illustrates, aligning of audience sympathy for the characters creates an emotional investment in the film that triggers audience response at a deeper level than when characters are dispatched simply for the spectacle.

Hooper's *TCM* revels in a number of broader cultural themes: social anxiety, the violence of capitalism, and the long-term impact of generational trauma post the Vietnam War. Hooper

forces the audience to witness a confrontation between the values of free love idealism and systemic capitalism. Throughout the film, Hooper specifically highlights scenes of the hippies' faith in humanity. They pick up a hitchhiker, trust the words of a stranger, and believe they can enter a person's home without consequence. Each of these three events put their lives in danger and sends them towards their horrific demise. They initially pick up a hitchhiker, Nubbins Sawyer, who is quickly dispatched by the group when Nubbins cuts one of the hippies with a knife. After a series of events that strand the group, the hippies enter a house uninvited only to discover it is the home of Sawyer and his deranged family.

Once inside *Leatherface*, the youngest brother of Sawyer, subjects the hippies to the brutal reality of a dehumanized class. The idealism, trust, and privilege of the hippies essentially created lambs to be led to slaughter; lambs completely unaware of the existence of predatory capitalism and its manipulation. The violence that plays out on screen demonstrates an unawareness of the class warfare waged on the poor by the hippies. When we see the poverty-stricken Sawyer family turn violent, we are disturbed by their ability to dehumanize the victims into consumable and profitable parts out of need. The commoditization of the human body for mass consumption is an apt allegory for capitalism. All the more disturbing is that *Leatherface* does not appear to want to participate in the violence. *Leatherface* does not relish the violent acts like the rest of his family; he simply engages in the cultural milieu and is an apt metaphor for our complicity in the violence of capitalism. The brilliance of Hooper is that he allows the audience to have empathy for *Leatherface* and the hippies. The real monster of the film isn't those characters trespassing against societal norms, but is the systemic oppression of capitalism in which we all participate.

*Friday the 13th*, on the other hand, utilizes the dehumanization of the human body (particularly the female body) as a means of active participation in capitalism. According to Cunningham on the film's director's commentary, "The most important thing you can do in

a film career is make money.”<sup>[4]</sup> In the documentary *Crystal Lake Memories*, Cunningham also said, “if I had a film titled *Friday the 13th*, I could sell that.”<sup>[5]</sup> The original film’s writer, Victor Miller, recounts discussing the project with Cunningham: “*Halloween* (1978) is making incredible money at the box office, let’s rip it off.”<sup>[6]</sup> Cunningham secured funding for the film by ripping off *Halloween* (1978) and by leveraging his producer credit in the groundbreaking Wes Craven film, *Last House on the Left* (1972). And so, it should not be surprising to anyone that the *Friday the 13th* franchise is largely void of deft social commentary. Almost every frame of the franchise feels like a cynical cash grab. *Friday the 13th* is Reagan-era exploitative capitalism clothed in Reagan-era rebellion. Hyper violence and hyper sexualized depictions give the air of a subversive, anti-establishment, and anti-Moral Majority franchise, but at the series heart is exploitation for financial gain.

### **Conclusion**

*Friday the 13th* is a product of nostalgia. It beckons us to simpler times when we spent Friday nights lurking the horror section of a Blockbuster, scanning VHS covers for something chilling, before sneaking home to the basement to watch movies your parents would never approve. More than anything, it calls many of us back to our first taste of horror and a time when watching a film felt rebellious and even a little bit dangerous. It is normal to have fond memories of your first crush, first kiss, and first romantic relationship, but we would be foolish to idealize these moments. As we get older, what once moved our hearts, we may now see as juvenile; but we will always cherish the impact of our first feelings of excitement and titillation. The *Friday the 13th* franchise is an example of a toxic middle school relationship. What originated for many young fan as titillation now reads as measurably and categorically sexist. As an adult, I am unable to not view the film as misogynistic in its attempts to fetishize violence against women and to generate entertainment by exploiting the pain of its characters. While various studios, writers and directors have attempted to rekindle the franchise through a fairly popular reboot, the end result failed to create demand for a sequel. It seems as though Jason Voorhees is destined to

forever remain in the nostalgic dustbin of our hearts. And perhaps, that is where he belongs.

---

Notes:

[1] Weaver, 389-390.

[2] Sapolsky, Molitor and Luque, 32-33.

[3] Ibid, 29-30.

[4] Cunningham

[5] Ibid

[6] Cunningham

Works Cited

Cunningham, Sean S., director. *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>: The Complete Collection*. Warner Bros., 2013.

Miller, Victor, writer. *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>: The Complete Collection*. Warner Bros., 2013.

Sapolsky, Burry S., Fred Molitor, and Sarah Luque. "Sex and violence in slasher films: Re-examining the assumptions." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80.1 (2003): 28-38.

Weaver III, James B. "Are "slasher" horror films sexually violent? A content analysis." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 35.3 (1991): 385-392.

# THE EYES BEHIND THE MASK: HOW *FRIDAY THE 13TH* CHANGED POV IN SLASHER FILMS

Fraser Coffeen

Both as a standalone film and as a series, *Friday the 13th* has a decidedly spotty relationship with film critics. Upon the film's initial release, *The Hollywood Reporter* called it "blatant exploitation of the lowest order... there is nothing to recommend about this ghastly effort" [1] while *Chicago Tribune* critic Gene Siskel really upped the ante by giving the film zero stars, intentionally ruining the twist ending so that audiences would not go see it, and calling director Sean S. Cunningham, "one of the most despicable creatures to infest the movie business." [2] From a purely critical standpoint, things were not off to a good start. Which, of course, mattered not one bit to the audiences who flocked to the movie, ultimately helping the \$550,000 film rake in nearly \$60 million worldwide. [3] Not bad for such a vile piece of garbage.

Over the years, there has been some mellowing of critical opinions, though the series is still far from being a venerated one. Revisiting the first film in 2000, BBC critic Matt Ford described it as, "undeniably a hugely influential film that contributed to the 1980s horror boom" while at the same time noting it was, "not the first teen 'stalk-n-slash' film and certainly not the most creative." [4] And that seems to generally be where things have landed critically – it's not the first, it's not the best, but it's the one that really brought the slasher genre to the mainstream, and for that, it deserves credit.

But that critical view is perhaps an unfair one, as it paints *Friday the 13th* as merely a good imitator with no creative pulse of its own, a depiction that ignores the actual innovation it brought to the slasher genre. That innovation is a big part of what sets this film apart from countless others that came out in the early 80s, and it is focused entirely on one specific

aspect of the film: its novel use of the traditional “killer’s point of view” (POV) shot.



Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*

Cunningham took what previous films had done in this area and applied it in new ways, effectively ratcheting up the tension and creating something new in the genre.

Before looking at the movie itself, it's important

to look back at the films that inspired *Friday the 13th* and, in particular, how they used the killer POV shot. Any discussion of the origin of this killer's POV pretty much has to start in one place: the shower. With one scene, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) brought the audience into the killer's head as he attacked, creating a truly unnerving experience that still packs a punch today and left audiences absolutely rattled in 1960. But Hitchcock actually doesn't use much of the killer's POV in that scene. The power of that attack comes in large part from the pace of the editing, with Hitchcock employing thirty-three different cuts in the twenty-four-second attack. Only a few of those are from what we would eventually come to know as that killer POV, from Norman's perspective, while the majority of the thirty-three shots come from a neutral camera view. Nonetheless, the path had been laid.

Despite the prominent position of *Psycho* in the horror canon, it was more accurately another 1960 film released just before *Psycho* that really pushed this idea forward. Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* featured a serial killer who films his murders. In the opening scene, the killer meets and murders a prostitute, and we, the audience, watch the scene unfold through the killer's camera, covertly filming the encounter from his pocket.

As the title implies, this idea of voyeuristically watching the killer commit his crimes was central to *Peeping Tom*; as a result, more than *Psycho*, this was the film that established this

POV shot as a convention of the emerging slasher genre. Elements of this POV could be found in the coming years, particularly in the Italian *giallo* films of Mario Bava and Dario Argento, but the next major step forward came in 1974 with the release of *Black Christmas*, a nasty take on the most wonderful time of the year directed by Bob Clark (who would go on to present a decidedly different view of Christmas with 1984's *A Christmas Story*). *Black Christmas* is often held up as the first true slasher, and with good reason. This is the film that established so many of the conventions we now associate with the subgenre – the final girl, the open-ended/twist ending, the holiday setting that was so big in the 80s, and of course, the killer POV. Here, Clark uses that POV for virtually every one of the killer's attacks, and he establishes it early. At the very beginning of the film, we enter the sorority house with the killer as he breaks into the attic. When the first murder occurs, the killer is hiding in a closet. We learn he is in the room through Clark's switching to his POV, watching the victim from the back of the closet. As the film continues, Clark keeps returning to that POV in those two ways: either during the actual murders or as the killer is hidden in the attic (typically accompanied by his watching the wrapped-up corpse of his first victim and unnervingly screeching about Billy).

The final bridge before *Friday the 13th* is, of course, John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). Carpenter re-uses many of the slasher trappings we saw in *Black Christmas*, though he actually does not rely heavily on the killer POV. In fact, he breaks with Clark's conventions by using it sparingly for just one of the murders. In the film's opening, we see through the eyes of six-year-old Michael Myers as he first spies on his sister with her boyfriend then dons a mask before stalking and murdering her. Perhaps most effectively, Carpenter stays with that POV shot as Michael leaves the house, watching his confused parents approach and remove his mask. It's only then that we switch to a neutral camera angle, seeing Michael's face for the first time (the only time we will see him until the film's climax). It's an incredibly powerful sequence, made more impactful both by Carpenter's use of the killer's POV, and his decision to limit that POV to this one sequence.



With all of these conventions firmly established, Cunningham set out to perform a seemingly typical execution of the genre when he made *Friday the 13th* two years later, in 1980. In many ways, Cunningham does indeed use the path already laid out for him. There's the final girl, the twist ending, the vague holiday setting (though not often referenced, the film is not called *Friday the 13th* for no reason), and even a score that owes a debt to Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* score. It also starts with a typical use of the killer POV. Two counselors sneak off, and under the watchful eye of our unseen killer, they proceed to take off their clothes and promptly pay for their indiscretion. As in *Halloween*, those opening murders immediately show that the killer POV is a part of this film's toolbox. During the film's next section (the daytime portion before the murders begin in earnest), Cunningham uses the killer POV in two ways. First, he again emphasizes that this will be a tool used for the murders themselves. This time, the victim is the unfortunate Annie, who makes the terrible decision to hitchhike and is picked up by the killer, only to be murdered before she even makes it to camp. During the sequences where Annie is with the killer, both in the car and for the actual murder, we watch the scene through the killer's POV. Again, this is similar to how this shot has previously been used.

The second way is slightly different. As the counselors unwind and swim, the killer watches them from the other side of the lake. There's a slight break from convention here as no attack is coming and we know no attack is coming – the killer is clearly far away – but we are still using that POV style. *Peeping Tom* did this a bit, as did *Black Christmas* with the attic scenes, but it's a small break from how it had primarily been used until now.

Things change drastically in the scene where Marcie is killed. (You would certainly be forgiven for not knowing any of the counselor's names; Marcie is the one who gets the axe in the face.) In these movies, when a lone girl goes off by herself to a remote location – in this case, the bathroom – we know her time is up. And at first, this looks like a standard kill. Marcie is in the bathroom, standing at the sink, looking away from the camera and we watch her from what has been established as the killer's POV. The camera is at a distance, and on the left side of the shot is the frame of the open bathroom door, implying that the

killer is partially behind the door, watching. With Marcie turned away, the camera moves forward slowly, advancing on our unsuspecting victim-to-be.

And that's when Cunningham pulls off a pretty impressive trick.

Marcie turns, looks straight at the camera, and there's no one there.

What was staged to look like the killer's POV is, in fact, not the killer – it's just the neutral camera. This is a complete shift from what we saw in the murders of the two counselors in the beginning and with Annie; in both of those



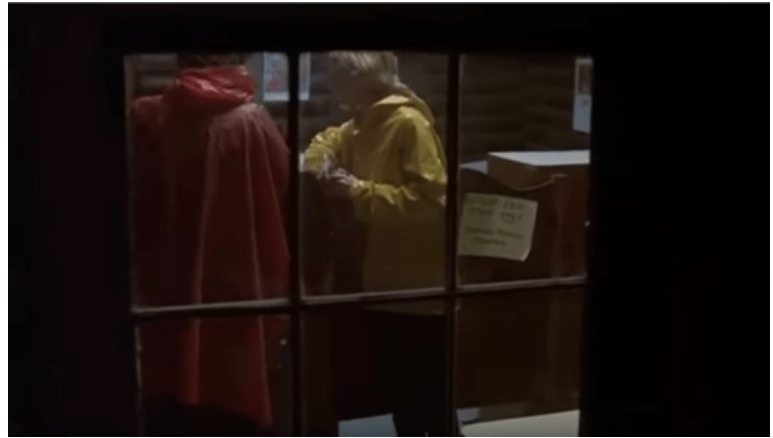
Marcie and the neutral camera's POV

situations, we watched the killer advance, we saw the victim look to the camera/killer, and then the attack. Here, Cunningham sets it up in exactly the same way, only to subvert our expectations, remove the killer, and deny us the anticipated attack.

The result of this is rather brilliant. As the audience, we thought we knew where the killer was – we felt relatively safe in our knowledge of how this attack was going to play out. And now that feeling of safety is gone. The killer could be anywhere. Cunningham subtly reinforces this notion by showing the scene from outside looking through the window, forcing us to ask if *this* is the actual killer POV. Again, we don't know. Marcie then turns to the closed showers, opening the curtains one at a time. This again emphasizes the idea that not only does Marcie not know where the killer is, we don't either. It is only when we see the shadow of the axe behind her that we know the attack is coming.

Cunningham repeats this trick later with the scene when Bill goes to check on the generator and get the power back on. Like Marcie, he has gone off alone, and like Marcie, we assume

this means he's done for. Just like Marcie at the sink, he begins working on the generator, his back to the camera. Again, the camera slowly moves in, the music swells, the attack feels imminent, Bill turns, and... nothing. It's not the killer, it's just the camera.



The camera "watches" Alice and Bill

This trick of setting us up to think we are watching from the killer's POV, only to find out it is actually the camera is a brilliant innovation. Nowhere in the use of this shot in previous films had a director fooled us like this. Until now, when we saw that killer POV, we knew the attack was coming. By taking that certainty away, Cunningham expertly dials the tension up in this film. Now, the conventions we are used to are failing us. We don't know where the killer is, when she is attacking. Even worse, we are being tricked into thinking we know, creating a false sense of security that is then yanked away from us. As a result, the tension rises not only in the actual attack scenes, but in all scenes. With that safety gone, we can no longer relax and wait for the next murder sequence to begin. Like the victims in the film, we don't know when it's coming, or where it's coming from, and the result is a big part of the tension of *Friday the 13th*.

While the two scenes described above best capture this change, there are two other ways the film reinforces the idea. The first is a sort of an inverse of what we saw above. This happens when Alice and Bill break into the office. The camera starts with them and is obviously just a camera. Then, they break a window and enter the office. But the camera stays outside, and moves along the wall, ultimately "watching" Alice and Bill through the window.

We know this is the camera, but Cunningham is again moving it more like it is the actual killer, watching the prey from afar. This contributes to that uneasy feeling of “Is this or isn’t this the killer?”

The other key change Cunningham makes here is that he removes the “tell” from these shots. In previous films, there was never any doubt that we had switched to the killer POV because the directors used various tells to really make the point clear. In *Peeping Tom*, it’s the cross-hairs of the camera. In *Black Christmas*, it’s the labored breathing and yells of the killer that always accompany these shots. In *Halloween*, Carpenter actually starts without a tell; that opening shot of the house could just be the camera before you realize it is Michael. But he then has Michael put on the mask, with us now watching through the eye holes. *Friday the 13th* eschews all of that. The killer makes no noise. Often, there is the trademark Mancini music, but that music also plays many times when we are not in the killer’s POV. There’s no clear signal to the viewer that this is the POV shot, and so, again, that sense of disorientation and unease increases as the tension builds.

By first establishing the use of the previously established killer POV trope, then twisting that trope and using it in a new way, *Friday the 13th* breaks new ground. It is here that the film shows that it is not a mere imitator, but it is taking what has been done and heightening it to instill that sense of fear and tension that every horror viewer craves. Director Sean S. Cunningham and director of photography Barry Abrams seldom get credit for this work, but they deserve it. Not only is the idea of flipping the killer’s POV an inspired one, but with the use of little details like the bathroom door frame, the camera outside the window, and the removal of the tells, the execution of this idea is pulled off perfectly. It is this that rightfully should earn *Friday the 13th* the credit from critics it has so seldom received.

Sadly, while Jason and the franchise would live on for another 11 films (to date), Cunningham’s work here would not be repeated. Already by Part 2, this trick was left to the

side, replaced by a combination of the traditional killer POV, and an emphasis on effective, but completely illogical surprise jump scares. But that's an article for another time.

---

Notes:

[1] "Friday the 13th: THR's 1980 Review."

[2] Parker

[3] "Box Office History for Friday the 13th Movies."

[4] Ford

Works Cited:

“Box Office History for Friday the 13th Movies.” *The Numbers*, n.d., [www.the-numbers.com/movies/franchise/Friday-the-13th#tab=summary](http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/franchise/Friday-the-13th#tab=summary).

Ford, Matt. “Friday the 13th (1980).” *BBC*, 10 Oct.

2000 [www.bbc.co.uk/films/2000/10/10/friday the 13th 1980 review.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2000/10/10/friday_the_13th_1980_review.shtml).

“Friday the 13th: THR’s 1980 Review.” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 1 Nov.

2014, [www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/friday-13th-read-thrs-scathing-745573](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/friday-13th-read-thrs-scathing-745573).

Parker, Jason. “Gene Siskel’s Original Friday The 13th Mini Review For The Chicago Tribune.” *Friday the 13th*, 3 Jun.

2012, [www.fridaythe13thfranchise.com/2012/06/gene-siskels-original-friday-13th-mini.html](http://www.fridaythe13thfranchise.com/2012/06/gene-siskels-original-friday-13th-mini.html).

# NED, TED, AND THE OTHER: MASCULINITIES IN FRIDAY THE 13TH

Dustin Dunaway

The slasher film is one of the few subgenres in which the female character gets most of the attention. “Final Girls” are a trope all their own, and rightly so, given the importance of gender to the slasher formula. But the surfeit of expendable male characters also leaves some areas unexamined. A genre that gives us the woman as fighter certainly has some things to say about men and, more importantly, the types of masculinity that were acceptable in the 1980s. While the mainstream was feeding us Rambo, Rocky, and ‘Ahnold,’ slasher movies were doing something far more subversive with their male characters.

*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980) situates manhood in several ways. Despite Helen Reddy’s ringing in the decade by belting out the feminist anthem “I Am Woman,” it was still a man’s world in 1980. In the brief time before they are dispatched by an unseen killer in the opening scene of *Friday the 13th*, camp counsellors Barry and Claudette have a flirtatious lover’s spat over whether Claudette is a better kisser than one of the other girls (Mary Anne) at camp. Barry responds, “How would I know?” but he says it in a way that tells us that he knows all too well what kind of kisser Mary Anne is. Cunningham’s stated goal in this first film of the successful franchise was to bring in the horny, teenage audience—and introducing them immediately to the sexual dramas of teenagers was certainly one way to do it.

The most striking differences in masculinity in *Friday the 13th* are marked by generation. The older men in the film come across as creepy, even predatory. While Enos, the truck driver, shoos away Crazy Ralph (Walt Gorney) when Ralph accosts Annie, he’s not above getting way more handsy than is necessary when helping Annie (Robbi Morgan) into the cab of the truck. This predatory behavior is continued in Steve Christy (Peter Brouwer), the

camp's patriarch. When the audience meets Steve and Alice (Adrienne King), there is an implied relationship between them, and while we never get official ages of the characters, it's apparent that there is a sizable gap between the two. Alice uncomfortably freezes as Steve brushes her hair and calls her pretty.

All of this could easily be explained away as a necessary element of the slasher film – the creation of red herrings – but for the fact that the portrayal of older, less sexually viable men is so consistently rapacious. It's a facet of gendered interaction that women sitting in the theater in 1980 would have been well acquainted with. "I'd say she's doing a woman's hardest job: juggling wolves," Grace Kelly tells James Stewart in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). In some form or fashion, each of the female camp counselors in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* struggles to keep a wolf at bay.

The younger male characters are equally oversexed, but there are marked differences in the way that Cunningham portrays their desirability. Bill (Harry Crosby) isn't given much characterization throughout the first two-thirds of the film – no doubt to bolster his bona fides as a red herring. His infamous snake-chopping scene is portrayed as cold and calculating, evincing the type of masculinity that is unfeeling, devoid of emotion. This is in stark contrast to the scenes that precede the snake killing. Bill seems jovial and joking with Alice just a few minutes earlier in the film, and he comes across as coolly extroverted during the 'Strip Monopoly' sequence.

But perhaps no dynamic so clearly illustrates the argument of R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* as the divide between Ned Rubenstein (Mark Nelson) and Jack Burrell (Kevin Bacon). Connell argues that masculinity is not static; it is predicated on social position and environment. Therefore, what makes a man masculine in one context may be irrelevant in another. This also applies to time and place.

Jack, as portrayed by a young, buff Kevin Bacon, is the epitome of late-1970s masculinity. Sheepishly provincial while also being a sexual dynamo, Jack evinces an "aw shucks" appeal



straight out of an Andy Gibb music video. While he displays a certain ruggedness in his beat-up pick-up truck, it's not hard to imagine he plans on blowing all that summer camp money on a bitchin' new Trans-Am that he'll spend every weekend waxing in the driveway to Ted Nugent's "Stranglehold." If we view masculinity as John Bowlby viewed relationship attachment styles, we can see that Jack Burrell falls firmly into a "securely masculine" style. As an audience, we don't spend a tremendous amount of time with him, but the glimpses we do get reveal no insecurity for Jack about who he is. While "Neddy" awkwardly flirts with Marcie (Jeannine Taylor) on the way to the camp, asking if there will be other pretty girls like her, Jack displays the casual confidence of someone sure that he'll be in Marcie's bed at the end of the night.



Jack Burrell (Kevin Bacon) was the epitome of teen masculinity in the 1970s

twenty-two minutes over eight scenes in the film. In each of those eight scenes, Ned does something to either center the focus on himself or undermine the secure masculinity of others, especially when his own masculinity is challenged. Although few side characters are developed in the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films, even the filler reveals the dynamic between Ned and the other men to be one of contrast. This is more apparent when viewing the scenes as they are structured.

While Ned's toying with Marcie goes nowhere, his subsequent flirting with other women doesn't go much better. Upon arriving at the camp, he immediately ingratiates himself with

Conversely, Ned's squirrely look-at-me antics reveal a young man struggling as a non-Jack in a world that expects nothing but Jacks. If we stick with Bowlby's categorizations, Ned demonstrates the "preoccupied masculinity" style.

As a character, Ned exists for

Brenda (Laurie Bartram) by nearly killing her with an arrow and a bad Bogart impression. When that approach is unsuccessful, he deceives her into thinking he's drowning and then sexually assaults her on the pier, alienating almost everyone at the camp. During the snake

scene in the cabin, it is Ned who fearfully hides behind the women and then panic-jumps onto the bed, creating chaos, while Bill stoically hacks the snake to pieces. In the next scene, Ned is dancing around in an indigenous headdress and quipping with Officer Dorf while the



Ned (Mark Nelson) irritates Brenda (Laurie Bartram) and the others with his juvenile antics

rest of the crew takes the latter's warning about Crazy Ralph seriously. Immediately after that, Alice finds Ralph skulking in the pantry, and it is Ned who unconvincingly tries to intimidate Ralph into leaving. Ned's cracking voice as he reprimands Ralph to "Get the hell out of here, man!" is a far cry from the secure masculinity of Bill or Jack.

Things just get worse for Ned. The camp loses power and Jack interjects helpfully, "Steve taught me to use the emergency generator." Already pushing his insecure, showy conduct to the hilt, Ned frames this as a criticism. "God, don't ya just love that macho talk: 'emergency generator,'" he mocks. It is at this point that everyone else in the room openly tries to get away from Ned. The next time we see Ned, he is sulking and watching Jack and Marcie make out from afar. This is also the last time we see him alive.

Although this duality of secure and preoccupied masculinities is brief and is embodied by two "cannon fodder" characters, the ideology of the film is clear: Jack Burrell is how *real* men should act – rugged, self-assured, and mature; Ned Rubenstein is just a boy

cosplaying as a man. As symbols go, they are fleeting but palpable, and when it came time for the sequel, those symbols evolved into outright stereotypes.

Gawky redhead scamp Ted Bowen (Stuart Charno) ostensibly takes over the role of Prankster from Ned in *Part 2* (1981), but while his pranks are more over-the-top and infuriating – he has Jeff (Bill Randolph) and Sandra’s (Marta Kober) truck towed and later leaps out at the campers during the scariest part of Jason’s origin story – his jokes seem to be more about amusement than pleadingly trying to get people to notice him. Ted has no designs on any of the women at camp, nor is he in competition with any of the men. He neither flouts authority, nor embraces it. In fact, he seems dismissive of the kind of macho gender roles his peers are clinging to throughout the film. In this, Ted can be categorized as “dismissive-masculine.” Dismissive-Attachment is described as an aloof, or apathetic, view of relationships.<sup>[1]</sup> Ted dismisses the need to form a relationship with his perfectly masculine self. He simply doesn’t adopt the existing roles and seems comfortable with that. So, in that respect, Ted cannot be Ned’s successor.

Instead, that role falls to Scott Cheney. Passed over as a slasher “Prankster” because he is played by former model Russell Todd, Scott recreates Ned’s preoccupied masculinity to a tee. When we first meet Scott, we’re actually looking *through* his eyes at the disembodied buttocks of Terry McCarthy (Kirsten Baker) in one of the series’ Male Gaze-iest shots. He playfully slingshots a pebble that gets her attention and follows it up with a come-hither stare. Instead, Terry brushes him off as annoying. She rejects him again when he asks her to dance and then makes him promise to discontinue the juvenile antics before she will cut him out of a snare trap. That Terry is not the object of affection for anyone else at camp allows Scott’s preoccupied masculinity to remain impish to the end.

If Scott is the Prankster, then Jeff Dunsberry (Bill Randolph) is certainly the Jock. Although the two never interact, they are positioned in the same clashing archetypal roles as Ned and Jack were in the first film. Jeff bumbles through most of the film, coming off as, frankly,

a dumber version of Jack Burrell. He's still presented as the (mostly) innocent beefcake of the cast, and though he suffers the same fate as Scott in the end, he is presented as the more competent, sexually desirable of the two.

This pattern of conflicting secure and preoccupied masculinities would continue in 1982's *Part III* (or *Part 3-D*, if you prefer), with Andy Beltrami (Jeffrey Rogers) and Shelly Finkelstein (Larry Zerner). In this case, Andy and Shelly are presented as much closer friends than the men in previous films. In fact, one of the more interesting parts of the paradigm is that Andy has taken Shelly under his wing, almost as a masculinity mentor. Shelly's self-destructive behavior is old hat by the third installment, and instead of disowning him, Andy tries to convince Shelly to behave in a more securely masculine fashion. "Be yourself," Andy scolds, to which Shelly retorts, "Would you be yourself if you looked like this?" It's the first glimpse of the truly conservative nature of high school sexual politics. "Sorry," Shelly apologizes to his blind date, Vera (Catherine Parks), immediately recognizing that he's been pigeonholed into the not-Jack category. Unlike its predecessors, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, *Part III* paints the behaviors of men as a reaction to, rather than a reason for, not fitting in. In many ways, Shelly is a precursor to the involuntarily celibate Nice Guys™ that would come to permeate the pop culture landscape over the next few decades.

The secure/preoccupied model would be turned on its ear in the fourth installment. *The Final Chapter* (1984) is widely praised among fans, and even some critics, for having the most well-rounded characters of the first four films. Much of this is likely due to the way the film disrupts the already tired tropes of masculine characters. While we do have four male characters, two of the characters embody the masculine tropes more distinctly than the others. Ted(dy Bear) Cooper (Lawrence Monoson) and Jimmy Mortimer (Crispin Glover) are engaged in a conversation about Jimmy's sexual prowess, or lack thereof, which leads to Ted branding Jimmy "Dead F\*\*\*." Unlike Andy and Shelly's friendship, which genuinely seems to be based on Andy wanting to help his friend, Ted and Jimmy's friendship is based in Ted berating Jimmy's wanting masculinity. Of course, the joke is

ultimately on Ted, as Jimmy winds up with beautiful twin, Tina (Camilla More), while Ted's increasing desperation and lack of self-awareness turns Tina's sister, Terri (Carey More), off.

Interestingly, this dynamic between secure and preoccupied masculinities presaged many of the teen sex comedies of the 1980s. Indeed, it was the preoccupied and dismissive masculine characters who would win the day by the late 80s and early 90s—a feat tied to overcoming the confident jock bully and getting the girl by winning the All-Valley Karate Tournament, skiing the K12, or defeating the Alpha Betas in the Greek Games.

As with all categorization, though, these models leave out “the Other.” Nowhere is the Other

more personified than in Jason Voorhees, a character who stands in direct opposition to various models of manhood. Jason is what gender scholar and literary critic Julia Kristeva might call “abject.”<sup>[ii]</sup> For one thing, it is implied that Jason was disabled before he met his untimely death. “Jason should have been watched! Every minute! He was... he wasn't a very good



Jason (Steve Dash), in *Friday the 13th, Part 2*, exists in an abject space outside of conventional gender roles

swimmer,” his mother explains, stopping herself from revealing anything more about him. For many scholars, especially in the 1980s, disability, which implies a dependence and helplessness, stands diametrically opposed to masculinity, which necessitates power and autonomy.

Unlike *Part 2's* Mark Jarvis (Tom McBride), who lost the use of his legs in a motorcycle accident after a presumably “normal” childhood, Jason isn't sexually available. He has no

social or economic expertise. He stands utterly outside of masculine categorization. And yet, he dominates relevant forms of masculinity, literally crushing the life out of men who were portrayed as rugged, even hyperviolent, individuals. Kristeva argues that the abject is horrific because of the feelings of revulsion we feel when the familiar is altered in a way that challenges our hegemonic views. For Kristeva, the greatest example of the abject was the corpse, which we experience as a challenge to our feeling of vitality.

Jason fits the “abject” moniker in three ways. First, as a killer, he is the embodiment of Death for teenagers who *should* be able to live another 60 years in a fair world. Neither dead nor alive himself, Jason resides in a liminal space that should not exist. This is true even before he is resurrected in *Jason Lives* (1986). The lore itself places Jason in the spaces of both the dead and the living. Jason also fulfills the abject in a second way. His appearance is grotesque, the antithesis of “the lovely, nubile young girls” that permeate the series.<sup>[iii]</sup> If the teenage dream is to be with the beautiful and naked campers in an idyllic setting, then Jason Voorhees is the teenage nightmare. His disfigured face twisted in a rictus of a horrific grin, Jason is repulsive to our dominant idea of beauty. This is so apparent that Jason himself recognizes that he must cover his face, lest the screams of terror be directed at him and not the violence that he’s about to inflict. Finally, Jason fulfills the abject by being a “Mama’s Boy.” In the second film, Ginny (Amy Steel) speculates that Jason might be “a child trapped in a man’s body.” Because one facet of masculinity is independence, Jason’s emotional attachment to his mother stirs a pathetic disgust in the audience. With his agency experienced primarily through his maternal fantasies, he exists neither as subject nor object, neither fully masculine, nor fully feminine.

Despite their reputation as brainless popcorn movies, the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films provide us with a snapshot of reactionary sexual politics in a post-second-wave environment, launching a conversation about the rules of gender and sexual development—especially masculinity—that came to define the teen-oriented films of the 1980s.

Notes:

[i] Connors, 475-93.

[ii] Kristeva, 1-31.

[iii] Flory, 11.

Works Cited:

Bowlby, John. *Separation, Anxiety and Anger. Vol 2 of Attachment and Loss*. Hogarth, 1973.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. 1995. University of California Press, second edition, 2005.

Connors, M. E. "The Renunciation of Love: Dismissive Attachment and its

Treatment." *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1997, pp. 475-93.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia University Press, 1982

Flory, Susy. "Friday 13th: New Blood, Old Story." *The Signal*, 20 May 1988, p. 11.



# “DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!”: THE BIRTH OF THE FINAL BOY IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE FINAL CHAPTER*

Ethan Robles

*Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984) is not the best-known film of the *Friday the 13th* franchise. As the fourth installment, *The Final Chapter* seems comfortable with its formulaic construction and its embodiment of a clichéd slasher plot. We find Jason Voorhees murdered following the events of *Friday the 13th Part III*. He is transported to a local hospital, where he miraculously revives and begins making his journey back to Camp Crystal Lake. Near the infamous site, a divorcée, her children, and a group of unsuspecting teens are enjoying the summer days isolated in the wilderness. Their seclusion comes to an end when Jason arrives, having come home to continue his killing spree. Despite its simplicity, *The Final Chapter* is actually, I argue, one of the most daring of slasher films: it asks serious questions regarding the “Final Girl” of the horror genre.

The *Friday the 13th* franchise may be virtually synonymous with the slasher’s excesses, yet *The Final Chapter* offers an intriguing twist on the traditional slasher narrative. Instead of focusing on the Final Girl, *The Final Chapter* breaks form and gives us the first Final Boy. The film’s most complex character, Tommy Jarvis (Corey Feldman), offers an entirely new relationship between the survivor and the slasher villain—as well as entirely new representations of gender and sexuality in horror. Tommy Jarvis is the only character in the film who is able to halt Jason’s relentless killing, and his arc is particularly important because it parallels his sister’s, Trish Jarvis (Kimberly Beck), including her transformation into the Final Girl. By comparing these two characters, *The Final Chapter* discloses the fundamental differences between a Final Girl and a Final Boy and, more importantly, it illuminates the meanings of the Final Boy within the slasher genre.

Before comparing Tommy and Trish, I want to define the Final Girl trope and its relation to the *Friday the 13th* franchise. Defining the term is significant, because the Final Girl is one of the few scholarly concepts that has broken into mainstream culture. From very tongue-in-cheek films like *Scream* (1999) and *The Final Girls* (2015) to Riley Sager's



Trish (Kimberley Beck) – the Final Girl

novel, *Final Girls* (2017), the concept has accrued nuances and meanings the more it has been adapted. That's not a bad thing. These adaptations invite conversation around the underlying themes of the slasher film and allow audiences outside of academia to see the richness in genre movies. However, understanding the Final Girl's original definition is important, especially when examining the original trope's evolution into the Final Boy. The first iteration of the Final Girl came from Carol Clover's *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. The book is known for the articulation of the Final Girl concept, but narrowing the scope of the work does a disservice to Clover's scholarship. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* is perhaps the first scholarly book to appreciate low-budget, shock cinema and ascribe meaning to a genre that was traditionally written off as low-brow. Clover is not the *only* scholar and writer to see meaning within low-budget horror film, but she may have been one of the first to understand the significance of horror cinema for academic scholarship. Considering how hard it is for in-depth, scholarly writing to move beyond the confines of the ivory tower, Clover's work deserves more credit than simply for identifying the Final Girl. Nonetheless, it is the Final Girl that remains her principal legacy.

On the surface, the meaning of the Final Girl is evident. Clover writes that the Final Girl

“is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified. If her friends knew they were about to die only seconds before the event, the Final Girl lives with the knowledge for long minutes or hours. She alone looks death in the face, but she alone also finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued (ending A) or to kill him herself (ending B). But in either case, from 1974 on, the survivor figure has been female.”<sup>[i]</sup>

The Final Girl, then, is the last one to face the killer and either escape or fight. Nuance arises from the Final Girl’s exposure to fear and violence. Unlike her murdered friends, the Final Girl is forced to “look death in the face” and to carry the burden of that look throughout large portions of the film. And despite the brush with death and the terror of being hunted, she is still able to escape or defeat the killer. The question, then, is why are the Final Girls the only ones who are able to survive? Clover’s answer is tied directly to gender and sexuality.

The Final Girl is not only the last survivor of the slasher; she also encompasses a shift away from the highly sexualized females that often end up as victims. To Clover, it is no coincidence that the Final Girl is usually virginal or, in some cases, portrayed as asexual. In her words, “The Final Girl is boyish...she is not fully feminine – not, in any case, feminine in the ways of her friends. 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.”<sup>[ii]</sup> In calling the Final Girl sexually reluctant, intelligent, and capable, Clover signals her difference from other female horror film characters. If the Final Girl embodies these qualities, then the females that become victims *cannot* possess the same attributes. They are fundamentally opposed and this difference leads to their contrasting fates.

*Friday the 13th*, especially *The Final Chapter*, is rife with boys and girls who think only of sex, indulgence, excess, or transgression. They are the subject of horror film cliché, acting as fodder for shock and gore. Viewers are most definitely on the side of the Final Girl, invested in her capability, despite her consistent brushes with death and violence. Up until *The Final Chapter*, the Final Girl was *always* a girl. Perhaps she was less sexualized than the other females in the film. Perhaps she was portrayed as a tomboy or as androgynous, but the slasher never explicitly made these Final Girls into boys. It's here that *The Final Chapter* moves away from form and asks the question: what would it mean to have a male survivor? As though forcing the audience to consider this question, *The Final Chapter* provides its viewers with both a Final Girl *and* a Final Boy.

Tommy and Trish Jarvis's gender difference influences the various transformations that horror film protagonists must undergo in order to overcome the killer. Trish, our model Final Girl in this experiment, is largely what we would expect to see given Clover's definition. Like Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) before her, Trish is coded as nonsexual. She does not dress in scandalous outfits or swoon over men. In the mornings, she jogs with her mother. In the evenings, she reads books. For the first half of the film, her only reference to relationships is a mention of the possibility of her parents reconciling their divorce. When asked to skinny dip with a bunch of teenagers, she responds, "No thanks. I think I'm overdressed." Every facet of Trish's characterization is designed to be in direct contrast to the sexuality of the other teenagers in the film. Trish checks every box of Clover's definition, and, as horror fans, we can safely assume that she is our hero. *The Final Chapter*, however, has other plans.

Throughout the film, Tommy Jarvis is portrayed as Trish's foil and is continually associated with monstrosity and sexuality. When Tommy first appears on screen, he wears a mask that is not dissimilar to that of Jason Voorhees.

His interest in monstrosity is not unintentional. Tommy is a monster maker. His room is



Tommy's monster mask illustrates his association with monstrosity

filled with masks and props that he created. At one point in the film, he brings Rob (whose sister was murdered by Jason and who is now hunting the killer) to his room to show off his many designs.

Tommy's interest in monstrosity and monster makeup has implications for the film's plot, but it also contributes to one of

the central differences between *Final Girls* and *Final Boys*. Tommy is allowed to associate with monstrosity throughout the film, while Trish is meant to *fear* monstrosity in order, ultimately, to defeat it. This factor isn't the only fundamental difference between the siblings, however.

*The Final Chapter* is near comical in its brimming sexuality, and Tommy, a twelve-year-old boy, is no exception. Early in the film, there are two explicit references to Tommy's sexuality. Upon witnessing the teens skinny dipping, Tommy is transfixed by their naked bodies. Unlike Trish and her hesitancy to participate in nudity, Tommy watches them avidly, and the camera focuses on the female bodies, mirroring his gaze. When driving away, he comments on the skinny dippers, saying, "Some pack of patootsies, huh?" In this interaction, his curiosity is rather bland. It is not surprising that a child nearing or entering puberty would have an emerging interest in sexuality. This moment feels somewhat innocent. However, things are a little different when Tommy is confronted with actual sex. When he has an opportunity to witness sexual interaction, Tommy's behavior presents animalistic qualities that starkly diverge from the attributes of Clover's Final Girl. Tommy spots one of the teenage women from his window and, in a scene not unfamiliar to audiences, he watches her undress and embrace her boyfriend. As he witnesses the initial nudity, he leaps around on his bed, smashes his face into his pillow, and grunts. As the scene progresses and the boyfriend steps into the window frame, Tommy jumps around

again, grunting, elated at what he is seeing. There is no mistaking that Tommy is sexually aroused by the scene. As though we needed more evidence, his mother enters his room during this episode and he hides his curiosity from her by feigning sleep. These spastic, animalistic movements are much different than the poised, uninterested sexuality of the Final Girl. While Trish is consistent in her avoidance of sexual interaction, Tommy fully embraces such desires—and he does so, moreover, without punishment from Jason.

The contrast between Trish and Tommy raises questions regarding their relation to the killer, Jason Voorhees. When the film is nearing its end, Trish is forced into the Final Girl position rather quickly and is exposed to the killer and the life-threatening violence that Clover describes. Trish is made to view corpses; she witnesses Rob's murder; she is chased, beaten, and cornered. As we expect with the Final Girl, she is able to hurt the monster. She outsmarts Jason on multiple occasions, drives a blade deep into his hand, smashes a television over his head, and drives a hammer into his neck. Regardless of all this damage, she does not stop him. Indeed, it feels as though the Final Girl is about to fall victim to Jason, until Tommy steps in.

The confrontation between Tommy and Jason cements the Final Boy as fundamentally different from the Final Girl and a mirror image of the killer. The now-dead Rob left behind news articles regarding Jason. Tommy rifles through these clippings before the climax of the film. He learns Jason's story and sees an artist's rendering of Jason as a child. While Trish is being chased, harmed, and traumatized, Tommy is transforming. He cuts his hair, shaves his head, and applies makeup so that he resembles a young Jason.

As Jason is attacking Trish, Tommy appears on the stairwell and reveals himself to be a carbon copy of the artist's rendering. Once he notices the boy, Jason is immediately drawn to him. He stops attacking Trish and approaches his younger self. He is nonviolent, paused. This moment of recognition between Jason and Tommy saves the two siblings' lives.

Tommy's replication of Jason underlines the central differences between the Final Girl and the Final Boy. Trish and Tommy are both chased and hunted by Jason. They both face violence, and they both live through the massacre. Tommy differs, however, because he literally becomes the monster. Throughout



Tommy's monster mask illustrates his association with monstrosity

the film, he is allowed to indulge in practices—in an attraction to both sexuality and monstrosity—that would have spelled doom for a Final Girl. These characteristics lead Tommy to the distinctive fate of the Final Boy: to survive the slasher film, the Final Boy must (exactly) mirror the killer. And this conversion is not only superficial. While uncontrollably hacking into Jason with a machete, Tommy screams, “Die! Die! Die! Die!” By killing Jason with such brutality (and Jason’s signature machete), Tommy not only looks like the killer, but he also becomes one.

*The Final Chapter's* ending indicates that Tommy cannot return to normality following his encounter with Jason. Not only has his appearance changed, but his mental state is corrupted by his transformation. Having also survived, Trish asks to see her brother. Still clad in his Jason Voorhees makeup, Tommy embraces his sister. The film ends as Tommy stares into the camera, a deranged look in his eye, mirroring Jason’s dead, focused stare.

There is no doubt that the Final Girl is always fundamentally altered by a slasher film’s events. However, Tommy’s gaze indicates that he is irrevocably lost to his transformation. The Final Boy pays for his indulgences in a way that the Final Girl cannot. Indeed, Tommy eventually dons the hockey mask himself in *The Final Chapter's* sequel, *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* (1985).

The differences between the Final Girl and the Final Boy exemplify the longstanding importance of binary gender to the slasher film. Indeed, the genre relies on dichotomized conceptions of masculinity and femininity. As Clover herself writes, the Final Girl is a girl precisely because “abject



Tommy's dead eye stare confirms his transformation into a killer

terror . . . is gendered feminine.”<sup>[iii]</sup> Likewise, the Final Boy relies heavily on the inherent violence that is coded masculine.<sup>[iv]</sup> Tommy’s engagement with monstrosity and his burgeoning sexuality feel “normal,” because viewers expect masculine subjects to be interested in monster movies and women’s bodies. This gender coding makes Tommy’s transformation into “monster” possible. The Final Boy continued to evolve and should certainly be studied further. *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy’s Revenge* (1985) offers a Final Boy who is struggling with homosexuality. *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* (1995) returns Tommy Doyle to the *Halloween* franchise and is explicit regarding the depths of his trauma.<sup>[v]</sup> Like the Final Girl before him, the Final Boy offers an opportunity to look closely at the implications of gender and sexuality within the horror film. Tommy Jarvis is only the first of many stories yet to unfold.

---

Notes:

<sup>[i]</sup> Clover, 35.

<sup>[ii]</sup> Clover, 40.

<sup>[iii]</sup> Clover, 51.

<sup>[iv]</sup> Clover does, of course, qualify the “femininity” of the Final Girl, who is able to adopt the “masculine” traits of seeing and effecting violence. But Clover nonetheless adheres to a



binary system of gender in that she goes on to argue that, because she can see and use violence, the Final Girl is in fact “like a man” (58). She is “masculine” albeit in a female body. Other scholars have critiqued Clover for her tendency to equate all the Final Girl’s strength, perceptiveness, and aggression to her “masculinity.” See Pinedo 82-84, who famously claims that Clover reads the Final Girl as a “male in drag” (82).

[v] The *Halloween* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises are, perhaps, the common associates to the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series and are paired together to emphasize their relationship to the Slasher genre. However, there are more recent films that feature the Final Boy that deserve mention. Regarding *Hostel* (2005), Dawn Keetley proposed that Paxton (Jay Hernandez) becomes the Final Boy and, in doing so, allows male viewers to identify with abject terror that is normally associated with the Final Girl (Keetley). By focusing beyond the Slasher sub-genre, Keetley opens the conversation to differing horror films and allows us to view films like *Saw* (2004), *Final Destination* (2000), *Get Out* (2017) as continuing the Final Boy’s legacy.

Works Cited:

Clover, Carol. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

*Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*. Directed by Danny Steinmann, Paramount Pictures, 1985.

*Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter*. Directed by Joseph Zito, Paramount Pictures, 1984.

*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*. Directed by Joe Chappelle, Miramax, 1995.

Keetley, Dawn. "The Final Girl, Pt. 4: The Hostel Films and Paxton as "Final Girl"." Horror

Homeroom, 21 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.horrorhomeroom.com/final-girl-part-4/>>.

*A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge*. Directed by Jack Sholder, New Line Cinema,

1985.

Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film*

*Viewing*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

# SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL: QUEERING THE *FRIDAY THE* *13TH* FRANCHISE

David Ruis Fisher

*Jason is so gay.* These words were spoken once by an ex-boyfriend as we sat watching *Friday the 13th Part II*. It was more like I was forcing him to watch it, and he was just doing it to appease my nerdy obsession. As a slasher film fanatic and a hardcore *Friday the 13th* lover, I quickly took offense to this notion. *Jason is not gay*, I fired back. The ex was using the label, not as a pejorative, but as a way of describing Jason's own sexual identity. *He's sooo gay*, he said, pausing right before the Jeff/Sandra shish kebab death scene. I felt that he was reading too much into these films. I saw them as forms of entertainment that made my adolescent years somewhat bearable, and he was theorizing and analyzing them like Jason was strapped down to Freud's couch. The ex would not let up: *Why do you like watching these films? They are so heteronormative. Where is the queer POV of these films? Jason is so gay!* Just like the hundreds of deaths I watched unfold in these *Friday the 13th* films, I was witness to the eye-gouging death of my very own relationship. In this essay, I aim to address these questions of queerness in the *Friday the 13th* franchise, zeroing in on the first eight films under the Paramount Pictures banner (1980-1989). I came into my queerness in the age of "Just Say No" rhetoric and the rising of the AIDS epidemic, which halted sexual exploration for a group of men being attacked by our very own machete-wielding madman.

I would think about this conversation with my ex-boyfriend years later as I made my way through the machete-wielding canon while writing my own PhD dissertation. After years of studying Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, and observing the lack of queer representation in mainstream horror films, the lights finally came on. Those questions my ex-boyfriend so fierily exclaimed bubbled up to the surface, and I finally had to dissect a franchise that I cherished so much. These were films that stayed in my conscious since the

first time I witnessed the beheading of Mrs. Voorhees at the age of five with my older brother, watching from a couch with amusement at the little monster he was creating by supplying me with sequel after sequel. This was the basis of our brotherly relationship.

I made a list. With a lack of queer characters in the franchise, was I able to queer the *Friday* canon? As a cisgender, queer, Mexican man, what stock did I have in a franchise that seemed to ignore queer representation? The clues were there: mother issues and the lack of a father figure or presence (not just Jason and Mrs. Voorhees's relationship, but let's take a look at Vera and her mother's own relationship in *Friday the 13th Part III*), dissecting the heteronormative sex scenes in a franchise that ignored my own group's sexuality (let's face it, these sex scenes were some of the first sex scenes young, queer fanatics viewed growing up), the admiration for brave final girl characters (using them as a lens for our own bullying and our own fierceness), and the themes of using Jason Voorhees as a conduit for the AIDS epidemic that nearly annihilated the gay population in the 1980s, including the life of my older gay brother who had introduced me to the series.

I did not grow up with a Mrs. Voorhees. My mother had been a stay-at-home mom for close to twenty-two years until I was born and then decided to go into the workforce. With a father that worked 4 PM-Midnight on the railroad, I was alone a lot. Television and our VCR kept me company with two teenage sisters who were sometimes bothered with a little brother tagging along or messing around in their priceless Prince records. My older brothers had already fled the house once they both turned eighteen. So, I was left with a television, a VCR, and old VHS copies of films that my oldest brother left behind for me. Most of these were horror films. As the VHS boom and the popularity of video stores hit the 1980s, my mother was glad to get me out of her hair for a few hours by taking me on frequent trips to the video store, where I would stock up on horror movies, popcorn, and candy. She would throw me a twenty-dollar bill and tell me to go wild! More often than not, the video store clerks would wander outside, tap on my mother's window, and ask her if she permitted me to rent the R-rated movies I had at the counter. Puffing heavily on a Kent cigarette, she okayed pretty much anything.

I look at all of the mothers in the *Friday the 13th* franchise with a sense of fondness: Mrs. Voorhees (Part I), Vera's mother (Part III), Mrs. Jarvis (Part IV), Ethel (Part V), Mrs. Shepard (Part VII). These were mothers that ultimately cared for the well-being of their child(ren). I strongly believe that if Mrs. Voorhees saw her son drowning, she would have done anything to have saved him. My mother, on the other hand, would have stood by the edge of the water and told me to kick faster with my legs and stop being such a baby. It was not so much that she was cruel when these stressful, anxiety-ridden things would happen, she just wanted me to be able to do things on my own without her help. This also could have been one of the many reasons why my brothers left so quickly after their high school graduations. When there are not a lot of rules in the house, you often want that sense of security. I found that in strangers.

My older brother, Frank, may have started my obsession with the *Friday the 13th* series, but the video clerks were the horror dramaturgs of my adolescent years. I would walk into my town's video store, and the clerks would be ready with recommendations:

"If you watched *this*, then you are definitely going to love *this*..."

"Oh, you love *Friday the 13th*, why don't you mash it up with some Mario Bava?"

Video clerks were my superheroes. Where my brother Frank left off, these movie lovers shot me into the stars by unleashing a tomb of knowledgeable anecdotes and trivia that would send me out of the video store with a bag of movies, provisions, and a copy of *Fangoria Magazine*.

By the time I was thirteen, I had come to two conclusions: I would never be an all-star athlete, and I would never be a Prince protege. My mother could see this as a problem. I was shying away from sports and retreating into my room into a fantasy world of horror films and horror books. My parents tried to purposely put me on a basketball team at our

local community center and tried to sign me up for baseball in the Spring to no advantage. The worry of their youngest son being hailed a 'sissy' or 'queer' was bringing up past memories of worry they'd had with my brother, Frank.

I do not remember bullying ever being a sacrosanct issue that was being discussed growing up the way it is now. Being bullied was almost a rite of passage. Every gay pejorative was whispered in my ear during class or followed by a punch in the chest in the hallways. The ones who got bullied learned how to plan their day accordingly at school. You would wear thicker clothes. You also brought an extra pair of clothes and kept them in your locker just in case the other boys stole your clothes during gym. You would wear boxers instead of briefs just in case you got de-pantsed in the hallway. You also learned how to run really fast just in case you got chased home after school being taunted with sticks and rocks. I felt like an outsider sympathizing with the likes of fellow outsiders like Ned (Part I), Shelly (Part III), and ultimate final boy: Tommy Jarvis. But it was Jason who got the major brunt of it. It was in these moments of stress, anxiety, and being bullied that I found solace in the *Friday the 13th* films. If a bully intimidated me on a Friday, promising to kick my ass on a Monday, watching the *Friday* films over the weekends gave me that sense of confidence to walk into school Monday morning with the impressions that all villains, or bullies, could be defeated. Identifying with both the final girl and the villain, I used these films as a way to amp myself up to face the hockey-masked bullies in my own life. These films were my safe space. If these heroes: Alice, Ginny, Chris, Trish, Pam, Megan, Tina, and Rennie could use their smarts and grit to outwit Jason (and his mother), so could I with the many Jasons in my world.

My parents could see the same things happening to me that happened to Frank when he was my age, and I think that scared them. Not only were they now dealing with two gay sons, but they were dealing with one who was dying from AIDS complications. After being gone for so long, afraid of tainting our family with his 'lifestyle' as well as the ire that came from my father for having a sissy for a son, Frank came home to die. It was during this time

that Frank and I came together to celebrate the *Friday* films that bonded us many years before. I asked what got him sick.

“Sex,” he answered truthfully. “I had sex, and now I’m going to die because I didn’t follow the rules.” The rules, as curated by the many slasher flicks of the 1980s, hailed that if you have sex, you die. As for the *Friday the 13th* franchise booming during the 1980s at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, how could you not see the correlation between the two? Frank did. He watched these movies with a fresh pair of eyes now. It was not so much the radical death scenes that made us squirm anymore. These deaths made Frank more aware of his own mortality that was diminishing day by day from an unseen force annihilating every fiber of his body. After his death, I just did not watch these films the same way ever again.

By queering the *Friday the 13th* franchise, I am certainly not stating the obvious. People tend to go to the overbearing mother/timid son dynamic of Jason and Mrs. Voorhees. What mother would not seek out revenge for the horrible drowning of her son by ill-equipped camp counselors, and what son would not do the same when that victim is his own mother? Queering the franchise looks at it through my own queer lens and the items that I have picked up in the process of watching these films over and over again through the years. This has been the genius of the series as a whole. The viewer can take it upon themselves to see things that others may not have seen before. It is why we keep coming back for more. You can examine this franchise through intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. You can look at its place in the historical context of an epidemic that eradicated millions, who among those were many queer fans, as well as creative artists who were involved with the films.

I retreat back to the questions that my ex-boyfriend fired at me during this colossal argument over my love of these *Friday the 13th* films. *Where is the queer POV in these films?* My own, of course. I was watching these films through a queer lens the whole time. Sure,

there are elements that you can read into, but I was not thinking about those things as a kid. It was not until I got older and realized that my own queerness was not represented in those films. So, *why do I like watching these films?* It brings memories of my brother back and the joy of watching these films together after my parents went to sleep. It brings back memories of the anticipation I had driving to the video store with my mom with the smell of a carry out pizza in the back seat of our car. It reminds me of how much I have grown from a nerdy, wimpy adolescent sissy to a badass, queer scholar of color still battling the Jasons of academia.



# KILLING THE SAD FAT GUY AND THE PREGNANT LADY: UNCOMFORTABLE DEATH IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III – 3D*

Wickham Clayton

Co-creator and director, Sean S. Cunningham, describes *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) as “a roller-coaster ride, a funhouse sort of thing.”<sup>[i]</sup> It is artificial, visceral fun that spikes adrenalin, provides thrills, but doesn’t aspire to much in the way of intellectual engagement or emotional connection (beyond terror and horror) with characters or story. The success of the first film drove the development of the sequel.

In *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2* (1981), director Steve Miner decided to embellish slightly without veering too far from the formula of the original. According to Miner, along with the other creators, he attempted to “improve upon some of the character and dialogue flaws [of *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*]. We attempted to make the characters a little more realistic. We *did* avoid ‘strip monopoly.’”<sup>[ii]</sup> *Part 2* saw further success, so inevitably the producers began work on *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III 3-D*. “With the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films,” Miner declared, “we had always made a conscious decision to make the same movie over again, only each one would be slightly different. And I had always been intrigued with the concept of 3-D.”<sup>[iii]</sup> Miner, however, toyed with more changes than merely the use of 3-D: “I spent a lot of time developing a number of different storylines and approaches that would be a breakaway from the other films. Finally, we all decided that it would have been a mistake. We have a certain audience that enjoyed *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* – and we owe them the best possible film that they will enjoy; suspense and scares within the format we’d already established.”<sup>[iv]</sup>

The resulting film met with further phenomenal success. According to J. A. Kerswell, “The most successful slasher film of 1982, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III* grossed a massive \$36 million

domestically. In the first three days of release alone, it grossed something over \$9 million, beating the same weekend total of Spielberg's *ET*, that summer's box office champ." [v] Even as they emphasize its sameness to its predecessors, however, the makers of *Part III*, as well as the critics, have failed to acknowledge the significant innovation of the film in regard to character.

The characters in slasher films have long been given short shrift. Film scholar Vera Dika has written of *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2* that the "characters have a palpably plastic, unreal quality that adds to the general theme of their expendability. The viewer is thus further engaged in the gaming process of the film, one that promises enjoyment through the viewing of attractive bodies and reduces the pain of guilt and fear in likewise viewing the wound." [vi] Apart from the clear effort at pathos with the character of Mark, the counsellor who lost the use of his legs in a motorcycle accident but is determined to play sports again one day, I have no real quarrel with Dika's analysis here. (Although the fact that Mark is handsome and guaranteed to get laid before his murder undercuts some of his pathos.) Miner grants the characters in *Part III* extensive sympathy, however, and this recurs in Danny Steinmann's *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part V: A New Beginning* (1985), about which I have written elsewhere. [vii] Although *Part III* does not explore character pathos to the truly uncomfortable depths that the later film does, it still manages to develop characters fully enough that their deaths are more unpleasant, difficult, and challenging than in the previous *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* movies. Interestingly, Ian Conrich identifies humour as a key source of engagement within both *III* and *V*: "the humour that can be discerned in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III*, and which is first made explicit with *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part V*, exhibits a similar effect to the Grand Guignol performances with their 'hot and cold showers', in that horror is designed in combination with comedy." [viii] While this may be true, I would not consider the "hot and cold showers" in these films their most fascinating structural and emotional contributions.

While many characters in *Part III* are not developed and function simply as objects of humour and aggression, as Conrich claims, three characters are developed in ways that encourage emotional engagement. Furthermore, these characters are designed around archetypes introduced in the earlier films of the franchise, which heightens the fact of their greater richness. The three characters are Shelly (Larry Zerner), the sexless, friendly (if annoying) prankster, Chris (Dana Kimmell), the Final Girl, and Debbie (Tracie Savage), the girl in a relationship. Neither of the previous sexually inactive jokesters, Ned (Mark Nelson) in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* and Ted (Stu Charno) in *Part 2*, are as sad and self-pitying as Shelly in *Part III*. When Chris wonders why Shelly is in the van while the others have gone to the lake, Shelly tells her, "Well, they said they were going skinny dipping and, uh, I'm not skinny enough." This acts simultaneously as a moment of humour but also one of pathos. Shelly jokes about his weight, but he appears both sad and disappointed.

At his most vulnerable, Ted from *Part 2* is merely drunk, so there is little equivalence with Shelly in terms of the viewer's potential emotional connection. However, we are given a similar moment of pathos with Ned in the first film. Immediately prior to Ned's murder we see him forlornly looking on as Jack (Kevin Bacon) and Marcie (Jeannine Taylor) share a romantic moment by the lake. The difference here is that Ned's moment of sadness is shown through a personal, undeveloped emotional engagement that is only implied. In other words, Ned isn't self-effacing as a character but expresses a fleeting moment of sadness and loneliness that appears in contrast to the rest of his character development. Shelly, on the other hand, continuously reinforces through both overt dialogue and performance his sadness and abjection.

A few moments later we see Chris "discovering" Shelly with a hatchet in his head, only to find out that it is one of Shelly's pranks. Chris expresses anger at him, which we later find out is rooted in her earlier traumatic experience at the same cabin. At the time, however, Shelly seems wholly unaware. Their friends excuse his actions because Shelly "doesn't know any better," while others let him know that he's being an asshole. We see Shelly

sympathetically trying to explain himself and apologise, and ultimately abandoned, shocked, and saddened by the impact his prank had on Chris.



In glorious 3D: Shelly (Larry Zerner) (L) expresses surprise and sadness at the anger his prank has caused, while Rick (Paul Kratka) (R) tries to maintain order

The final indignity for Shelly comes after his genuine expression of feelings for Vera (Catherine Parks), when he makes himself entirely emotionally vulnerable to her. This expression is

immediately, but kindly rejected. Vera even offers to discuss it later (arguably going farther than strictly necessary) out of consideration and sensitivity. Shelly meekly says “Sure, we’ll talk,” and once Vera leaves the room, mutters “Bitch.” This certainly undermines any sympathy we may have for him, but the impotence of the expression also reinforces both how pathetic he is, as well as his self-pity.

Shelly’s death is sudden, but the weight of his character development, not seen before in the series (even in the *Final Girls* [\[ix\]](#)), makes this film altogether different. In fact, Chris is also the first Final Girl to have an in-depth backstory. For *Friday the 13th’s* Alice (Adrienne King), we merely know that there is some romantic tension with Steve Christy (Peter Brouwer), or, perhaps more likely, that she is the object of uncomfortable predatory behaviour by him. Alice is considering leaving early to go “back to California to straighten something out,” which is all the information we get about the subject. Ginny (Amy Steel) from *Part 2* is a fairly flat character– quirky and with a pre-established romantic relationship with Paul (John Furey) and a convenient Psychology degree.

*Part III’s* Chris on the other hand has an entire flashback dedicated to her early trauma. We know through the flashback that she was attacked by Jason–an attack that hinted at the possibility of rape–the last time she visited the house in the woods her family owns where

the bulk of the film takes place. This prior event provides a sufficient arc to explain Chris's complete breakdown at the end of the film, and again provides enough characterisation to create more emotional engagement with her than with either of her analogues from the previous films in the series.

Furthermore, *Part III* gives us Debbie (Traci Savage), a character similar to Marcie from *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, and Sandra (Marta Kober) from *Part 2*. These are all young women who are sexually active within a monogamous heterosexual couple. Debbie's

principal difference, however, is that she is pregnant. We find this out early in the film when Chris is asked how far it is to the lake, and she responds while pointedly looking at Debbie "We would've been there already if *some people* didn't have to go to the bathroom every five minutes." Debbie engages with the joke and replies, "That's what happens when you're pregnant."

The *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series may repetitively reconfigure its source material, as numerous critics have pointed out, but this does not necessarily mean that the franchise simply lazily rehashes the same story. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>[x]</sup> the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films have no single formative point: they do not consistently build stories and aesthetics upon those of the first film but instead undergo consistent formation and *reformation*. But even as the films capitalise on both predictability and unpredictability, the murder of Debbie seems especially transgressive. Intriguingly, we encounter conflicting political orientations in the way Debbie's story develops. The *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films, famously according to Robin Wood (2003), embody the reactionary politics of Reagan's America. But considering the US Right's view of the sacredness of unborn life, the murder of an unborn child in Debbie's



Also in glorious 3D: Chris (Dana Kimmell) (R) is led away from the crime scene by State Trooper #2 (Terry Ballard) (L) in hysterics, having a complete mental breakdown and again provides enough characterisation to create more emotional engagement with her than with either of her analogues from the previous films in the series.

murder seems in shockingly bad taste with no real moral impetus (as there is with the general perception of the other murders here – don't drink, do drugs, or have premarital sex). The US Right has traditionally taken a disapproving stance toward young mothers who are not married. However, the vocal defence of unborn life is one commonly held position of the US Right. Wood's interpretation of these films creates an equivalence between punitive murder in fiction as a response to, or as an iteration of disapproval toward behaviours transgressing reactionary boundaries. As a result, Debbie's murder would sit uneasily with any political position, both on the far Right (in the murder of the unborn child) as well as on the Left (in the murder of the unmarried mother).

The complicated politics of Debbie's murder, then, don't easily align with the perceived simple pleasures of slasher set pieces. We do not merely witness the predictable murder of a promiscuous, attractive, nearly naked young woman. Her death inevitably comes with the death of her (potential) child – as well as the death of a mother who cares enough not to drink or do drugs throughout. As a result, Debbie's death is deeply uncomfortable for a wide range of viewers across the political spectrum, thus imbuing this particular murder with a much deeper emotional resonance than the typical disposability of characters allows.

Kerswell has suggested that filmmakers considered even further dark developments for *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III 3-D*, although his tonal analysis of the film differs from mine: “An alternative ending, in which Jason whacks off Chris's head with a machete, was seemingly shot but has yet to surface. *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III* is still very entertaining, although it is a perfect example of how, by 1982, the slasher was taking itself increasingly less seriously and was content to veer ever closer to camp.”<sup>[xi]</sup> Ending a film with the decapitation of a Final Girl who has a visible trauma of a potentially darker sort than usual reads to me as more deeply unpleasant than anything the series has given us so far.

Although the depths *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part V: A New Beginning* sinks to are more unpleasant, complex, and uneasy than anything else in the series, *Part III* certainly dips its toe into this

murky and dangerous water. In analysing Jason as a monster, along with the nihilistic implications of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films, Jonathan Lake Crane suggests that these films work through eliciting minimal sympathy with the murdered characters: “the human body, our most precious sac, achieves a pittance of worth only when it is reduced to a weeping pile of scattered exuviate.”<sup>[xii]</sup> It is important to realise, however, that we are, on occasion, given characters who are fully enough developed to make their resultant death unpleasant and sad. And we see that some of these “precious sacs” have worth prior to having their insides introduced to the outside.

---

Notes:

[i] Qtd. in Martin 1979, 16. Although this appears in a contemporary interview prior to the release of the first film, Cunningham still describes the film this way. See Wood 2015.

[ii] Qtd. in Burns, 14.

[iii] Qtd. in Bracke, 74.

[iv] Qtd. in Martin 1982, 54.

[v] Kerswell, 122.

[vi] Dika, 78.

[vii] See Clayton 2015.

[viii] Conrich, 182.

[ix] This is in reference to the term coined by Carol J. Clover (1992), one which I hope I do not need to explain in depth here.

[x] See Clayton 2013 and 2020.

[xi] Kerswell, 122.

[xii] Crane, 141.

## Works Cited:

- Bracke, Peter M. *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. Titan Books, 2005.
- Burns, James H. "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part II." *Fangoria* #12, 1981, pp. 12-15, 64-65.
- Clayton III, George Wickham. *Bearing Witness to a Whole Bunch of Murders: The Aesthetics of Perspective in the Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Films*. PhD Thesis, Roehampton University, London, UK, 2013.
- . "Undermining the Moneygrubbers, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part V*." *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*, edited by Wickham Clayton, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 37-50.
- . *SEE! HEAR! CUT! KILL! Experiencing Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. University Press of Mississippi, forthcoming.
- Clover, Carol J. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Conrich, Ian. "The *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol." *Horror Zone*, edited by Ian Conrich, I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp.173-88.
- Crane, Jonathan Lake. *Terror and Everyday life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film*. Sage, 1994.
- Dika, Vera. *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle*. Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990.
- Kerswell, J. A. *The Teenage Slasher Movie Book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised and Expanded Edition. Chichester: CompanionHouse Books, 2018.
- Martin, Bob. "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>: A Day for Terror." *Fangoria* #6, 1979, pp. 14-16, 64.



—. “*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III in 3-D: Still More of the Same – Only Deeper!*” *Fangoria* #21, 1982, pp. 54-7.

Wood, Jennifer M. “[The Hard Truths of Making Horror Movies, from the Creator of \*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>\*: Sean S. Cunningham on the Do’s and Don’ts of Keeping a Slashing Murderer \*Alive\*.](#)” *Esquire.com*, 31 October, 2015.

Wood, Robin. *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan...And Beyond*. Columbia University Press, 2003.

# NO CLOWNING AROUND: THE GOTHIC AND COMEDIC ELEMENTS OF *FRIDAY THE 13TH* *PART VI: JASON LIVES*

Brian Fanelli

After the fan backlash that followed *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part V: A New Beginning* (1985), the only film in the series (other than the first) that didn't technically feature Jason Voorhees as the killer, the franchise needed to get back on track. Cue writer/director Tom McLoughlin, who already had some horror cred from his 1983 film *One Dark Night*. McLoughlin's background in comedy, however, and his love of the golden age of Universal Monster movies, made the sixth installment unique and one of the series' strongest sequels to date. *Jason Lives* (1986) introduced a reanimated Jason, whose rotting, corpse-like qualities would be the staple moving forward. More notably, the film balanced Gothic tropes with comedy and a self-awareness that would influence later slasher franchises, specifically *Scream* (1996). In breaking with the previous installments through the injection of Gothic tropes and some levity, *Jason Lives* became one of the most memorable sequels in the *Friday the 13th* catalogue.

The beginning of the film has the feel of a 1930s/1940s Universal Monsters film because it's so heavy on establishing atmosphere from the get-go. It begins with shots of fog rolling over Camp Crystal Lake, which has been renamed Camp Forest Green in attempt to bury the past. Then the camera focuses on Tommy Jarvis's (Thom Matthews) pick-up truck zooming down the road, headed to the cemetery where Jason (C. J. Graham) is buried. The cemetery scene is reminiscent of James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), specifically the scene in which Dr. Frankenstein (Colin Clive) and his assistant Fritz (Dwight Frye) dig up bodies to create the Monster. As Tommy and his friend Allen Hawes (Ron Palillo) search for the grave with shovels in hand, the scene again echoes the world of the Universal Monsters. Wind howls. The ground is littered with leaves. The trees are gnarled and bare. Eventually,

after some digging, Tommy opens Jason's creaky coffin, where he discovers the maggot-covered corpse. The camera lingers on Tommy's face, as he recalls the scene from the end of *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part IV: The Final Chapter* (1984) when he stabs Jason over and over, shouting, "Die, Jason, die!" This moment is significant because it shows the trauma that Tommy still carries, while underscoring his obsession with ensuring Jason/the past is truly dead and buried.

Of course, Jason never stays dead for long, and after lightning strikes him, he's brought back to life in a way that echoes Frankenstein's animation of his creature. He makes his presence known by punching through Allen's body and ripping out his heart. This opening is effective and important for a number of reasons. As stated, it establishes the Gothic tones and moody atmosphere that are prominent in the rest of the film. Furthermore, it shows a break from the previous entries. Jason is no longer going to be the crazed mountain man depicted in the earlier films. In *Jason Lives*, he's presented as a reanimated corpse—a distinctly supernatural presence. After Tommy douses him with gasoline, heavy rainfall suddenly erupts and soaks his matchbook, as if it's fate. Even Jason's look is different. Until he snags the hockey mask after killing Allen, he looks less like the iconic killer of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* franchise than like one of the zombies in *Return of the Living Dead* (1985). It's only after he puts on the hockey mask that Jason becomes the slasher we all know and love.

In *Jason Lives: The Making of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VI*, which is included on the series DVD and Blu-ray boxsets, *McLoughlin* acknowledges the heavy influence of the Universal films: "My main objective was to give the audience a sense of the old Gothic horror movies because I was trying to set a tone right from the beginning that this was going to be what the Universal horror movies used to be- a stormy night, going to the cemetery, digging up the grave, and a monster coming back who is unstoppable."



Jason resurrected via lighting

Yet, shortly after the cemetery scene, it becomes clear that the movie is going to include plenty of camp and comedy, which was also evident in Whale's Universal films, especially *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and particularly in the character of Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger), who has plenty of zany one-liners and engages in much farcical behavior. The title sequence in *Jason Lives* marks a shift from the Gothic opening in the cemetery toward comedy. It mirrors a James Bond movie, as Jason slow-walks across the screen and then stops in the center of the frame, slashing towards the camera. This is effective in reinforcing Jason's iconic status while also previewing some of the farce to come later.

In that same DVD feature, *McLoughlin* admitted to having only watched the first film and then going to Paramount Pictures to watch the sequels. He made it clear to studio execs that he would only direct *Part VI* if he was granted permission to wink at the rest of the franchise and include some levity. Producer Frank Mancuso Jr. said that was fine as long as Jason remained serious and frightening. Jason is indeed imposing and chilling throughout the film, a supernatural entity impossible to stop. His counterweight is Tommy, who appears crazed to nearly everyone he encounters, especially to Sheriff Garris (David Kagen) and bumbling Deputy Rick (Vincent Guastaferrro), who dismiss his story the moment that he enters the Forest Green police station and says, "Jason's coming. He's after me." The town is eager to move on from the past's grisly murders, so Garris responds, "No one in Forest Green wants to be reminded of what happened here. That's why we changed the name." To Tommy, however, it will always be Camp Blood, and the only way to defeat Jason is to bury him in his original resting place. What Tommy tries to emphasize, and what we see in the opening cemetery scene, is the fact that the past won't stay dead and buried, no matter the name of the town. This again is another trait of Gothic literature and film. To quote William Faulkner's novel *Requiem for a Nun*, the past is never dead. It's not even past.

The counterbalance between seriousness and comedic self-awareness continues throughout the rest of the film and is handled deftly. The first teens that an unleashed Jason kills are Darren (Tony Goldwyn) and Lizabeth (Nancy McLoughlin), who stop their car the

moment they see Jason on a dirt road, gripping a metal spire from the cemetery. Here, the film's self-awareness is apparent, as Lizabeth quips, "I've seen enough horror movies to know any weirdo wearing a mask is never friendly." Again, the supernatural elements of Jason are emphasized. One minute, he's in front of the car, and then he's not. After he kills Darren, Lizabeth exits the car, stumbles, and crawls through the mud. At first, Jason is in



Lizabeth's cash and American Express card after Jason kills her

front of her and then suddenly leaps behind her, killing her after she tries to offer him cash and her American Express card. Like the opening, this kill illustrates what works so well in *Jason Lives*. It's a perfect balance of tone. Jason is menacing, as Mancuso requested, and yet, there's a real absurdity in the way that

Lizabeth tries to reason with him. Clearly, he's not human and has absolutely no interest in whatever material possessions she can offer. This is only reinforced after he kills her, and the camera zooms in on her American Express card floating in a muddy, bloodied puddle.

The comedic elements surface a few more times throughout the film. For instance, the graveyard keeper Martin (Bob Lark) plays a drunken fool who stumbles upon Jason's unearthed grave and is too intoxicated to realize that it's not the Voorhees corpse in the coffin but rather Allen's. He says, "Shitheads couldn't even stick him in right. I'm not gonna touch that slimy sucker. Why'd they have to go and dig up Jason? Some folks have a strange idea of entertainment." While delivering those last lines of dialogue, he looks at the camera and breaks the fourth wall, which is yet another nod and wink to the fans clamoring for Jason's return after the previous entry excluded him. In one of the only other scenes featuring Martin, a panicked Tommy goes to the graveyard with Deputy Rick and Sheriff Garris, demanding that they look at the evidence showing Jason is back. Tommy pleads with Martin to dig him up, but the caretaker asks, "Dig him up? Does he think I'm a fart

head?” The camera then cuts to a scene of child campers screaming “yeahhhhh” as the counselors talk about everything they’re going to do together. The cutting is quite effective in balancing the seriousness, mostly shown through Tommy’s character, with humor.

Furthermore, the film lampoons masculinity, which is most apparent in a scene involving insurance workers that play paintball in Jason’s woods. One of the men gripes that a female executive was included in the game. He complains, “This is a man’s game. It requires a man’s cunning, a man’s intelligence.” Shortly after he says that, he and his male counterpart are shot dead by the female exec, who makes them parade around in black bandanas that say dead in large, white letters. Another male co-worker, who has already been sniped and sports the headband, swings a machete against the trees and whines, “She should have stayed in the kitchen where she belongs. A woman shouldn’t be allowed in these games. It’s not a game. It’s life.” His over-the-top dialogue and clichéd character traits are reinforced by his punishing demise: Jason pushes him into a tree, crushes his head, and leaves a bloody smiley face on the tree. Jason then reclaims his famous weapon of choice, which comes in handy when he encounters the rest of the co-workers.

Another contrast to stereotypical masculinity is the film’s competent and resourceful final



“Manly” insurance workers playing paintball

girl, Megan (Jennifer Cooke), who frequently challenges her father, Sherriff Garris. She’s also quick to believe Tommy’s story that Jason indeed has returned and is out for blood. At one point, while in her father’s office with her friends, she reinforces the myth and legend of Jason, asking if it’s

possible that he could return to Camp Blood to find those responsible for decapitating his mother. It’s fair to say that Tommy would not be successful in defeating Jason during the film’s conclusion without Jennifer’s help, since she busts him out of prison by stealing

Deputy Rick's gun and revives him after Jason nearly drowns him in Crystal Lake. In the documentary *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, McLoughlin stated that he wanted Megan to have "a very 30s/40s snippy attitude." Cooke added, "She really was a feisty girl...like most girls her age, she was figuring things out... including how to say no to her dad." Megan's strength and agency are a direct contrast to the criticism slasher movies received throughout the decade that they are demeaning towards women. Megan takes charge several times, and she pursues relations with the male lead, not the other way around.

*Jason Lives* is also unique because it's really the only film in the franchise that doesn't feature heavy nudity. There is only one major sex scene, which also includes one of the best kills in the movie. It features counselors Cort (Tom Fridley) and Nikki (Darcy DeMoss), who draw Jason's attention because their sexual interactions literally rock the RV, which belongs to Nikki's dad. As music booms from the mobile camper, Jason pauses and tilts his head, before cutting the power. Yet, like other kills in this movie, parts of the scene are meant to be outlandish, while jabbing masculinity and previous installments of the franchise. When Cort climaxes at the end of a song, Nikki says, "Cort, you didn't already?" He also expresses reluctance to go outside and investigate why the power went out. Additionally, McLoughlin uses this scene to again echo Whale's *Frankenstein* films. When Jason enters the RV, Alice Cooper's "Teenage Frankenstein" is blaring to the point that Cort can't even hear Jason kill Nikki in the bathroom. Soon after, Jason thrusts a knife in Cort's ear, and the music fades out. The scene concludes with Jason leaping on top of the wrecked RV, with fire and smoke surrounding him. It's one of the most memorable scenes in the film and one that again balances humor and Gothic elements, in this case atmosphere and Jason's new supernatural qualities.

When the film opened in August 1986, it didn't capture the #1 spot at the box office and fell behind James Cameron's *Aliens*. Overall, it grossed \$19.5 million and was the lowest grossing *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* to date. Generally, the reviews were mixed. Caryn James wrote

for *The New York Times*, “But despite a few lighter touches, the film is still a gory waste of time that plays its murders for all the blood and guts they’re worth.” [Gene Siskel](#), on the one hand, said the film was the least offensive in the series, but labeled it an “all-too-familiar bloody ritual.”

*Part VII: A New Blood* (1988) would see Kane Hodder take up the hockey mask and resume that role for several more sequels. *A New Blood* was much more serious in tone than *Jason Lives*, as it saw Jason go toe-to-toe with a telekinetic. Yet, the influence of *Jason Lives* on the wider horror genre is undeniable, and McLoughlin has stated that Kevin Williamson told him that its comedic and self-referential style was a major influence when he wrote *Scream*. More than thirty years after its release, *Jason Lives* remains a fan favorite because it did something different with the exhausted franchise. It referenced horror history, including locations named Karloff’s General Store and Cunningham Road, and it infused several Gothic elements that nod to the Universal era. Furthermore, its unique style of comedy was a breath of fresh air in a series that had largely become stagnant. McLoughlin masterfully balanced laughs with memorable kills, often within a single scene. As a result, *Jason Lives* is *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* sequel that resonates more than many of the others.

---



Works Cited:

*Camp Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. Directed by Daniel

Farrands, 1428 Films, 2013. Shudder.

James, Caryn. "[The Screen: Jason Lives in 'Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Part VI.](#)" *The New York Times*,

2 August, 1986, section 1, p. 9.

*Jason Lives: The Making of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Pt. VI*. King Media Services, 2009.

Siskel, Gene. "[The Flick of the Week.](#)" *The Chicago Tribune*, 8 August 1986.

# JASON GOES TO HIGH SCHOOL

Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

In his insightful and fascinating study *Educational Institutions in Horror Film*, Andrew L. Grunzke observes that three trends in the latter half of the twentieth century produced horror films that were “centered around various aspects of school life.”<sup>[i]</sup> Those trends are: the dominance of teenagers in horror audiences; the development of monstrous children narratives; and a horror cinema increasingly focused on locating horror in the familiar rather than the exotic. “The confluence of these trends,” writes Grunzke, “made the high school a favorite site of for staging shocking physical, mental, and emotional trauma.”<sup>[ii]</sup> Enter the slasher film.

Slasher films are, more often than not, set at high schools. *Halloween* (1978), *Prom Night* (1980), *Graduation Day* (1981), *The Prowler* (1981), *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy’s Revenge* (1985), *Slaughter High* (1985), *Return to Horror High* (1987), and *Scream* (1996), to name but a handful of the best known-examples, are all set in high school. Indeed, secondary school lends itself to fear, serving as a hotbed of bullying, social acceptance, sexual awakening, parent/child relationships, academic performance, and graduation anxiety.<sup>[iii]</sup> Although college slashers also pop up during the period—*Black Christmas* (1974), *Hell Night* (1981), *House on Sorority Row* (1982), and *Scream 2* (1997)—high school horror dominates. Whether based on school-centered events (*Prom Night*, *Graduation Day*), reunions (*Slaughter High*), or simply the day-to-day life of students upended by a killer (*Halloween*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Scream*), high school is the slasher killer’s natural home.

The original *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) offered a different educational institution as the site of horror—the summer camp, which has equally inspired imitations: *The Burning* (1981), *Sleepaway Camp* (1983) and its sequels, *Madman* (1982), and *Cheerleader Camp* (1988). The camp doubles as a “survival training” center, according to Grunzke, teaching urban children how to swim, canoe, tie knots, and subsist away from the city.<sup>[iv]</sup> This training

holds particular importance in the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* series, as the young counselors must survive first Mrs. Vorhees and then her son Jason. Let us remember the primary cast (and thus the victims of the killer) in the first *Friday* films are not the campers but the counselors; Mrs. Vorhees and her son do not threaten children but teenagers.

Indeed, the cast of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* franchise is consistently of high school age, with most installments set at summer camp, except *Part V*, which takes place at the Pinehurst Youth Development Center, a camp for troubled youth (basically *Breakfast Club* does slasher), and *Jason X*, which is in space, still with young people (college-age), creating a holodeck-style summer camp. Even when the film is set somewhere other than Crystal Lake, Jason finds a camp. Summer camp is Jason's natural home.



The ill-fated Lazarus

Despite the franchise's consistent focus on the high-school population, *Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* (1989) is the only *Friday* actually set within the context of high school: a senior class cruise/trip on the SS Lazarus.

The ship is named after a man who

came back from the dead, not unlike Mr. Vorhees, and perhaps a premonition of what will happen to all but a select few of the high-school students who board for this particular trip. As Crystal Lake High School senior class cruises down a river to Manhattan, the film throws up all the tropes of high school cinema—the despotic principal, the understanding teacher, the mean girls, the clueless guys, the nerds, the rockers, the jocks, the hooking up, and the hijinks. Into this mix comes Jason Vorhees (Kane Hodder), stowing away on the ship and killing students first on board the ship and then pursuing them through the city.

Written and directed by Rob Hedden, *Part VIII* marked an attempt to take the tired series in yet another new direction after *Parts V and VI*. By 1988, the teens who had seen the first

film in cinemas were in their mid to late 20s. *Part VIII* was aimed at a new generation of fans.<sup>[v]</sup> The film has much more humor than previous entries in the series and far less gore and violence. Indeed, the violence is almost comic at times. Hedden's instinct from the beginning was to get Jason out of Crystal Lake. When he pitched it to series producer Frank Mancuso, Mancuso responded, "Jason takes Manhattan!" which Hedden took and ran with. The budget was too small to film in Manhattan for more than a week, though, so most of the film was actually shot in Vancouver.<sup>[vi]</sup>

While the novelty of the film was supposed to be Jason in an urban setting, the other novelty of the film is that Jason finally joined his fellow slashers within a specifically high school setting. Hedden complained, "This is the one thing that everybody says, that it is not 'Jason Takes Manhattan,' it's 'Jason takes a Cruise Ship.'" <sup>[vii]</sup> That cruise ship had been hired for a senior cruise to the big city, though. Given that so little of the film actually takes place in Manhattan, that means the majority of it takes place in what is essentially a substitute for a high school.

The opening credits show New York City to be a place of crime, vandalism, trash, drug use and filth. As the theme song begins to play, the deejay states unironically that he loves the city and gives a shout-out to the senior class at Lakeview High, who are coming to Manhattan for their graduation trip. The song was a request, as "They'll be graduating on the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month and we wish them the best of luck and success when they come to visit our seductive city." Crystal Lake is somewhere in New Jersey, which would indicate that it was created as part of a larger trend in the earlier twentieth century to take students out of urban areas (particularly New York City) and send them to camps in rural New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.<sup>[viii]</sup> The film then cuts to graduating seniors Jim Miller and Suzi Donaldson enjoying an intimate evening on a boat in Crystal Lake. They appear to be the ones who requested the song—and they are in short order murdered by Jason.

The next scene gives us stereotypical high school students and staff. Were it not for Jason Vorhees, *Jason Takes Manhattan* would and could play out as a high school sex comedy such as *Porky's* (1981) or *American Pie* (1999). Colleen van Dusen (Barbara Bingham) is the sensitive and supportive teacher, while



High school on a ship

Charles McCulloch (Peter Mark Richman) is the insufferable principal, a school administrator directly descended from *The Breakfast Club's* Mr. Vernon. He does not seem to care for students, nor does he have a high opinion of anyone except himself. He demands respect even as he heaps scorn on all under him. On the cruise with these two teachers is a veritable *Breakfast Club* of students: less than a dozen seniors seem to be on the ship. Rennie Wickham (Jensen Daggett) is the sensitive heroine who suffers from a traumatic past. Sean Anderson (Scott Reeves) is her erstwhile boyfriend who lives in his ship captain father's shadow. J. J. Jarrett (Saffron Henderson) is the rock goddess who prefers her guitar to boys. Wayne Webber (Martin Cummins) is the AV geek and J. J.'s best friend, who is crushing on the beautiful mean girl, Tamara Mason (Sharlene Martin). Tamara's best friend and sidekick is Eve Watanabe (Kelly Hu), who downplays her intelligence in order to be popular. Lastly, we meet athlete (Boxing? In high school?) Julius Gaw (Vincent Craig Dupree), who is revealed to have a heart of gold, despite his high-school Adonis body and personality. Were this not a slasher film, things would get complicated but then work out for Rennie and Sean; Wayne would realize he had been in love with J. J. the whole time; Eve would learn to be herself and end up with Julius; and Tamara would get her comeuppance in front of the entire school, as would Mr. McCulloch.

But this is a slasher film. Interestingly, as a result of taking place in a high school setting, one of the major themes present only in *Part VIII* is the challenge of parent/child

relationships. Rennie's parents are dead, and Mr. McCullough is her uncle and legal guardian, but there is no love between them. Colleen van Dusen, however, serves as a surrogate parent for Rennie, giving her a graduation present in the form of a pen Stephen King supposedly used in high school. With such an unlikely and perhaps even ridiculous gift, the film establishes that it is Ms. Van Dusen and not Mr. McCullough who truly understands and parents Rennie.

Similarly, Sean Robertson is given a gift by his father, Admiral Robertson (Warren Munson), although why an admiral is in command of a small river cruise ship, the film never explains. Sean's present is a sexton, a symbol that the father wants the son to follow in his footsteps. With great pride Admiral Robertson relinquishes command of the *Lazarus* to Sean to take the ship out of port and takes control back just as quickly when Sean orders the incorrect procedure and then abandons the bridge in frustration and shame.

Within the first ten minutes of the film, the models for parenting are established through these gifts (and the absence of one from Mr. McCulloch). The good parent understands their teen's hopes and dreams and supports them rather than asserting their own authority to decide everything in the teen's life (Mr. McCulloch), or, with the best of intentions, placing burdensome expectations on a child to follow in one's own footsteps (Admiral Robertson). The film sets up a tension between parents and children not present in any other *Friday* but frequently present in teen comedies (see: any John Hughes film).



Jason (Kane Hodder) takes a cruise

As the ship leaves port, Jason climbs on board. The theme of parent/child relationships continues as we meet J. J., who plays very hot licks on an excellent guitar, despite its neither being plugged in nor having any amplification. "Your parents really

came through," Wayne tells her, and she agrees. J. J.'s parents understand her dreams and

goals and gave her a gift that suits her and her talents. These parents are, however, absent from the cruise and, by extension, seemingly absent from her rock-n-roll life. The bad news is that she seeks out the engine room in order to make a “killer rock video,” and, being all alone, becomes Jason’s first victim. Her parents “came through” with the gift of a great guitar, but the absence of any parenting on their parts contributes indirectly to J.J.’s death, as she wanders away from the group to play the guitar, seemingly unaware of stranger danger.

The film continues to unfold as a high school comedy, even as Jason begins killing students and crew. Caught snorting cocaine, Tamara is informed by Mr. McCullough that he will meet her in her stateroom in fifteen minutes and she better have her final biology project ready for him (despite his not being her biology teacher). When he arrives, she greets him with champagne and opens a silk robe to reveal she is in bra and panties and has drawn her organs on her body. She pulls him down onto the bed and when he extracts himself and tells her she is in trouble, she reveals Wayne in the closet with a camera and tells Mr. McCullough that if she does not graduate, she will give the tape to the authorities and he will lose his job. He exits, uncertain what to do.

This trick is a classic teen comedy move, almost always preceded by the line, “It’s kind of crazy, but it just might work.” The audience gets to see some skin and an authority figure outwitted and humiliated (see: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* [1982], *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* [1986]). One might note that the slasher film and the teen comedy simultaneously come of age and flourish because of some of the same factors—not least because teens dominate audience share and because the same fears that propel high school horror are those taken up and dispelled in high school comedy.

*Jason Takes Manhattan*, in the end, is not a teen comedy, even if it is structured as such. Jason kills Tamara as soon as Mr. McCulloch and Wayne leave. Jason then makes his way to the bridge and kills Chief Engineer Jim Carlson (Fred Henderson) with a harpoon before slitting Admiral Robertson’s throat with a machete. As the high school students begin to

find the bodies of their classmates, they gather together for protection. Julius gathers weapons and organizes the other athletes to hunt and kill Jason. Mr. McCullough insists he is in charge, that Jason is not real, and he forbids them to leave the room. “School’s out, McCullough,” Julius insists before leaving with his friends. The lack of “Mr.” before the principal’s name and the puckish exit line is designed to show how little respect the students have for the man, as well as, more broadly, how they have achieved a sense of adulthood and are ready to leave high school behind. They do so, however, by being killed. Julius is thrown overboard. Wayne is killed in the engine room, resulting in a fire. Eve is killed in the ship’s disco/dance club, strangled by Jason. He grabs Rennie through a porthole, but she stabs him in the eye with the Stephen King pen. Following Julius, Sean also stands up to McCullough: “It’s time you listen to me if you want off this ship alive.” The lone survivors, Sean, Rennie, Ms. Van Dusen, and Mr. McCullough, flee in a lifeboat, discovering Julius still alive in the water. Jason sees them and follows them.

The last third of the film actually does (finally) take place in Manhattan. Upon arrival in the Big Apple, the survivors are mugged, and Rennie is drugged and almost raped, only to be rescued by Jason. The film ceases to be a high school comedy and becomes a proper slasher film, albeit one in which Manhattan is



Jason (Kane Hodder) in Manhattan

as dangerous, if not more so, than Jason. When Rennie runs into an all-night diner and cries out, “A maniac is trying to kill us,” the waitress deadpans, “Welcome to New York.” Indeed, Grunzke finds the film to be a failure precisely because of the threats that perpetually lurk in Manhattan: “Ultimately, this is part of the downfall of the picture. At Crystal Lake, Jason Voorhees is a lone maniac...In New York City, Jason is hardly the most colorful, or even



dangerous character.”<sup>[ix]</sup> While this is true, it ignores the first two thirds of the film where Jason proves to be very effective at dispatching high school students and teachers alike.

It is interesting that Grunzke thinks *Part VIII* is a failure because Jason left the summer camp for the big city, an inversion of the expectation that his victims are supposed to leave the big city and come to camp. The film successfully blends the summer camp slasher and the high school slasher within the structure of a high school comedy. We could see Jason as another despotic parent/authority figure, killing a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess, and a criminal. I would, however, suggest seeing Jason as the hero of the high school comedy, not a parent or authority figure. After all, at the end, when the water in the sewer washes him away, all that is left is the body of Jason as a little boy. Like the heroes of high school comedies, Jason is able to outwit (and kill) the principal, defeat the mean kids, and (in *Part IX*) graduate (from Crystal Lake to hell). Congratulations to the Class of 1989.

---

Notes:

<sup>[i]</sup> Grunzke, 2.

<sup>[ii]</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>[iii]</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>[iv]</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>[v]</sup> Bracke, 194.

<sup>[vi]</sup> Ibid., 194-95.

<sup>[vii]</sup> Ibid., 195

<sup>[viii]</sup> Grunzke, 157-58.

<sup>[ix]</sup> Ibid., 158.

Works Cited:

Bracke, Peter M. *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. Titan, 2005.

*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*. Directed by Rob Hedden, Paramount Pictures, 1989.

Grunzke, Andrew L. *Educational Institutions in Horror Film*. Palgrave, 2015.

# FREDDY AND JASON – THEIR NEW FULL-LENGTH FEATURE

Stella Castelli

When in his short story ‘The Killers’ Ernest Hemingway characterizes the proverbial killers as a vaudeville team in appearance, the text not only implies a comedic undercurrent within the fictionalized murderous agency, but also exposes these killers explicitly as a double act. At the height of its popularity in the 1940s and 1950s, American vaudeville had produced numerous renowned comedic acts such as Abbott and Costello or Laurel and Hardy, marking itself as a type of comedy which hinges on a power dynamic relying on the often diametrically opposed relationship between two actors. It is this binary structure of American vaudeville which is translated into Ronny Yu’s contemporary slasher-crossover *Freddy vs Jason*. Tapping into two vast and durable horror franchises, the film experiments with the afterlives of these seminal villains proposing a vaudeville aesthetic. As its rather nonchalant title suggests, the picture pits two pivotal figures of the slasher genre, Elm Street’s nightmarish Freddy Krueger and Crystal Lake’s drowning boy Jason Voorhees against one another, all the while maintaining an ironic distance, which is ultimately created to elicit a comedic response despite the horrific pictures presented. Endowed with iconicity, Jason Voorhees’ bloodthirsty machete slaying its way through Camp Crystal Lake remains as notorious as the villain himself even forty years after the release of Sean S. Cunningham’s original *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* in 1980. Doubling down on notoriety, Yu’s film invites another renowned horror figure to participate, Elm Street’s cunning Freddy Krueger, whose conniving wit alongside his red striped sweater and eerie claws fatally haunting the dreams of his victims matches Jason’s own reputation. While adhering to traditional conventions of the horror/slasher genre by featuring a virginal final girl who survives the many gruesome kills which haunt a group of teens throughout, the crossover-slasher ultimately redirects its focus on the battle between the iconic villains. Hinging on said iconicity within the horror genre, *Freddy vs Jason* marks the eighth (re-)appearance of Krueger and no less than the eleventh (re-)appearance of Voorhees. Rather

than establishing the ultimate triumph of good over evil, however, the film resurrects these villains with an interest in the spectacle generated by evil versus evil. Tenaciously unkillable not only within their respective diegeses but also on the level of meta-productivity, as the substantial carriers of their respective franchises, their immortality has been thoroughly established by the time of the release of the film in 2003. This begs the question of how this battle can be resolved if neither character will ultimately fall to his demise, with the villain's perpetuity marking an inherent trope of the slasher genre.

Seemingly sabotaged by the protagonist's immortality, the interest of telling the tale of *Freddy vs. Jason* must thus lie elsewhere; not in the question of who wins the battle but in the dynamics of their relationship itself and, by extension, the staged performativity of this against the backdrop of well-established spaces such as Elm Street and Crystal Lake. While the titular 'versus' implies battle, the immortality of both villains places significance on the performance of said battle rather than on an implicitly impossible outcome. The experienced slasher audience is well aware that these villains are essentially immortal and have the ability to endlessly resurrect themselves. Hence, what is at stake in the proposition of *Freddy vs Jason*, so heavily pregnant with iconicity, is not triumph but the intricate ways in which the pair could and will battle one another. As such, the picture avidly plays with this performativity, reformatting the slasher towards screwball comedy. Leaning on Hemingway's description of his killers as a vaudeville team, said performativity of Kruger and Voorhees in *Freddy vs Jason* can be translated to that of a comedy duo, their performance during combat implementing a vaudeville aesthetic which instrumentalizes their previously established, distinct personalities for the rendition of a villainous extravaganza which, in its exaggeration, cannot but become comedic. The slasher genre then becomes a toolbox of props for this comedic act in which the villains' immortal bodies appear particularly apt for the motions of slapstick, their final showdown becoming almost cartoonish, in which their neglect for the laws of physics comes to parallel infamous pairs such as Tom and Jerry or the Road Runner and his counterpart Wile E. Coyote. Employing their carnivalesque physiques, Voorhees and Krueger come to create a humorous response

by violently playing off their pre-established personalities. By reading the film as pure (comedic) showmanship, the final lack of closure, which results from not being able to categorize either villain as positively deceased, is solidified; their immortality renders their battle purely theatrical while their clownsque dynamic remains marked as the grotesque throughout, the staging of their capacities against one another becoming ultimately geared towards humor rather than horror.

While the minimalistic title of the film alone already carries the implication that their iconicity carries enough momentum for a crossover, in a comedic wink to the literate horror audience, they ultimately also mirror each other using their trademark weapons



The comedic showmanship of Freddy and Jason

against one another during their final showdown. It is also already on a superficial level that the adherence to a comic duo is echoed, namely in the costumes which both villains wear, and, which remain seminal in the construction of their afterlives. As such, their costumes serve a double

purpose; on the one hand, they perpetuate the respective franchises of these horror icons and on the other, they become a uniform in adherence to the vaudeville aesthetic in which each player obtains a certain role as well as a trademark appearance. Being clearly discernible by their distinct outfits, their final battle is staged as a dance during which each is given a platform to showcase his respective characteristics. However, only during the interaction with one another, as a dual act, do their theatrics become an act of comedy. This is further reflected in the subtlety with which the franchise's respective scores are seemingly seamlessly combined into a harmonious overture. Against the backdrop of the horror-slasher, the implementation of a comedy duo aesthetic seems to become particularly fruitful as comedy is said to instrumentalize genre hybridity in order to

produce itself as “[v]audeville, musical revue, musical comedy, radio and early sound film comedy drew upon each other’s practices, performers, and producers” [1]. Read as a vaudeville performance, *Freddy vs Jason* draws on previously established characteristics of these horror film icons which are amplified towards a ridiculous absurdity in the particularly poignant final showdown. Being among themselves, the *entre nous* of the villains allows for the cruelty of physical comedy to become overtly cartoonish, a caricature nurtured by vaudeville’s “cross-fertilization of comic forms” [2].

Staging the film as such plays into Henry Jenkins’ definition of “the vaudeville aesthetic: fast-paced word play, gags, and physical humor” [3], in which a resilient physicality is complemented by wit and irony. By making use of the slasher genre as a prop for their act, it is also at the beginning of the film that screwball comedy is explicitly referenced. Having established Freddy’s return by means of resurrecting Jason’s bloodthirstiness in order for the world to remember them, the film opens on a characteristically foggy Elm Street which is otherwise cloaked in darkness. Upon a brief reference to Jason’s jingle, the first words spoken by Gibb, whose nonchalance and sexual promiscuity check all the boxes of becoming a victim of Jason’s, are “marry, fuck or kill, your choices are, your choices are the three Stooges. Go.” This invocation of the Stooges against a setting of marrying, fucking or killing both frames and solidifies a reading of the villainous pair as a vaudeville team. The game suggests that no matter which one of the Stooges is chosen, the participant has to engage with all three slapstick aficionados in one way or another. One might even say that the picture itself fucks, marries as well as ultimately kills as a comedic duo. It unites, i.e. *marries* two of the most iconic villains from the horror genre. They heavily physically engage with one another, i.e. *fuck* towards a cathartic response. And while they do remain immortal, they ultimately *kill* as a vaudeville team, implementing a comedy aesthetic as subtext and the clay along which they mold their final battle.

The film being ultimately concerned with the performance of said final showdown, the people that get slain along the way merely serve as a characterizing force which establishes

and solidifies their vaudeville personalities. Over the bodies of the ultimately only supporting human presence which is reduced to a peripheral necessity, Freddy crafts his witty intellectual dominance, which is cast vis-a-vis Jason's more physically inclined slapstick personality. Together, they become a comedic duo, entertainment becoming their ultimate objective. If Yanning is correct in asserting that the power relation of the comedic duo hinges on the intellectual dominance of one over the other as "[e]ven if, in past comedic duos, both members displayed idiocy to the audience, there was always some semblance of one member's being more serious, smarter, or more sane" [4] then Freddy clearly assumes intellectual dominance over Jason. The dynamic of the pair as a comedic duo casts Krueger as the witty intellectual and Voorhees as the physically indestructible slapstick artist. This becomes evident in Krueger's opening monologue outlining his grand resurrection. Lamenting the fact that he has been forgotten and thus no longer able to haunt the dreams of the unsuspecting tenants of Elm Street, he is forced to rely on a helping hand in order to resurrect himself: "I can't come back if nobody's afraid. I had to search the bones of hell. But I found someone. Someone who'll make 'em remember." Drawing on Jason, he foreshadows their respective positions as a comedy duo when he states that "He may get the blood but I'll get the glory" marking Jason with physicality and himself with cranial reputation. Further consolidating this reading of the pair, the characterization of Krueger in a scene during which he steals Kia's nose becomes illustrative. When her previously established discontent regarding her appearance inspires her to browse a magazine catering to the clientele of plastic surgery as she conveniently finds herself waiting for her friend Lori at a doctor's office, she is even more conveniently in a state of exhaustion. When she gives in and so fatally falls asleep, Krueger emerges in her dream and, inserting his claw into her nose, slays it off, chanting "got your nose". Framing his own orchestration of rhinoplasty with child's play, he turns the common trick of stealing somebody's nose into that nightmare from which he crafts the cloth of his existence. At the same time, he is ridiculing the horrors executed on her body using an ironic stance which implements his notorious wit, casting him as the intellectual party of the duo against taciturn Jason, a dynamic which is eventually consolidated by Lori identifying him as the

puppet master of the operation when she states that Krueger is “the one pulling the strings”. Marking only one half of the duo, Freddy’s intellectual superiority is then completed by Jason’s overt physicality and blind, urge-driven bloodlust. This contrast is already enacted during the setting of the initial tone of the film when, in the previously referenced opening on Elm Street, Gibb’s sexual interest is ultimately slain to illustriously gory abjection by Jason.

While each kill of Jason and each psychological trick of Freddy may be read as a solo number of their comedic act, it is only once united that they truly gain momentum and carry their act to extremes. They may have been cast as single acts in previous films and initially start out as such in *Freddy vs Jason*, however, their human-directed killing spree, which soon assumes a competitive undertone, ultimately only serves as individual characterization for their double act. The fact that they appear less and less interested in murdering people and more and more interested in battling one another points toward their portrayal over-the-human-corpse as the establishment of their respective personalities and power dynamic within their final act. It is their battle which is ultimately catering to the entertainment of the audience and becomes that which the film elaborately stages, devoting avid time to the choreographed performance between Freddy *and* Jason. As such, the final showdown then heavily implements their idiosyncratic killing styles. While Freddy narrates the battle with his characteristic wit, Jason remains heavily unkillable. Excessively marked with the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, their final battle is rendered caricaturesque, extending the vaudeville dynamic towards their drawn counterparts; the slasher villains’ bodies allow for a cartoonish physicality. The theatricality of their ultimate showdown then peaks in Krueger relying on props when pitted against Jason’s resilient physical dominance. Set at Camp Crystal Lake, so conveniently under construction and thus laden with heavy objects, Krueger maneuvers anything and everything he can find in Jason’s way. Pestering him with small rockets and momentarily trapping him with metal spears, he attempts a final blow by means of a large container. When he ultimately trips and gets caught within an attached string, the



invocation of slapstick is completed by the final image of him hanging from that box upside down, while Jason remains his usual unfazed-by-physical harm self; clumsily Krueger eventually tumbles into the physically stoic Jason upside down, who aimlessly begins clobbering at him. Extensively exaggerated towards the cartoonish, the scene becomes overtly comic while its subtext – Krueger’s desperate “give me a break” upon the container remaining stuck and Jason’s seeming ignorance towards the reason for him even being attacked – cannot but evoke a comedic response.

Implementing their physicalities in this manner, the film burlesques their signature characteristics which have been established by their respective franchises.



Scenes designed for comedic effect

Excessive slapstick, which is executed to extremes on the un-killable physique of the horror villain, is intertwined with verbal humor hinging on irony and wit. Krueger’s exasperated “[w]hy won’t you die” mirrors as well as satirizes the horror genre and ridicules the human frustration at the villain’s ultimate survival. Exactly because these are figures from such durable franchises this exasperation resonates with an equally exasperatedly entertained audience, which traditionally roots for the protagonist’s triumph over the antagonist.

Thus, it is their durability which renders their battle so purely performative, a performativity which is endowed with self-reflexivity in the concluding image of the film. Having battled each other to non-death, they have simultaneously shaped their characteristics further – as part of a vaudeville team as well as within their respective franchises. It is poignant, then, that what remains of Freddy is merely his head; carried by Jason who resurrects his partner’s character-token, that trademark which complements Jason’s own physicality within their dynamic. Even at the end of the picture they remain,

head in severed hand, a double act in which a final wink re-establishes their immortality as they speak a final word in unison. Their unified emergence from water during the concluding scene thus highlights their characteristics within their dynamic as a comedy duo in which Freddy is physically reduced to a head but with his cheeky wink maintaining the final word while Jason's body is overtly physical, towering and carrying Freddy's wit, while both parts are equally necessary for the act. At the same time, their emergence from Crystal Lake, through which they surface in unison, can be extended to a reading of a reassuring baptism, as only the first act of their collaboration as a vaudeville team.

---

Notes:

[1] Glenn, 651.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Jenkins, 336.

[4] Yanning, 82

Works Cited:

Glenn, Susan A. "‘A Hero! Is Dot a Business?’ Vaudeville Comedy and American Popular Entertainment". *Reviews in American History* 23, no. 4 (Dec 1995): 650-657.

Hemingway, Ernest. "The Killers". *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1953.

Jenkins, Henry. *What made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. New York, Columbia UP, 1992.

Yanning, Michelle Y. "Party on, Be Excellent and Be Ignorant: Depictions of Masculinity in the Idiotic Duo Film Genre". *Studies in Popular Culture* 23, no. 3 (April 2001): 81-95.

Yu, Ronny. *Freddy vs Jason*. New Line Cinema, 2003.

# TOO MUCH FREEDOM AT CAMP CRYSTAL LAKE: NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND *FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE GAME* (2017)

Caitlin Duffy

In his article “Game Design as Narrative Architecture,” Henry Jenkins offers “a middle ground position between the ludologists and the narratologists... examining games less as stories than as spaces ripe with narrative possibility.” In studying games this way, scholars and critics explore the methods and opportunities for narrative play and experimentation rather than attempt to fit video games into the same narrative box as traditional mediums of storytelling, such as novels or films. *Friday the 13th: The Game* (2017) uses generic images and characters to create a horrifying experience for its players familiar to any fans of the franchise or slasher genre, however, its most powerful narrative impact results from its semi-open setting. *Friday the 13th: The Game* provides an excellent space through which we can explore Jenkins’s “middle ground” and consider the storytelling potential of such a game.

*Friday the 13th* allows for up to seven players to play as the teenage counselors, all of whom must try to survive the murderous rampage of Jason Voorhees, controlled by an eighth player. Unlike many other horror video games, *Friday the 13th* does not employ any sort of directed navigational direction and instead allows characters to roam freely throughout the virtual world for either twenty minutes or until they’ve been butchered by Jason. Although the players can move when and where they’d like, there are certain tasks that each player must fulfill to win the



The cover of the version of *Friday the 13th: The Game* for Switch promises an experience similar to those provided by the franchise’s films.

game: Jason must kill all of the counselors, and each counselor must survive by lasting for the full twenty minutes, killing Jason, or escaping the campgrounds. *Friday the 13th* has a soundtrack similar to one that might be used in a horror film and when Jason comes close to a counselor, loud aggressive music plays, serving both to warn the players of his proximity and to heighten the players' fear.

Described as “a gory game of hide-and-go-seek,” there is not much narrative within *Friday the 13th: The Game*;<sup>[1]</sup> however, it uses its filmic original to its advantage by infusing the story of Jason Voorhees into the virtual space of the game and evoking the atmosphere of the original narrative. Players bring their own memories of the film with them into the game's space and the game's designers “play on those memories and expectations.”<sup>[2]</sup> As a fan of the film, I knew that I should fear Jason and that Camp Crystal Lake was not a safe location for me, a teenage camp counselor. I find that playing *Friday the 13th: The Game* as a counselor is often a far more frightening experience for me than watching any of the films. I'm a jumpy video game player to begin with, however, knowing that there are real people out there playing as the other counselors and Jason Voorhees adds to this fear. I feel more responsible for the lives of the counselors, and I doubly fear Jason knowing that there is a real person somewhere out there focused on hunting down and slaughtering my counselor avatar. Additionally, an increased sense of empathy and responsibility is common in horror video game experience due to the fact that players are immediately in control of what the protagonists do on screen.<sup>[3]</sup> This directly opposes the experience of watching a horror film, where viewers have no control over these choices, and can easily judge the characters for the foolish decisions that *they* most certainly would never make. Horror video games make it clear that you would, in fact, make all the wrong choices.

As Jason, killing can be accomplished in numerous fun and grisly ways: depending on which Jason you select as your avatar, you might kill any counselors that cross your path with a spear, pickaxe, or a machete. Jason also gets to play with various “grab kills” (options include “head punch” and “choke”), other “non-weapon kills” (my favorites include “eye

gouge,” “bear hug,” and the “heart punch”), and “environmental kills” which rely on the area in which the kills take place (favorites within this category include “marshmallow stick,” “toilet drown,” and the “tree arm ripoff”).<sup>[4]</sup> Jason also has some special abilities that perfectly fit the slasher genre. For example, he can use “shift,” which allows him to quickly move across short distances. This mimics the supernatural ability of the filmic version of Jason, as well as his fellow slashers, to suddenly catch up to running victims even though he is constantly walking. For me, playing as the Jason character felt much more similar to my experience watching the *Friday the 13th* film franchise. As Jason, I can celebrate each kill I successfully commit without the fear of being killed myself, just as slasher audiences cheerfully enjoy the gory and often bizarre murders portrayed on screen.



Yes, you can even play as “Retro Jason,” one of two Jason avatars not modeled after a movie version of Jason (the other being “Savini Jason”). Retro Jason is modeled after Jason’s appearance in the NES game *Friday the 13th: The Game* (1989).

There are also fourteen camp counselor avatars from which players can choose, most of which are based on characters from *Friday the 13th* films, though four of these avatars were designed and named after Kickstarter backers of the game who donated over \$10,000

towards the project. Each counselor has a different set of skills and weaknesses. Counselors aren’t armed prior to gameplay, but once the twenty-minute timer begins, they are encouraged to locate a weapon on the campgrounds and arm themselves. If you are playing as a counselor, your goal is to escape death-by-masked-killer. This can be accomplished in one of three ways: by killing Jason (a feat which can only be done if multiple counselors work together, and even then is a nearly impossible task), by waiting out the twenty minute timer, or by escaping the campgrounds by car, boat, or through a police rescue. To help with these three methods of winning the game, counselors can call upon Tommy

Jarvis, a favorite character of the film franchise who made his first appearance in *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984). Once Jarvis has been called, the first player to die or escape will be able to return to gameplay using the Tommy Jarvis avatar. He is one of the strongest counselor avatars due to the fact that his stats are incredible; Tommy basically has no weaknesses and he comes pre-equipped with a number of helpful items, including a shotgun, pocket knife, medspray, map, and walkie-talkie.

While *Friday the 13th* is most obviously categorized as a slasher game, it also contains some key elements of the “game horror” sub-genre, which is at least partly defined by its interest in questions of ethics and morality.<sup>[5]</sup> Although morality has always played a major role in the slasher genre, game horror tends to portray these questions in a messier way. Traditionally, the slasher film presents its moral code through its victims: the morally correct tend to survive, while the characters who drink, do drugs, or have pre-marital sex get butchered by the slasher film’s killer.

Rather than remain “pure,” characters within game horror sub-genre are typically encouraged to make whatever choice best supports their own survival and allows them to “win” the game. While this choice may sometimes overlap with a moral or ethical code (for example, characters in the *Saw* franchise often discover that they need to work together to ensure survival), it often goes against the character’s and viewer’s morality (for example, at the end of David Guy Levy’s *Would You Rather* (2012), final girl Iris chooses to shoot an innocent man in order to win the money prize which she plans to use to pay off her brother’s considerable medical costs). When a slasher film franchise like *Friday the 13th* is turned into a video game, it’s not surprising that it takes on some of the characteristics of game horror. Suddenly, *Friday the 13th* can be enjoyed by fans in such a way where their choices determine the outcome of the narrative. Since it is a game, *Friday the 13th: The Game* takes on some of the characteristics of game horror; most importantly, players of this game survive by making the correct decisions and actions to support their own survival. Suddenly, the concept of sin doesn’t really matter.

The interactive nature of video games like *Friday the 13th: The Game* allows users to not only enter the game's narrative architecture, but also to dramatically alter the story or genre. Soon after the game's release, a major flaw became apparent due to the game's lack of depth and the considerable freedom offered to players in their movements and choices. Legions of self-proclaimed "team-killers" complained about the repetitiveness of the game and, instead of focusing on escaping or killing Jason, began to purposefully kill the other counselors.<sup>[6]</sup> In August 2017, the game's developers removed team-killing capabilities from public matches, making it so that counselors could not kill other counselors except by hitting them with a car or placing a surreptitious bear-trap.<sup>[7]</sup> This, however, didn't stop players from finding more ways to transform the narrative. The newest trend reviled by the *Friday the 13th: The Game* fandom is called teaming, which is when a group of people playing on the counselors team up with Jason and help him to track down and kill other counselors.

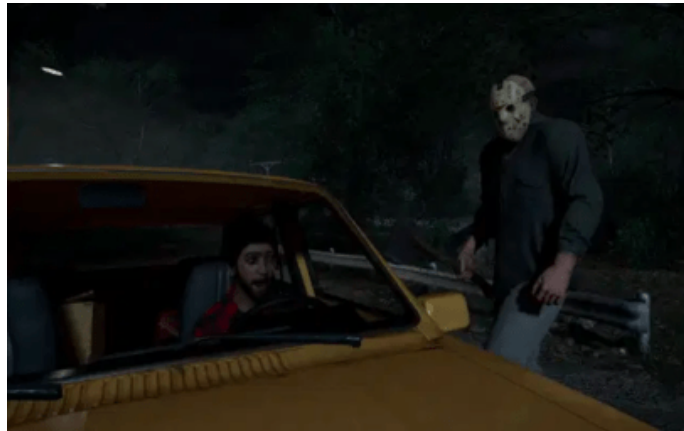
Team-killing and teaming not only drastically transform the game's narrative, but they also push *Friday the 13th* further into the game horror sub-genre.<sup>[8]</sup> In order to increase their chances of winning, anyone playing as a counselor cannot trust the other counselors due to the existence of teaming, as well as the fact that counselors win by surviving and they don't have to help others survive in the process. In *Friday the 13th*, then, there is no comradeship amongst the counselors as there is in the film franchise, and everyone must look out only for themselves. This style of gaming naturally raises questions of in-game morality. While most players wouldn't dream of becoming a teamer or team-killer, many also wouldn't consider protecting a fellow counselor from Jason's attacks.

Unfortunately, I have to admit that I accidentally once took part in teaming. Prior to researching for this article, I had no idea that teaming was as common as it is, nor did I know that it ruined the game for many players. So when I saw three counselors casually standing around Jason Voorhees, I decided to join them. One of the counselors hanging out with Jason asked the group to form a circle dance around our favorite killer. We then



roamed through the campgrounds with Jason, not really doing anything except breaking for random bouts of dancing. This lasted for about ten minutes until, suddenly, the counselor who previously instructed us all to dance told Jason to start killing us. It was my bad luck to be the one standing closest, so within a matter of seconds, I went from being one of Jason's best friends to being choked to death. This experience represents a major narrative shift. No longer was *Friday the 13th* about a group of teenaged counselors trying to escape a masked killer, but it instead told a comedic story of friendship and betrayal.

To be fair, however, most of my *Friday the 13th: The Game* adventures demonstrate the fact that the majority of its players commit to the franchise's intended narrative. The most common frustration I encounter



Even if you're safely inside the car, be careful! Jason can pull you out of the window or break down the door.

while playing this game online results from players who get so frightened that they spend the entire game hiding rather than working towards accomplishing the various tasks needed for counselors to escape, making it incredibly difficult for those of us actively trying to escape Jason's clutches. Otherwise, it seems like most players-as-Jason will commit to playing the slasher and players-as-counselors will support the other counselors as much as possible while avoiding Jason and working towards a means of escape. There have been multiple times when I've been surprised and even a bit touched at the kindness of these strangers. For example, once a fellow counselor was driving away in a car and actually paused their escape to rescue me. They drove up to where I was fleeing from Jason and started honking the car's horn as a means to get my attention. Although this also caught Jason's attention, I managed to get into the car and we drove far away from Camp Crystal Lake. To whoever that was: thank you for risking death-by-Jason-Voorhees just to save me!

The semi-open setting of *Friday the 13th: The Game* allows players a considerable amount of freedom. It is in this narrative space that fans can dramatically alter the narrative, genre, and affective experience expected of media within the *Friday the 13th* franchise. Based on my time spent playing this game, I'd argue that the freedom permitted is, for the most part, a good thing.

---

Notes:

[1] Valle

[2] Jenkins

[3] Madigan

[4] For full details on the various types of kills Jason can execute, see *Friday the 13th: The Game: The Wiki*.

[5] For more on game horror, see Dawn Keetley's "[Game Horror, Circle \(2015\), and Lifeboat Ethics.](#)"

[6] For more information on team-killing in *Friday the 13th: The Game*, see Stacie Ponder's article "[In Friday the 13th, the Real Killer isn't Jason – It's Your Teammates.](#)"

[7] See Jordan Sirani's "[Friday the 13th: The Game to Remove Team Killing.](#)"

[8] Interested in watching team-killing and teaming in action? See "[FRIDAY THE 13TH TEAM KILLING COMPILATION](#)" for team-killing and "[Jason's Slave- Friday the 13th Funny Moments](#)" for teaming.

Works Cited

Jenkins, Henry. "Game Design as Narrative Architecture." *MIT Blog*,

n.d., [www.pcgamer.com/friday-the-13th-review/](http://www.pcgamer.com/friday-the-13th-review/).

Madigan, Jamie. "The Psychology of Horror Games." *The Psychology of Games*, 29 Oct.

2015, [www.psychologyofgames.com/2015/10/the-psychology-of-horror-games/](http://www.psychologyofgames.com/2015/10/the-psychology-of-horror-games/).

Wilde, Tyler. "*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* Review." *PC Gamer*, 31 May 2017, [www.pcgamer.com/friday-](http://www.pcgamer.com/friday-the-13th-review/)

[the-13th-review/](http://www.pcgamer.com/friday-the-13th-review/).

# SOMETHING IS WRONG AT CRYSTAL LAKE: MONSTROUS NATURE IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE FINAL CHAPTER*

Jason J. Wallin

In the expository montage of *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984), camp counsellor Paul Holt rehearses an omen well established in prior installments of the franchise: *something is wrong at Crystal Lake*. In a flashback to the original film, town local “Crazy” Ralph proselytizes that Camp Crystal Lake is plagued by a “death curse.” Ralph’s warning is redoubled in another scene drawn from the franchise’s first film, in which a truck driver warns that Camp Crystal lake is “jinxed.” Akin to its franchise predecessors (*Friday the 13th Part III* excepted), much of *The Final Chapter* centers on the largely abandoned setting of Crystal Lake and its surrounding forest. The ill-fated teenagers who narrowly arrive at the remote destination bemoan the effort involved in finding it. Coming across Trish and Tommy Jarvis’ broken down car, *The Final Chapter*’s ‘tritagonist’ Rob Dier concernedly comments, “I didn’t think anyone lived out here.”

Proving local lore correct, the forest surrounding Camp Crystal Lake is anything but abandoned. As the teenage party-goers prominently featured throughout the film approach Crystal Lake, they are pursued by something *vague* and *terrible*. While it is revealed that the film’s obscured stalker is none other than Jason Voorhees returning to the scene of his childhood trauma, it is significant that the rising sense of dread evoked throughout the body of the film is composed largely through the ‘inhuman gaze’ of the camera withdrawn under the cover of the woods. Throughout the body of the film, Jason becomes largely indistinguishable from the remote wilderness of Camp Crystal Lake with which he seems filmically allied. That is, the wilderness *mise-en-scene* of *The Final Chapter* suggests Jason’s existence, but significantly, the film’s antagonist is often visually absent but for his fragmentary and sudden emergence from the cover of forest. Disappeared into the

ecological backdrop, Jason's presence is made to suffuse the surroundings, imbuing the cinematic frame with a sense of imminent danger and dread of which the film's characters are suitably unaware. For alike the dense vegetation that both floods and yet disappears into the cinematic background of *The Final Chapter*, Jason seems both ubiquitous and yet, remote to the life-world of the characters that populate the film.

Jason's alliance with the obfuscating veil of wilderness is vaguely redoubled in his mask,

where clusters of holes mimicking the natural patterns made by insects, worms, and wounds appear in lieu of a standard human face. Jason's mask evokes fear not for its cultural reference, but for its evocation of



The filmic 'endarkenment' of Crystal Lake

such horrors as diseased tissue (Morgellons disease, necrobiosis, xanthomas, etc.) and the markings of venomous animals (poison dart frog, blue ringed octopus, marbled cone snail, etc.) commensurate with *trypophobia* – the so-called evolutionary fear of dangerous and revulsive patterns in nature.<sup>[1]</sup> In distinction to the human face adopted by Michael Myers or the horribly scarred yet recognizably human face of Freddy Kruger, Jason's mask harkens to another point of reference. Eschewing his resemblance to the human, Jason adopts an inhuman guise allied with the deadly patterns and markings of an endarkened natural world. Jason's filiation with nature is elsewhere dramatized through his non-violent relation to animals. While Jason pursues his human prey with singular vengeance, his fidelity to animals is illustrated in the film through his 'letting-be' of Tommy and Trish's canine companion, Gordon. Herein, *The Final Chapter* composes an image of Jason that both allies with nature and enters into indistinction with its most inhuman, unfamiliar aspects.

The confused resemblance of Jason and Crystal Lake links the film's brutal acts of antagonism to the 'monstrous nature' of the forest and lake from which Jason's drowned body is "rebirthed." Such cinematic confusion intimates a nuptials between Jason and a natural world perverted by human degeneracy and intolerance. Yet, the alliance between Jason and Crystal Lake also points to the monstrous nature of the lake itself. As the opening scenes of *The Final Chapter* suggest, Jason's return occurs from "under" the darkened waters of Crystal Lake as a monstrous surrogate from which he is birthed into ghoulish 'unlife.' The endarkened womb of Crystal Lake finds little reflection in the vitalist or "beneficial" character often attributed to nature, and where the lake is often represented as but a passive backdrop to human leisure and enjoyment, *The Final Chapter* transpires its occulted, lethal character. For ultimately, the image of nature developed in *The Final Chapter* is unlinked from its passivity as a filmic 'backdrop' and rejoined with Jason's vengeance. Jason and Crystal Lake not only blur into filmic indistinction, but into *symbiotic* relation wherein the lake and wilderness come to function as an obfuscating veil for Jason's brutal assault. Herein, *The Final Chapter* modulates the stalker trope in its nascent speculation on what might be dubbed an 'eco-stalker' film. As director Joseph Zito dramatizes through the intermixing of Jason's final assault with the elemental fury of a thunderstorm, Jason appears less as a human than a force of nature. Herein, and throughout the film, Zito's direction portrays nature as less 'for us' or rather, as a neutral screen for the expression of *our* desires, than an endarkened staging-point for ambush and suffering. The wilds of Crystal Lake are made to resonate with the ancient Greek concept of *loxos*, which in opposition to the clarity of *logos*, or truth, designates a 'place of ambush' or 'holey space' withdrawn from the presumption that reality is as we think it.<sup>[2]</sup>



*Ambush from beneath the lake*

Camp Crystal Lake and its surrounding wilderness resemble neither the image of a beneficent, life-giving natural world, or the image of a “cultured nature” emblemized in the oversexed desires of the film’s teenagers. The confused intersection of Jason and Camp Crystal Lake suggests

another *darker, natural* order. In overt fashion, *The Final Chapter* dramatizes the tension of two natural drives – that of life (vitalism) and death (thanatosis). The teens who descend upon Crystal Lake are made to resemble nature’s vitalist character, with a majority of scenes depicting their life-world awash with the pursuit of reproductive pleasure and sexual adventurism. In an ongoing depiction of the link between the vitality of youth and sexual desire, Jimmy obsesses over Teddy’s persistent ribbing that he’s a sexually impotent “dead fuck”. The significance of Jimmy’s preoccupation with Teddy’s joke is drawn throughout the film and underscores one of its founding anxieties. Astride the desire for pleasure emblemized in the film’s depiction of youth, there persists another force that advances toward pleasure’s extinction. In adversarial contrast to the desires of the film’s youth, Jason functions as a force of indomitable and inhuman destruction. As elsewhere in the franchise, *The Final Chapter* imagines Jason as thanatosis incarnate. This posed, it is important that Jason’s thanatotic death-drive is connected to the negation of a *particular* form of desire. The dark history of Camp Crystal Lake might be rejoined here, for the “curse” that bedevils the lake and wilderness is precipitated by the seeming corruption of nature perpetrated through the immoral acts and negligence of the camp counsellors resulting in the drowning of 8-year-old Jason Voorhees in the summer of 1933.

The significance of desire in *The Final Chapter* resonates within the socio-cultural anxieties of mid 1980s America, particularly in regard to the emerging pretensions of consumer freedom and corollary fashioning of consumer freedom as a measure of social health and well-being. The end of the 1970s stagflationary period and the stock market boom of the 1980s saw both a reinvigoration of consumerism and an increasing socio-economic pressure toward



Teddy (Lawrence Monoson) mocks Jimmy's (Crispin Glover) sexual inexperience

'conspicuous consumption', or

rather, of overt consumption linked to social status and mobility.<sup>[3]</sup> The film's focus on oversexed desire and bourgeois hedonism are coextensive with the new axiomatics of mid-1980s capitalist 'enjoyment' ("Coca-Cola, enjoy"), 'overconsumption' ("I can't believe I ate the whole thing"), and the pursuit of pleasure without consequence ("What Happens Here, Stays Here"). The injunction to 'enjoy' characteristic of mid-1980s consumerism is obliquely referenced through the youthful freedom, carelessness, and privilege of most youth that populate the film. In distinction, the film's quintessential "final girl," Trish, appears most responsible and obligated to familial duties, which she consistently prioritizes above invitations to join her peer partygoers. Anxiety over pleasure's legislation as a compulsory attitude occurs in relation to the overt conformism demanded within the film where, for instance, a reluctant Jimmy is pressured into skinny-dipping with his friends. Elsewhere, the 'obligation to enjoy' persists via Jimmy's ongoing anxiety that he's a "dead fuck." Such anxiety explicitly links the libido to the expectation of sexual confidence and prowess.



Despite the obligation of enjoyment and the worry of its inaccessibility drawn throughout



Twins Tina and Terri Moore (Camilla and Carey More) party at Crystal Lake

the film, *The Final Chapter* is entirely unique for the fact that nearly all of its teenage characters realize some degree of sexual gratification. The interruption of sexual pleasure is a trademark of both earlier and latter installments of the franchise, where Jason figures more prominently as a force of prohibition and an index of conservative idealism ushered forward by the ‘iron hand’ of

Reaganomics and Thatcherism.<sup>[4]</sup> Where prior installments of the franchise prominently featured the violent interference of sexual nuptials and the deferral of orgasmic pleasure, *The Final Chapter* presents the new socio-economic mood of the mid-1980s. For ultimately, *The Final Chapter* imagines the immediateness and accessibility of all desires. This aspect marks a significant shift in the *Friday the 13th* franchise, wherein Jason figures less as a force prohibiting pleasure and enacting Oedipal, moral conservatism. No longer the arbiter of “phallic” prohibition often attributed to the figure, Jason’s function is made to relate to pleasure differently, occurring less as an analogue to moral panic than the articulation of new anxieties coextensive with the rise of bourgeois hedonism throughout the mid-1980s.

*The Final Chapter* might be said to imagine two “natures.” The first is founded on the image of a rising bourgeois consumer class given expression by the vacationing teens and their pursuit of pleasure. The libidinal drive of the teens is shaped around the contours of culturally defined sexuality where such acts as Jimmy’s spastic dance to Lion’s ‘Love is a Lie’ stand-in as a courtship ritual and performance of vitalism. The cultural shaping of sexuality is further dramatized across a number of scenes in which a sexually-rejected Teddy watches a pornographic film dating to the inception of Camp Crystal Lake in the

1930s. While the teens of *The Final Chapter* are undoubtedly made to represent “culture” and its immediate, surface pursuits, they concomitantly function to articulate the ways in which ‘natural’ drives are routed through the cultural imaginary. Such cultural reformatting of nature is juxtaposed in *The Final Chapter* through the transpiration of an antithetical natural order. Where the teens come to figure in an image of nature driven by the vitalist axioms of neoliberal capitalism under which pleasure and enjoyment become mandated, the endarkened nature of Crystal Lake conspires to remit such vitalism to its horrific underside. Crystal Lake’s ‘small town’ values are made to directly contrast with the hedonism of the city, and so too, the city’s glossy image of ‘vitalism’ becomes in the course of the film measured against the forest’s endarkened natural order. *The Final Chapter* herein creates an augury on the disappearance of small-town America and its attendant values under the motors of consumer culture, and further, the reformatting of such disappeared places as Crystal Lake as a leisure ‘playground’ for a re-emerging consumer class.

The contrast between the vitalism of consumer culture and of a natural world in which we are yet enchained in mutual fate is reflected in *The Final Chapter’s* portrayal of nature.

Where the film’s party-going teens figure as emblems of culture and its revaluation of the world as but a passive backdrop for their pleasure, the film composes an image of the natural world born in antagonism to the presupposition that



The withdrawn nature of Crystal Lake

the world is *for-us*.<sup>[5]</sup> In distinction to the refashioning of ‘life’ corollary to the glossy aesthetics of MTV, the hyperactive ‘overproduction’ of the mid-1980s marketing industry,

and compulsory happiness 'mandated' by popular consumer markets, Crystal Lake is conceived in fidelity to another reality. Against the meteoric rise of the 1980s media simulacrum and abstract expansion of consumer markets advanced under the accelerating impulses of globalization, Crystal Lake exists as a reminder of 'real' places forged from the indelible trauma of their 'forgotten' past. Antagonistic to the image of nature as a passive background and fated to its exploitation by a culture it is made to serve, *The Final Chapter* forcefully habituates the immanence of death rendered unthinkable from the vitalist perspective of the film's youth. Such tensionality might be understood as an anxious rejoinder that the capitalist mantra of 'fun and satisfaction' is haunted by the immanence of doom, redoubling the Christian caveat *memento mori* (remember that you must die) against the Dionysian dictum *nunc est bibendum* (now is the time to drink). At a time of accelerating consumer excess, *The Final Chapter* articulates the inescapability of death, rendering together the axiom to enjoy the inevitable decline, herein mirroring both the anxiety of economic downturn experienced throughout the late-1970s stagflationary period as well as the anxieties of having to 'grow up' and face the sobering consequences of individual and collective choices.

*Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* diagrams a moment of socio-political tension intimate to mid-1980s America. The pleasure-principle of the mid-1980s consumerist boom dramatized throughout the film is harried by its dark twin, thanatosis. So, too, is its attitude of enjoyment beset by the threat of immanent reversal. The film advances an implicate juxtaposition of culture and nature and forges a stealth commentary on the sublimation of rural life and wilderness under cosmopolitanism. The "return of the repressed" features through the film and primarily through the repetition of Crystal Lake's place-based trauma and Jason's impossible resurrection from the abyssal depth of the lake. It is here that *The Final Chapter* articulates the emergence of a remote world that resists against the libidinal conjunction of enjoyment and pleasure commensurate with the socio-economic boom of the mid-1980s. From the vantage of the vacationing youth, Crystal Lake is but a libidinal 'playground.' Yet, as *The Final Chapter* dramatizes, the image of the world *for-us* intersects

with an endarkened nature antithetical to the hedonistic desires of man in its demonstration of human ignorance and fragility.

Where the name “Crystal Lake” is suggestive of nature’s transparent and benign character, there manifests in the film an obscured and remote world in which human fate is yet



Jason (Ted White) confronts Trish Jarvis (Kimberly Beck)

entwined. Crystal Lake comes to function as a strange attractor toward which the film’s action and characters are drawn and importantly, the revelation of Crystal Lake’s tragic history in the form of found newspaper clippings

becomes the fulcrum by which Tommy and Trish survive Jason’s assault. *The Final Chapter* features the return of a monstrous nature born from the machinations of man, and returns the viewer to the primal tableaux of upon which life is rejoined to its decay and extinction. While the *Friday the 13th* franchise has been canonically interpreted as a morality play in which Jason dramatizes the conservative values and prohibitive social order of the 1980s, *The Final Chapter* posits a more nuanced relation to its cultural background. For *The Final Chapter* is not simply a narrative about prohibition, but of the symbolic link of consumption and pleasure to its reversibility. Here, *The Final Chapter* gives expression to *another* nature astride the conflation of vitalism and enjoyment emblematic of 1980s America. If this endarkened nature represents anything, it is the doom of the present order of things and the ruination of a culture to whom the world is presumably ‘given.’ It is in this way that *The Final Chapter* might be thought as an ‘eco-stalker’ for its dramatization of nature’s symbolic enchainment to death, and so too, for the monstrous nature that rises in antagonism to life’s fashionable reformatting within the engines of interminable and obligatory consumerism.

Notes:

[1] Adam

[2] Lambert, 222

[3] Page, 83

[4] "Ronald Regan, American Slasher"

[5] Thacker, 102.

## Works Cited:

- Adam, David. "Trypophobia: Why a fear of holes is real – and may be on the rise." *New Scientist*, 15 Jan. 2020, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24532650-800-trypophobia-why-a-fear-of-holes-is-real-and-may-be-on-the-rise/>.
- Lambert, Gregg. "What the Earth Thinks." *Deleuze and Space*, edited by Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, Edinburgh University Press, 2005, pp. 220-39.
- Page, Christine. "A History of Conspicuous Consumption." *SV – Meaning, Measure, and Morality of Materialism*, edited by Floyd W. Rudmin and Marsha Richins, Association for Consumer Research, 1992, pp. 82-87.
- "Ronald Reagan: American Slasher." *H8urs*, n.d., <https://www.8hours.com/essay/ronald-reagan-american-slasher-renegade-cut>.
- Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of this Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1*. Zero Books, 2011.

# REANIMATING COLLECTIVE ECOLOGICAL NIGHTMARES IN *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI: JASON LIVES*

Matthew Jones

In 1986, a cataclysmic environmental disaster at a nuclear plant in Russia fell upon the whole of the continent, afflicting and forever altering the life inhabiting its natural world. Other anthropogenic ecological disasters within and outside of the United States in the years prior to the Chernobyl catastrophe had invariably led to a public consciousness stricken with a new type of anxiousness and dread. The Times Beach incident in Missouri, Love Canal, pesticide poisoning in California, and the horrors of the Bhopal disaster in India had merely set the stage for the heightening of an emerging ecophobia for an already traumatized populace. After decades of real-world ecological nightmares, a new perspective on horror surfaced on cinema screens and a once romanticized view of the natural world was transmuted into a threatening vision of monstrous nature.

Only a few months following the Chernobyl incident, Tom McLaughlin's *Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives* was released. The film is undoubtedly a departure from the prior entries in the series as it is a more decidedly gothic re-conception of the narrative strain that includes distinctive subtextual commentary on the conflicted relationship between the human and non-human world. This article employs an ecogothic lens primarily in order to examine this conflict but also to reassess the iconic slasher as a force of monstrous nature, the result of materialized fears stemming from environmental poisoning and mutation resulting in what I will be calling *collective ecological nightmares*. This perspective will allow for a close textual analysis that will bring to bear unconscious impulses at work while providing a visual examination of various gothic elements present in the text and their connection to a threatening nature. The gothic woods and landscape omnipresent in the film are also key to my analysis and provide more than a foreboding ambiance. Instead of

the perceived classical atmospheric passivity, the natural environment here is *active* and possesses a certain agency that allows it to influence characters as well as provoke narrative direction.

The most pivotal point of my ecogothic reading of the sixth entry in the *Friday* series is



Jason as a hybrid force of monstrous nature, both human and non-human

Jason as a force of monstrous nature. Undoubtedly a focal point of iconographic significance within the horror genre, the hockey-masked slasher had indeed survived seemingly countless run-ins with death throughout the prior films yet he is presented as fundamentally human in all of them leading up to *Jason Lives*. It is only here where he is reanimated and subsequently

transformed into something that defies what we may consider a natural classificatory scheme or as Noel Carroll puts it “that which violates our conceptual schema.”<sup>[1]</sup> Thus, this work argues that Jason is truly a Carrollian monster, a malevolent force of hybridity, simultaneously both human and non-human and a violation of the boundaries of those worlds.

Long viewed by critics as a derivative and painfully formulaic clone of John Carpenter’s 1978 horror opus *Halloween*, Sean S. Cunningham’s *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) managed to carve important in-roads for the slasher variation of the horror film. By most accounts, the original *Friday* was merely intended to capitalize on Carpenter’s film and its numerous sequels did adhere to a rigid narrative structure.<sup>[2]</sup> However, along with the arrival of the sixth entry came a new perceivable impulse which itself had formed within the public’s collective unconscious through decades of environmental contamination and the accompanying dread of its potential consequences. The result of these unconscious and



conscious anxieties take shape as what I call *collective ecological nightmares*, which are in essence repressed fears arising from real-world eco-crises manifesting themselves in the form of horror monsters. Sharae Deckard refers to such a manifestation as the projection of a sort of “environmental unconscious” [3] where a text reveals deeply buried anxieties resulting from an environmental crisis. These unearthed anxieties give shape to our eco-nightmares which are then projected and played out within a text where the unleashing of the monster results in a threatened humanity, an idea that in part echoes Robin Wood’s conception of repressed collective subconscious fears rising to the surface to threaten the social order in horror fictions. [4] However, unlike Wood’s theory, and closer to Deckard’s, eco-nightmares always find nature at their core, both as the force of monstrous manifestation and source of the threat. In short, eco-nightmares see the horror monster distinctly and inherently adhered to the natural world. For *Jason Lives*, the collective ecological nightmares of the (recent) past are reanimated and made manifest within the fabric of its narrative ultimately forming an ecogothic mise-en-scène which plays part in the construction and reformulation of the iconic slasher as an indomitable force of threatening nature.

Elizabeth Parker and Michelle Poland see the ecogothic as a means of “interrogating and interpreting the intriguing darkness in our increasingly troubled relationship to and

representation of the more-than-human world.” [5] Using this as our basic framework we should also consider Simon Estok’s conception where “an agential nature is menacing in itself; a vengeful one is truly



Nature as animating agent resurrecting evil to threaten humanity.

horrifying” and how imagining nature in this way is at the core of ecogothic texts. [6] With

this in mind, *Jason Lives* can then be seen as an ecogothic text that when peering into its gothic darkness a variant of our collective ecological nightmares is revealed, one where a dreadful agential nature animates a terrible force of monstrous eco-vengeance. When Tommy and Hawes show up to the graveyard where Jason is buried, the pair seem to accidentally resurrect the killer when a traumatized Tommy repeatedly stabs Jason's maggot-ridden corpse with a metal rod broken off a nearby fence and a seemingly freak pair of lightning strikes reanimate the deceased monster. However, this was no accident and the film makes perceptible an agential nature at work as the electricity from the lightning strikes act as the solitary source of Jason's animation throughout the film, much like the creature in James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1930). The primary difference here is that Jason's resurrection is not a purposeful act of human agency as was the case for Henry Frankenstein in Whale's film. Instead, *Jason Lives* portrays this scene as one of a resurrection driven by what appears on a surface-level to be (not one but two) completely random lightning strikes; however, a closer look reveals an act of purposeful agency committed by a non-human force. This is coupled with and made clearer by a seemingly freak *third* act of nature occurring in the same scene after Jason brutally ends Hawes (importantly establishing nature as threatening and oppositional to humanity). Tommy attempts to light a match after dousing the lumbering, cow-webbed covered Jason in gasoline only to have a sudden rain shower extinguish the flame causing Tommy to flee and allowing the monster to freely threaten the human world. Indeed, from the start, the film presents nature both as a powerful agent in a purposeful resurrection of evil and as an adversarial and kinetic force of the non-human world.

Interestingly, the film never presents Jason as either completely human or non-human; rather it conceives of the monster as a hybrid. In his hybridity, Jason violates the boundaries between human and non-human, living and dead and even past and present. After Tommy flees the aforementioned graveyard scene, instead of giving chase, Jason opts to retrieve his hockey mask from the mud and put it on, an act of expeditious recognition correlating to the presence of human memory. Jason also wields weapons with a kind of

recognizable brutal efficiency seen throughout the series as he stabs and maims the familiar archetypal band of victims in a return to the site of his original demise, Camp Crystal Lake (now renamed Camp Forest Green, an implied nod to the dominance of the non-human in the area). The film seems to confirm the return of a human Jason when Sheriff Garris mentions someone using “Jason’s old M.O.,” in the murderous acts. *Jason Lives* then makes clear its resurrected antagonist possesses a functioning memory, a certain self-recognition, and a motive, all typically associated with the biological human.

Yet, despite this, the film is ultimately paradoxical. Although he appears to be something of a human zombie, Jason is not only resurrected by and represented as intrinsically singular with the nonhuman world, but he is also powered and made deathless by it. For instance, the first time we see the monster he is depicted as visually synonymous with nature (an important visual motif throughout) in that he has become a natural repository for worms and maggots, much like the soil that surrounds his coffin. This aspect, coupled with the earthy tones of the corpse’s color palette, eerily matches the greens and browns of the natural world which come to signify the confluence of life and death. Indeed, the monster’s deathlessness is on display towards the end of the film when Jason, after getting up from several shotgun blasts at close range, continues after the sheriff unabated before gruesomely subduing him. Later, the monster continues to threaten when he grabs from below a swimming Megan after being held underwater for an inhuman amount of time by a large boulder chained around his neck.

The film, not un-problematically, also exemplifies this view of the monster as non-human when the frightened little girl, after seeing Jason, tells the counselors “he was everywhere,” making evident the monster’s nonhumanness illustrated through his omnipresence. Although this is a clear narrative conceit in the previous *Friday* films, it is only here that Jason has achieved a true omnipresence that coincides directly with his hybridity. Jason’s ability to appear in front of soon-to-be victims after giving chase from the rear is nothing new for the series, yet here his presence is preceded by an ominous gothic mist that functions as a boundless ethereal extension of his humanoid physical form, which in itself

is a terrible instrument imbued with nature's vengeance. In turn, the entirety of the film's human world is in essence threatened by the monster due to its proximate interiority within the bounds of the surrounding natural world. Thus, as a hybrid ecogothic monster, Jason does indeed transcend the boundary between the human and material worlds and in doing so, illustrates the dichotomy between the two, ultimately embodying the anthropocentric dread of a threatening, omnipresent, deathless and monstrous nature that is active, vengeful and an animated manifestation of perhaps the worst of our eco-nightmares.

As we are told, camp Crystal Lake (as well as Forest Green) is cursed and forms the film's gothic landscape which in itself exemplifies nature's agential threat and its terrible metaphysical power. Fred Botting, in his important study on the gothic, characterizes the



An ominous mist stalks Steven and Annette's night picnic.

gothic landscape as "desolate, alienating and full of menace." [7] Much in the same way, *Jason Lives'* gothic landscape breeds an apocalyptic menace concealed by the desolation of pitch-black darkness and foreboding storms which serve to further forge the connection between the film's monster and the non-human world. Although Jason does appear in the daytime to make bloody quick work of a clueless corporate team, the most crucial points of the narrative action occur at night, preceded by a storm. The film opens with a sequence that constructs a kind of ecogothic mise-en-scene, where a sudden thunderclap visually reveals the blackness of storm clouds accompanied by distant peals of thunder and howling winds. An icy, slow-moving mist can be seen snaking through the gothic woods and across the frame, a visual motif that serves to both foreshadow and indicate Jason's proximity.

Not only do these acts of nature denote doom and the approaching threat but they also possess the ability to intervene in the narrative action. The previously mentioned lightning strikes that resurrect and animate the monster are the initial instance of this but it is important to consider how several of the victims meet their end after the metaphysical glow of the mist has crept into their vicinity. The mist lurks in the woods, seen in a wide shot surrounding Lizabeth and Darren's car before blocking the road (and bringing with the implication it had concealed Jason evidenced by the couple's need to make a sudden stop) causing the pair to halt their progress and make a poorly calculated attempt to fight with the monster. Later the eerie mist hovers behind and above Steven and Annette during their night picnic, concealing and seemingly transporting Jason in front of them (both illustrating the monster's omnipresence as well as the agency of the natural world) where he skewers the pair simultaneously.

Interestingly, in the opening two-shot of the scene, there is a perceivable mist moving from frame right to left where, via the film's established screen direction, we witness the murder of the drunken gravekeeper not far from the couple. Importantly, Steven sees Jason in the violent act (beyond frame left) and tries to escape with his girlfriend in the opposite direction (toward frame right) before the two meet their end at the hands of the mysteriously transported omnipresent monster. Later on in the film, the mist creeps outside Cort's RV before we see Jason enter the frame. After Nikki and Cort move outside to investigate the power outage, Nikki is suddenly struck with fear after gazing upon the threatening mist lurking in the nearby wood, causing her to move quickly inside where she eventually finds Jason (who has slipped inside while the mist acts as an uncanny diversion) and ultimately a painful death. Gazing at the ominous mist outside a cabin causes a suddenly frightened Paula to run inside before howling storm winds blow open the door allowing the threat entrance and leading directly to her grisly demise. The gothic landscape, primarily in the form of the mist and storm, then takes on a metaphysicality that makes it both synonymous with Jason as well as an intervening force on its own.

Thus as a variant of our collective ecological nightmares, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VI: Jason Lives* becomes a textual exemplar of perhaps the most terrible of our eco-fears. By looking at the horror film as a form of social history, we can see how *Jason Lives* embodies the escalating environmental anxieties of its time through the positioning of and commentary on the tumultuous relationship between the human and the non-human worlds. Despite broader global efforts, our contemporary relationship with nature appears to be even more strained than it was over three decades ago. Thus, deeply buried fears of an agential natural world metamorphosing into an apocalyptic force of active evil have not abandoned us and as long as horror films project our eco-nightmares, these fears will conceivably reside not far from the surface.

---

Notes:

[1] Carroll, 186.

[2] Nowell, 28.

[3] Deckard, 174.

[4] Wood, 14.

[5] Parker and Poland, 11.

[6] Estok, 41.

[7] Botting, 2.

Works Cited

- Botting, Fred. "Introduction." *Gothic*, Routledge, 1996.
- Carpenter, John, director. *Halloween*. Compass International Pictures, 1978.
- Carroll Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, 1989.
- Cunningham, Sean S., director. *Friday the 13th*. Paramount Pictures, 1980.
- Deckard, Sharae. "Ecogothic." *Twenty-First-Century Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Maisha Wester and Xavier Aldana Reyes, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 174-88.
- Estok, Simon C. "Theorising the Gothic." *Gothic Nature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2019.
- McLoughlin, Tom, director. *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VI: Jason Lives*. Paramount Pictures, 1986.
- Nowell, Richard. "'The Ambitions of Most Independent Filmmakers': Indie Production, the Majors, and Friday the 13th (1980)." *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2011.
- Parker, Elizabeth, and Michelle Poland. "Gothic Nature: An Introduction." *Gothic Nature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2019.
- Whale, James, director. *Frankenstein*. Universal Pictures, 1930.
- Wood, Robin. "Return of the Repressed." *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, by Andrew Britton, Festival of Festivals, 1979.

# THE ORIGINS OF CRYSTAL LAKE: CAPTIVITY, MURDER, AND AN ALL-AMERICAN FEAR OF THE WOODS

Wade Newhouse

Though Mrs. Voorhees and Jason represent the archetypal fear of death by monster, the sylvan setting of summer camp in the original *Friday the 13th* movies is a particularly contemporary all-American place to stage such anxiety. Michael B. Smith's account of the summer camp industry emphasizes that the impact of the historical camp experience depends on its remaining parallel to the values of contemporary society; camp is a structured but temporary alternative, "a less artificial world" than the increasingly mechanized one in which American children actually lived.<sup>[1]</sup> The ersatz "frontier" activities promised by a place like Camp Crystal Lake—boating, archery, living far from comfort—are juxtaposed with the idea of adolescence as a similarly liminal space, a "frontier" on the edge of adulthood. A basic trope of these films is the kids' awareness that they exist in a place—psychological as well as geographical—that is unequivocally cut off from adult influence, even while the victims, in training to be camp counselors, also see themselves as "grown-ups" who are earning the right to supervise children.

The franchise (and other camp slasher films, such as *Sleepaway Camp* and *The Burning*) manages to get away with potentially heavy-handed associations of gore with personal growth because this pairing has been built into the American imagination from the beginning. This essay will briefly discuss two texts—each the first of its respective genre—that align the wild American frontier with graphic violence and depict the fine line between abject victimhood and resilience that has come to define the *Friday the 13th* formula. Both of these books, moreover, depict their horrors through the eyes of a young woman who survives the onslaught, and thus, in a sense, they may be said to predict the rise of the character we now call the "Final Girl" in the horror genre.





Carol J. Clover first coined the term “Final Girl” in her masterful 1992 book *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* (which should be required reading for any fan of horror movies). Clover initially defines the Final Girl as “the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril . . . . She is abject terror personified.”<sup>[ii]</sup> Puritan writer Mary Rowlandson, in her 1682 captivity narrative, and heroine Clara Wieland in Charles Brockden Brown’s 1798 novel *Wieland* embody early

versions of this iconic character type as they face death and psychological trauma on the literal American frontier. Their stories (one historical, one fictional) demonstrate not only that *Friday the 13th* grows from old mythic roots but that its primal scenes of danger in the woods lie at the very heart of the American storytelling impulse.

Mary Rowlandson was captured in 1676 by a group of 1500 Wampanoag warriors when they attacked the town of Lancaster, Massachusetts during King Philip’s War. Carrying her wounded daughter, who later succumbed to her injuries, Rowlandson lived with her captors for eleven weeks while they moved throughout the colonies until she was ransomed. In 1682, she published an account of her adventure, which is today referred to variously as *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* or *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. The popularity of her book led to the writing and publishing of similar accounts from other colonists, and a new genre of “captivity narratives” was established. As the wife of a Puritan minister, Rowlandson sees her ordeal primarily as evidence of her community’s understanding of divine grace, but much of the

story's popular appeal came from its frank depiction of frontier violence and, in the end, a quiet reflection on her own ability to endure and evolve.

The initial attack on the Puritan settlement that begins Rowlandson's account establishes imagery of the "barbarous creatures"<sup>[iii]</sup> who kill innocents in the woods, imagery that took hold in the American imagination and has guided middle-class expectations of what might lurk there ever since. Rowlandson spends only a few paragraphs on the attack itself but describes a harrowing series of graphic assaults: women and children "knocked on the head" (58), men with their bowels split open, and the living "standing amazed, with the blood running down to our heels" (60). The point of the narrative is ultimately to note how illusory is the Puritan sense of safety in the new world, but it is hard to believe that Rowlandson was not aware of the grim pleasures afforded by the gruesome detail she provided, such as "one who was chopped in the head with a hatchet, and stripped naked, and yet was crawling up and down" (60). In the end, when she returns to colonial society, she is able to marvel at what she has endured "in the midst of those roaring lions and savage bears that feared neither God nor man nor the devil" (84).

Rowlandson is of course not a literal Final Girl in the slasher film sense of the term; her story represents one small moment in a wide range of battles, captivities, and negotiations that took place between the native tribes and the colonists during the seventeenth century. What Clover calls the Final Girl's "spirited self-defense" at the climax of a slasher film<sup>[iv]</sup> is for Rowlandson a much more passive acceptance of God's will and, eventually, an ability to accept a place for herself within the alien society that abuses her. The impact of Rowlandson's story on her readership, however, relied upon a presumed recoiling from the native monster, and that repulsion anticipates a "whole category of racial monstrosity" that lies at the heart of the American horror film.<sup>[v]</sup>

The first few *Friday the 13th* movies suggest some complicated ways in which summer camp horror might be seen as a distant descendent of Rowlandson's tale. First, there is of course the stereotypical association of American summer camps with "Indian" cultures. Although Camp Crystal Lake does not bear a Native American name, in the



Ned (Mark Nelson) "playing Indian" in *Friday the 13th*

original film archery is apparently the only camp activity that the kids have time to begin setting up before the murders begin, and the jackass comic-relief character Ned (Mark Nelson) wields a bow and arrow and a ridiculously mass-produced "Indian" headdress. He is offering up a war whoop when a police officer arrives to warn them about Ralph (Walt Gorney), "the town crazy," another character who helps align the teenagers' plight with that of Rowlandson's vulnerable frontier society. Ralph is a sort of prophet, a voice literally crying in the modern wilderness. "I'm a messenger of God," he says when he surprises Alice (Adrienne King) in her cabin, "You're doomed if you stay here." After Ralph is killed off in *Part 2*, Abel (David Wiley) appears on the road to camp in *Part III* to perform a similar function, showing off the talismanic eyeball "that His grace has brought unto me." Though the teens beat a hasty retreat, Abel tries to give them his divine message: "He wanted me to warn you! Look upon this omen and go back from whence ye came! I have warned thee!" The prophetic warnings offered by Ralph and Abel, as well as the absolute certainty on the part of the audience that these dire predictions will come true, are part of the larger moralistic tone to these films that has itself become a camp/campy trope. In Rowlandson's time *and* in 1980, the murderer lurking in the woods is presented as a sort of moral corrective, a Puritanical vengeance that seems to delight in punishing bad behavior. While sex is the activity most famously certain to lead to a gruesome death in slasher movies, not

every murdered kid ever gets that far (so to speak); what really separates the Final Girl from her murdered friends is most consistently a respectful *attitude* toward herself and others, an attitude that Rowlandson inaugurates in her account.

“What if there *is* a Jason?” asks Ginny (Amy Steel) when the others drunkenly ridicule the idea in *Part 2*. “I mean, let’s try to think beyond the legend, put it in real terms.” Alone among her friends, Ginny is able to think through the psychological process of suffering and trauma that might create a Jason, in effect lending credibility not only to the film’s own exposition but to the logic by which Mary Rowlandson’s fear of the wilderness can be transferred to a contemporary world that no longer relies on a stark demarcation between Christian and heathen. “He must have seen his mother get killed,” Ginny muses with earnest sympathy, “and all because she loved him.” In a parallel scene in *Part III*, Final Girl Chris (Dana Kimmell) offers up a psychology not of the murderer but of the victim, explaining her reluctance to be a fun-loving camp teenager by telling a story that bears all the hallmarks of a Rowlandson-inspired story of Indian attack. In her story, Chris commits the original teenage sin of staying out too late with boyfriend Rick (Paul Kratka): “I knew my parents would be waiting for me but I didn’t care.” She is punished for this transgression by being chased through the woods by a murderous figure “so grotesque he was almost inhuman.”

What sets Chris apart from the other counselors isn’t any particular moral code but an awareness of herself, an ability to reflect upon her experiences that continues to haunt her. “All I want is to just forget it,” she confesses to Rick, “but I can’t.” This scene has shown her to be in a sense worth saving because her introspection marks her as unique in a world of otherwise generic teenagers. Rowlandson, too, ends her narrative with a similar awareness of herself as distinct, marked by God to dwell relentlessly upon experiences the rest of her community merely apprehends from a distance; she recognizes that “the Lord had His time to scourge and chasten me.” [\[vi\]](#)

If Mary Rowlandson provides an early historical account of “monsters” in the American woods, Charles Brockden Brown provides the first novelized version of this fear. His 1798 novel *Wieland; or, the Transformation* tells the story of a brother and sister who, with the brother’s eventual wife and children and a good friend, establish a little community of religious and philosophical free-thinkers on the Pennsylvania frontier. After a series of bizarre encounters with disembodied voices that give them strange commands and threaten them with murder, the loving brother, husband, and father Theodore Wieland kills his wife and children at the behest of what he believes to be the voice of God.

This strange novel is convoluted, illogical, and frustratingly wordy (even for its time), but it marks a turning point in the culture of American horror. Its alignment of religious fanaticism with violence and primitive psychoanalysis borrows some of the archetypal American fears laid out by stories such as Rowlandson’s and, unfettered by the need to be historically accurate (though Brown’s story was inspired by an actual event from 1781), commits itself fully to imagining their implications for the new republic. Moreover, it anticipates some of the basic narrative architecture of *Friday the 13th* by describing the horror from the point of view of a young woman, Clara Wieland, aware of her own constant proximity to danger and setting the action in a liminal space that is neither entirely social nor entirely personal.

The novel’s setting is “an imaginary landscape consisting of a rural estate composed of a main edifice and a number of subsidiary structures” [vii]—not unlike a summer camp. It was established by the father of the novel’s protagonists as a way to “retire into solitude, and shut out every species of society”, [viii] and here the elder Wieland eventually dies as the result of spontaneous combustion. The book only gets weirder from here, but at its heart it



*The elder Wieland spontaneously combusts in the summer house*

is the story of Clara and her victimhood at the hands of men who are by turns cruel, manipulative, ignorant, and murderous. Living in their insulated community on the banks of the Schuylkill River, Clara and her family and sometimes-suitor Henry Pleyel are stalked by voices that echo between rocky crevices and threaten from dark bedroom closets; gradually everyone comes to doubt their sanity and Clara, the most level-headed of the group, declares herself to be “tortured by phantoms of my own creation” (76).

Like Rowlandson, Clara Wieland comes to represent less a unique personality than a particular kind of consciousness, an ability to narrate evil and suffering that is unavailable to the rest of her community. Christine Hedlin claims that Clara articulates a reaction to “the spiritual and intellectual instability of the early republic,”<sup>[ix]</sup> giving voice to a tension between logic and superstition, between rationality and panic in the face of horrific events that make her a heroine to the reader but a stranger to herself. Clara explains, “I used to suppose that certain evils could never befall a being in possession of a sound mind . . . How was it that a sentiment like despair had now invaded me, and that I trusted to the protection of chance, or to the pity of my persecutor?” (83). Perhaps most applicable to a comparison of Clara to Final Girls in horror films, *Wieland* suggests that a young woman’s reputation for virtue might matter more than her actual life: before the strange voices convince Theodore Wieland to murder his family, the same voices trick Clara’s suitor into believing—with no evidence whatsoever—that she is sexually fallen and therefore of no use to him. Like Alice and Ginny and Chris in the first three *Friday the 13th* films, Clara can only fully earn the reader’s (or viewer’s) sympathy by having her sexual appetite assessed and declared safe; the “cross-gender identification” upon which the Final Girl’s narrative function depends requires that she pass a virginity test.<sup>[x]</sup>

*Wieland* ends with a violent confrontation between Clara and her murderous brother in which Theodore, trapped between competing impulses pushed on him by the voice-throwing villain of the piece, prepares to kill her but at the last moment stabs himself in the neck. Anticipating the crazed astonishment that will mark the Final Girl’s awareness of her own survival, Clara gazes at the blood-spattered corpse of her would-be murderer and

exclaims, “For a spectacle like this was it my fate to be reserved!” (216). The novel’s final chapter explains how Clara reflects upon the experience of surviving mass murder much as Rowlandson had done before her: “It is true that I am now changed; but I have not the consolation to reflect that my change was owing to my fortitude or to my capacity for instruction” (220). As Alice and Ginny and Chris will discover in their summer camps almost two hundred years later, living through bloody violence is as much the result of luck as inner strength, and yet Rowlandson’s and *Wieland*’s first-person narration tells us from the start that she must survive to tell the tale.

Part of the narrative architecture of the Final Girl is precisely that she is somewhat pre-scripted to prevail, and the stories of Mary Rowlandson and Clara Wieland demonstrate that this representation of female survival is not a product of the 1970s slasher film industry—it has been built into American horror from the beginning. Meanwhile, if the summer camp industry attempts to capture a fleeting pre-industrial wilderness experience, it only achieves that goal when it *also* provides the threat of frontier violence that Rowlandson and *Wieland* insisted must be there. In both fiction and nonfiction, then, American history crafted the core of the *Friday the 13th* experience centuries ago, and the apparently endless appeal of this franchise testifies to the endurance of a uniquely American metaphor.

---

Notes:

[i] Smith, 74.

[ii] Clover, 35.

[iii] Rowlandson, 61. All other references to Rowlandson’s narrative will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[iv] Clover, 36.

[v] Halberstam, 142.

[vi] The Dover edition of Mary Rowlandson's narrative used throughout this article removes this final reflection; the quotation cited here is from the Project Gutenberg version found online.

[vii] Bennett, 372.

[viii] Brown, 9. All other references to Brown's novel will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[ix] Hedlin, 738.

[x] Clover, 46.



Works Cited:

- Bennett, Bridget. "'The Silence Surrounding the Hut': Architecture and Absence in *Wieland*." *Early American Literature*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2018, pp. 369-404.
- Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland; or, the Transformation*. 1798. Dover, 2010.
- Clover, Carol. *Men, Woman, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Friday the 13th*. Directed by Sean S. Cunningham, Paramount Pictures, 1980.
- Friday the 13th Part 2*. Directed by Steve Miner, Paramount Pictures, 1981.
- Friday the 13th Part III*. Directed by Steve Miner, Paramount Pictures, 1982.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Duke University Press, 1995.
- Hedlin, Christine. "'Was There Not Reason to Doubt?': *Wieland* and its Secular Age." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2014, pp. 735-56.
- Rowlandson, Mary. "Narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson Who was Taken Captive by the Wamponoags Under King Philip, in 1676." 1682. *The Account of Mary Rowlandson and Other Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Horace Kephart, Dover, 2005, pp. 58-86.
- Smith, Michael B. "'The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper' and the Nature of Summer Camp." *Environmental History*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2006, pp. 70-101.

# JASON VOORHEES AS BACKWOODS BERSERKER

Kom Kunyosying and Carter Soles

Jason Voorhees is the most popular backwoods slasher killer. While Leatherface and the largely suburban Michael Myers came first, neither of those masked psychopaths have achieved the same iconic status as Jason, whose identity can be evoked simply via the image of the hockey mask he wears from *Friday the 13th Part III* (1982) onward. Fans wishing to masquerade as Jason simply need a hockey mask and a machete, his preferred weapon. Imitating Jason's stalking motif (ch-ch-ch) is shorthand for evoking a slasher movie villain.

Jason has a changing significance that seems always to meet its evolving cultural moment. For example, he begins the franchise as an abject backwoods monster, essentially a rural Michael Myers. He gradually morphs into the darkly humorous star of his franchise, an anti-hero whom fans root for. In both cases, as a rural stalker killer, he foreshadows how white hillbillies will signify in identity politics, authenticating white masculinity in the Trump era. Jason's connection to the primal and rural allows him to render his suburban and urban victims as ineffectual and impotent, emphasizing his dominance as a (certain type of) white man.

## **Jason as Hillbilly**

Jason's legend begins in *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), but in that movie it is his mother (Betsy Palmer) who actually kills the Camp Crystal Lake counselors, avenging the death of her son at the negligent hands of their predecessors. The film is an homage to and literalization of *Psycho's* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) reveal of the mother as the killer.

Whereas Mrs. Bates is a persona introjected into Norman's psyche, however, Mrs. Voorhees is alive and real. Seen only in protagonist Alice's (Adrienne King) film-ending vision of him emerging from the waters of Crystal Lake, Jason is presumed dead.

In *Friday the 13th Part 2* (Steve Miner, 1981), however, Jason (Warrington Gillette) is revealed to be an adult dwelling in a crude shed in the deep woods near Camp Crystal Lake. He is an expert wilderness stalker, mostly visible as a pair of legs or feet, or from the neck down. When fully revealed, he doesn't yet wear a hockey mask but instead a crude gunnysack pulled over his head — a backwoods improvisation. He blends into the woods and is often depicted lurking near trees and behind vegetation.

Like Michael Myers, the slasher killer he most closely resembles, Jason Voorhees is above all an elemental force of nature, the embodiment of what Dawn Keetley calls “the terrifying confrontation with the nonhuman (the inexplicable, irrational, and implacable) at the heart of horror.” Discussing *Jaws and its influence on slasher films*, Keetley writes that



A skilled backwoods stalker, Jason blends into his forest surroundings in *Friday the 13th Part 2*. His blue trousers and workboots suggest his working-class origins

“The encounter of the three men with the shark, and Quint’s story of his five days in shark-infested water after the *Indianapolis* sank, embody humans’ confrontation with a devastating nonhuman force—a force that surpasses our ability to explain, understand, and often defeat. In *Jaws*, the implacable nonhuman is embodied by the shark; in the slasher film, the “shark” is incarnate as Michael Myers (and, later, Jason Voorhees).”

While Jason embodies the terrifying nonhuman force that lurks inside the human, his animality and savageness may also be traced to his identity as an abject backwoods dweller. As a poor backwoodsman strongly associated with the woods around Crystal Lake,

Jason is a slasher killer gone native, a Natty Bumppo (from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* novels) or Ethan Edwards type (from John Ford's *The Searchers*), a white man playing ecological Indian / wild man.

*Part 2* opens with Alice's dream sequence, in which Jason, here depicted *sans* mask as a kind of undead boy's corpse, springs forth from beneath the surface of Crystal Lake. This dream echoes Ed's nightmare of a dead hillbilly's arm emerging from the dam reservoir at the end of *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972). Jason's activities in this film could be seen as a riff on what would happen if *Deliverance's* symbolically drowned hillbillies really did come back to wreak vengeance on the city folk who kill them.

Like the fictional Cahulawassee River in *Deliverance*, which is exploited by privileged, citified canoers for recreational purposes, Camp Crystal Lake functions as an emblem of Euro-American settlement, a cultivated, civilized place to safely and comfortably enjoy the wilderness as a tourist. In fact, the summer camp commodifies as tourist activities the development of backwoods survival skills — skills Jason, by contrast, earned the hard way, living alone for years in the wilderness. Just like the unnamed *Deliverance* hillbillies, Jason punishes those who would blithely consume those woods.

Like many rural stalkers and post-apocalyptic survivors, Jason allows viewers to indulge the insidious fantasy of "simpler times," a fantasy analogous to "Make America Great Again," in which old-fashioned, white, masculine values trump the values of other cultures because they are seen as superior through the lens of American/white exceptionalism. Jason's working-class clothing and use of mundane tools as weapons visually align him with these values.

### **Jason as Berserker**

Yet Jason's appeal is also based on another association—to northern climes and Viking culture. There has been a recent rise in appreciation for Medieval European and Viking culture among blue collar Americans as well as the middle and upper middle class. A

growing connection to Crusader ideology in response to Muslim extremist terrorism is connected to this rise and explains the conservatism attached to this particular brand of imaginative nostalgia. Donald Trump Jr. [recently posed with his assault rifle](#) which has a crusader's helmet on it along with "Made in the USA" and "Crusader."

Mandalorians are new crowd favorites of the Star Wars franchise via Disney's show, *The Mandalorian*. Their ethos is Viking-esque whereas the Jedi were samurai. Pieces of armor and weapons are tokens of Mandalorian citizenship. They prioritize ship maintenance and long-range travel. The zeitgeist has shifted in masculine US fandoms in recent decades. "Oriental" warriors like samurai and monks don't hold the sway they used to when the Jedi were introduced. Warrior cultures which emphasize European exceptionalism such as the Vikings, Spartans, and Crusaders have outpaced them. Like many of these warrior cultures, and Jason Voorhees, the Mandalorians wear head gear that masks their faces.

Therefore Jason Voorhees, while celebrating whiteness as a hillbilly, also signifies as a berserker when read through the current celebration of things European, Viking, and/or Medieval. Jason's Dutch/Viking surname solidifies this connection.

Furthermore, Camp Crystal Lake, Jason's paradigmatic locale, is located in the American northeast, an area famous for sleep-away camps. There is a real Voorhees Township in New Jersey, the state in which the first film was shot. Jason wears a hockey mask which connects him to a sport that is most popular in the region. And while Jason's connection to the lake and the recurring image of his emerging from it evoke hillbilly horror classic *Deliverance* (or possibly *Apocalypse Now*), Camp Crystal Lake's location puts a northerly spin on the usual backwoods protagonist, who typically hails from the rural South.

### **Jason's Whiteness**

With the rise of multiculturalism in the US, there has been a pushback to represent white male protagonists as also authentic and marked, or suffering in some sense. We trace this

rise in our “[Postmodern Geekdom](#)” essay. Reading Jason Voorhees as a berserker and/or hillbilly highlights his role as the ultimate marked character. Jason possesses limiting, marked characteristics (e.g., his impoverished, backwoods existence and limited access to technology) that are intertwined with his abilities as a near-invincible stalker/killer. The shift toward seeing Jason as the protagonist/ fan favorite in the films coincides with reading him as an unkillable warrior/berserker and a representative of hillbilly strength and backwoods toughness.

*Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* cements Jason as a rural signifier full of potency and authenticity. This meaning sees its culmination when Jason (Kane Hodder) takes on an African-American boxer, revealing the former to be the truer and more masculine fighter. The skill of the boxer, Julius Gaw (V. C. Dupree), is no match for the toughness imbued in Jason by his backwoods upbringing, berserker qualities (basically his hyperreal whiteness and authenticity), and/or his demonic roots.

*Jason Takes Manhattan* premiered in 1989, which also saw the prime of Mike Tyson, who had been boxing heavyweight champion of the world in unmatched dominant fashion for three years at that point. Before the ascension of mixed martial arts, the boxing heavyweight champion was regarded as the world’s toughest man by sports fans and mainstream audiences alike. The success of Black athletes historically caused white audiences to try to re-masculate through a rotation of “great white hopes” in boxing and through fictional portrayals of athletic dominance, such as Hulk Hogan or Rocky Balboa. In this era, characters like Mick “Crocodile” Dundee and Jason Voorhees would also show Black men who the “real men” were.

The scene: Resigned to fight Jason, Julius tells himself, “Just use the combos, and keep the feet light,” while taking a low stance reminiscent of Mike Tyson’s (whose white opponents were significantly larger than he was). Like Tyson, Julius puts his faith in the science of

boxing. Jason shows Julius his training means nothing and Jason contains a more potent masculinity. Images of Jason versus Julius have become widely used in memes.



Jason vs. Julius in *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*

Exerting no effort, and taking no damage from Julius's best punches (over 50), Jason vanquishes Julius not only physically but spiritually. Flaccid from exertion, Julius lowers his hands, telling Jason to take his best shot, which results in a one-punch decapitation.

Julius's death scene mirrors the famous knife scene in *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986). A trio

of muggers accosts Dundee and his date. The lead mugger is African American and pulls a switchblade. Dundee reveals his larger bowie knife. Despite outnumbering Dundee, having lost the battle of phallic symbols, the muggers become unmanned and flee. This allows Dundee his trademark line, "That's not a knife. THAT's a knife." Further emphasizing the impotence of the muggers, Dundee calls these men "kids having fun" as they flee in terror. One of the three muggers is white but he is clearly included to defuse the obvious racial subtext of the scene. All three muggers represent the inferiority of urban masculinity to Dundee's rural masculinity.

Dundee is an early representative of white rurality as superior to people of color and urbanity, and he serves as a harbinger of how this attitude would come to grip US identities. As an Australian, Dundee is not a direct commentary on US culture yet, just as Jason, a monster, is also an indirect commentary, although both still clearly put urban people of color and their skills in positions of impotence and inferiority. *Dundee* was a love

letter to conservatives. It was racist, sexist, and homophobic in its portrayal of marginalized groups.

Other iconic scenes mimic this racial hierarchy of masculinity. Indiana Jones dismissively defeats an Arab sword master in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981), insulting the training and culture behind his opponent's skill and reducing it to a punch line. Similarly, James Bond outwits and unmans two Thai martial artists in their own school in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (Guy Hamilton, 1974). In a culmination of this conceit, Quentin Tarantino portrays Bruce Lee as an over-hyped blowhard versus white stuntman and green beret Cliff Booth in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), drawing protest from Lee's daughter, which caused [Tarantino to double-down on the portrayal](#).

Jason's 1989 *The Arsenio Hall Show* interview promoting *Jason Takes Manhattan* can be read as an extension of the movie. Voorhees appears on the show as stoic and rural, while Hall plays a grinning urbane jester. Also, Jason's presence on a talk show as the main promotional celebrity reveals that he is fully the protagonist of his movies by this point. None of the actors who serve as Jason's prey are deployed alongside him to promote the film.

### **Hillbilly Melodrama**

More recently, *Freddy vs. Jason* (Ronny Yu, 2003) features Freddy Kreuger (Robert Englund), the paradigmatic suburban slasher killer (from the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise), in an alliance / showdown with Jason (Ken Kirzinger), the definitive rural stalker. In the film, Freddy tricks Jason into killing people to make the community feel fear, paving the way for Freddy to return from exile in hell. Jason starts the film doing Freddy's bidding — Freddy appears to Jason in the guise of his mother Mrs. Voorhees, repeating the trick Ginny (Amy Steel) uses in the climax of *Friday the 13th Part 2*. While Jason's falling for this particular ruse once again is connected to his weirdly Oedipal, Norman Bates-ish relationship with his mother, his gullibility also reminds us that berserker characters don't



dissemble — they just charge forward like barbarians. In contrast to Jason's guilelessness, Freddy is characterized as a suburban con-artist who manipulates and betrays Jason, thereby earning the backwoodsman's vengeful ire. This berserker-as-victim-hero scenario is a form of hillbilly melodrama, in which rural, poor white people gain authenticity and cultural cachet via their perceived (and real) socioeconomic disenfranchisement vis-à-vis middle- and upper-class whites.

The last few shots of *Freddy vs. Jason* reveal in condensed form the opposing iconography and core persona of each of its titular franchise-spawning killers. Morning dawns on the mist-strewn surface of Crystal Lake. Having physically defeated Freddy in battle the night before, Jason emerges in slow motion from beneath the lake waters, carrying a machete in his left hand and Freddy's decapitated head in his right. As he walks up onto the shore, toward the camera, Freddy's head turns, looks into the camera, and winks. Jason is the undefeatable, invincible backwoods berserker warrior, while Freddy is the ultimate tongue-in-cheek trickster.

The hillbilly and the Viking warrior are cultural identities that allow white people to celebrate their whiteness and foreground their guilelessness and (from a melodramatic perspective) their innocence.



The iconic image of Jason rising from beneath the surface of Crystal Lake in *Freddy vs. Jason*

Marvel's Thor, especially when with the Avengers, emblemizes this Viking warrior trope. Thor charges forth while his adoptive brother Loki villainously leads with his brain. The backwoods Viking Berserker, on the surface at least a non-thinking and non-strategic fighter, is perceived as being simple, straightforward, and authentic, in contrast to shifty, manipulative urbanites and people of color.

Jason's authenticity equals Trump's authenticity. Acting without thinking equals authenticity in an era where acting thoughtfully or communicating with so-called "political correctness" is often maligned as dissembling. Conversely, Freddy Krueger is framed as a thinking, non-Trump type. Freddy is ironic and deconstructive in that he foregrounds the smirk in his character.

Jason uncannily anticipates cultural trends of today. The celebration of Jason as a cult figure predicts the suffering white male anti-hero protagonists who will come after him. Combined with the contemporary rise of backwoods white protagonists such as Daryl Dixon of *The Walking Dead*, and the tank-like warriors in shows like *Vikings* and *Game of Thrones*, Jason's identity is poised to resonate with the cultural specifics of today's fandom. Murderous violence as an authenticating feature has been well-established by iconic characters such as Tony Soprano and Walter White. Jason anticipates these and more immediate trends as well: violence without thought, signifying authenticity, is now in the zeitgeist.

# INJURY, ISOLATION, AND IDLENESS: THE REAL HORRORS OF *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III*

Brennan Thomas

*Friday the 13th Part III* (or *Friday the 13th 3D*) is generally regarded as one of the series' weaker and more forgettable installments. Though it generated higher ticket sales than *Part II* due to its well-timed 3D marketing campaign, critics panned *Part III* for its grainy film quality, retro-disco soundtrack, and needless retread of the first two films' story elements. "More of the same," wrote *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reviewer Marylynn Uricchio, adding that the "magical abilities" of the film's "hooded cretin [Jason Voorhees] defy reason."<sup>[1]</sup> The film currently holds a 12% rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*, the second lowest of the series behind *Jason Takes Manhattan*, with the consensus that it offers nothing more than a violent flurry of "stab and repeat."<sup>[2]</sup>

While these faults do at times detract from *Part III's* overall impact, they should not overshadow its contributions to the franchise's narrative expansion beyond Camp Crystal Lake. *Part III* is the first film in the series to feature minority characters, including two African American bikers and a young Latina woman. The film also presents issues of body shaming, social isolation, drug addiction, and trauma as real problems faced by its principal cast, particularly female lead Chris Higgins, whose previous encounter with Jason still haunts her. *Part III's* treatment of such issues, even against the usual backdrop of Jason-infused mayhem, establishes it as a topically relevant film whose appeal lies not in its gratuitous violence or 3D graphics, but in its frank depictions of contemporary viewers' real-life horrors. Examining this seemingly unremarkable installment as a socio-historical relic of the post-Vietnam era, therefore, reveals a far more remarkable commentary of the era's disenfranchised and displaced youth.

Despite being excoriated critically upon its release in August 1982, *Part III* performed well commercially, grossing \$9.4 million in its opening weekend and \$36.7 million in its initial run, the second highest of all *Friday the 13th* films released that decade.<sup>[3]</sup> *Part III*'s strong box office performance has been attributed in part to the resurgence of 3D's popularity in the early 1980s, as evidenced by the releases of *Jaws 3-D* and *Amityville 3-D* the following year. While not overly impressive, the 3D effects of *Part III* were sufficient enough to draw sizeable crowds and even impress the occasional critic in 1982. *Guardian* critic John Patterson later wrote that his first viewing of *Part III*'s infamous eye-popping scene, in which Jason crushes the male lead's skull until his eyeball flies at the camera, "delighted" him and other moviegoers.<sup>[4]</sup> Jay Stone recalled that the "[3D] process was so realistic that when someone on screen picked up a long pole and turned it sideways, you flinched to keep it from hitting you in the head."<sup>[5]</sup> However, Stone added, the same could not be said for the film itself, which he dismissed as an unrealistic story populated with one-dimensional characters.<sup>[6]</sup>

Still, a handful of critics, notably among them *New York Times* critic Janet Maslin, have defended the film's pacing and character development. Maslin argues that *Part III* may not necessarily be "more clever" or "vicious" than *Parts I* and *II*, but it is "more adept at teasing the audience" due to its more leisurely pace and adequate performances of its principal cast.<sup>[7]</sup> What also sets this film apart from its predecessors, notes Maslin, is the addition of "an interracial trio of motorcycle gangsters."<sup>[8]</sup> The bikers' group appearance is brief and garners little sympathy, as their principal aim is to burn down a teenager's barn in retaliation for damage done to their motorcycles. Still, Mason argues, their inclusion suggests that Jason is unaffected by "[r]ace or class" when choosing his victims. The film's other minority character, Vera Sanchez, is more fully developed, as is her story arc. Vera is the blind date of Shelly, an overweight drama student who masks his embarrassment about his physical appearance by pranking others. Although it is apparent from their initial meeting that Vera is not romantically interested in Shelly, she makes an effort to get to know him on a platonic level. Vera soon recognizes that Shelly lacks

confidence in his appearance and in his ability to handle himself in uncomfortable situations. When he and Vera are harassed by the aforementioned group of bikers at a nearby convenience store, Shelly is rendered ineffectual by the two male bikers, who easily lift him off the ground when he tries coming to Vera's aid. In the next scene, however, Shelly, inspired by Vera's outrage, deftly drives backwards over the gang's motorcycles, leaving the infuriated bikers in their dust. Still needing confirmation of his victory, Shelly asks the genuinely impressed Vera, "Did I do it?" to which she replies, "Yes, you did! You were great!"

Their shared euphoria is short lived, as Vera later rejects Shelly's romantic advances when he tries scaring her with an ill-timed prank. Still, there remains the possibility for a blossoming friendship, if not a romance, when Vera finds in Shelly's wallet



Vera Sanchez (Catherine O'Hara) admires Shelly's (Larry Zerner) juggling talent.

(which he had loaned to her at the store) a photograph of him and his mother. The effect the photograph has on her attitude towards Shelly is evident when, after accidentally dropping his wallet in a pond, she takes off her shoes and wades into the mucky water to retrieve it. Vera likes him, perhaps not sexually, but enough to get dirty for him. Metaphorically speaking, one could argue that Vera's willingness to get her feet wet symbolizes her recognition of Shelly's dignity and compassion.

Unfortunately, viewers will never learn whether these two might have become something more. Just as Vera reaches Shelly's wallet, Jason Voorhees, wearing the hockey mask Shelly had used to scare her with earlier, shoots her in the eye with a spear gun. We later learn that Jason had slit Shelly's throat off-screen and taken his mask before killing Vera; Shelly appears briefly onscreen several scenes later, gushing blood from his mouth and throat

before dying in front of another young woman named Chili who assumed (incorrectly) that he was pulling another prank.

One might argue that Shelly is partially responsible for his and Vera's demise. As the boy who cried wolf one too many times (though he pulls only two onscreen pranks), Shelly is ignored when he stumbles into the cabin and dies. His hockey mask also provides Jason with the perfect cover to move about unnoticed. Jason is able to get quite close to Vera before she realizes that it isn't Shelly pointing a spear gun at her. After killing her, he walks freely about the cabin searching for more victims.

However, the catalyst of Shelly's death isn't his proclivities for mischief or hockey masks. It is his embarrassment of his body and general appearance, exacerbated by the belittling comments of others. Although Vera never mentions his weight, Shelly's roommate Andy teases him that he's "always hungry," and Chili calls him a "butterball." Shelly's greatest fear, which he expresses privately to Vera, is being dismissed as "a nothing." It is this same fear that prevents Shelly from partaking in skinny-dipping and other sexually driven activities. Had Shelly been a female, his refusal to undress in front of others might have spared him (at least until the film's third act), as most other "final girls" of the series are shown to be modest and sexually unavailable. As a frustrated, overweight male, however, Shelly's reluctance to become more socially involved only makes him an easier target for Jason. After his final misguided prank with Vera fails miserably, he walks off towards the barn—and his death. Unwilling to reveal himself or his body, he seeks refuge in solitude and thus becomes the first teenager to fall victim to Jason.

Body shaming wasn't part of the vernacular of the early 1980s, but it certainly colors Shelly's on-screen interactions with other characters, as well as his sense of self-worth. "Would you be yourself if you looked like this?" he asks Andy when his roommate begs him to stop pranking others. Shelly views himself as an aberration when measured against the rest of the group's standards of thinness and beauty. Unable to stand with or among them, he forces himself to stand *out* through juggling or other clownish antics, and when this, too,

fails, he becomes invisible to them. Shelly's marginalization due to his outwardly otherness mirrors that of many Vietnam veterans who had been disfigured in combat and felt invisible or uncomfortable around others.<sup>[9]</sup> As noted by biographer and journalist Myra MacPherson in her book *Long Time Passing*, "That awkwardness and distaste for the physically 'different' create[d] barriers for many disabled Vietnam veterans."<sup>[10]</sup> Like Shelly, some might have even invented new personas for themselves to redirect people's focus away from their physical appearances, while others turned to drugs and alcohol for sanctuary.<sup>[11]</sup> Regardless of which methods they utilized, however, their struggles for recognition and respect went largely unnoticed. This massive indifference to their plight is symbolized by Shelly's quiet death in front of Chili, the group's oldest female and one-half of the film's joint-smoking "stoner" couple.

This counterpart to the disabled war veteran—the drug-addled hippie—is epitomized in *Part III* by Chili and her boyfriend Chuck, who, apart from their mutual interests in marijuana and partying, have little in common with the rest of the group. Of the eight main characters featured in this film, Chili and Chuck are the last two introduced, sitting passively in the back of Chris's van smoking weed. When Shelly reproachfully tells them, "There are better things to do with your time [than smoke dope]," Chili and Chuck insist that they can't think of anything they'd rather do than smoke—and smoke they do. As the group's two oldest members (presumably in their mid-twenties, though Chuck looks closer to thirty), they seem to have bypassed those adult responsibilities such as work and parenting that would have been ascribed to them had they been born into an earlier generation. What little work there is to do at Chris's house is done by every other character except Chuck and Chili: Vera and Shelly shop, Andy and his girlfriend unpack the van and fix up each other's rooms, and Chris and her boyfriend tidy up the barn. Chuck and Chili, by contrast, lie around sleeping or stoned most of the film. Like a couple of deadbeat parents whose children shoulder the household duties, the two stoners seem content allowing others to do what needs to be done without offering help or direction.

In this state, they remain oblivious to Jason's presence until it is too late. By the time Shelly stumbles into Chili and Chuck's cabin and dies on the floor, three of their companions—



Chili (Rachel Howard) and Chuck (David Katmis) smoke marijuana in Chris's van, while Shelly and Vera look on disapprovingly.

Vera, Andy, and his pregnant girlfriend, Debbie —have already been killed by Jason. Chuck and Chili are themselves soon dispatched, via electrocution and a red-hot fire poker, respectively. Their

deaths, which unlike the other victims' involves heat, arguably symbolize their destruction from drugs—a metaphorical and literal frying of their minds. In contrast to other characters with greater concerns, such as kindling a potential romance, reconnecting with friends, or conquering personal fears, Chuck and Chili seem to have no goals or interests, and they don't even appear invested in one another. What little dialogue they share usually hints at their age, such as when Chuck yells at Chili, "Between you and Shelly, I'm lucky I haven't had a heart attack!", or their nostalgia for the past, such as when Chuck lustfully gazes at an early 1960s-era pinup he discovers in Chris's basement. They seem utterly disconnected from the present and spend most of their onscreen time escaping it in their drug-hazed state. Out of apathy or malaise, they continue smoking marijuana as their friends die around them until they, too, are murdered.

Following Chili's death, Chris and her boyfriend, Rick, who had been out driving during the film's second act, return to the cabin and find it deserted. After the pair split up to look for their friends, Rick is caught and killed by Jason in gruesome fashion, his death being the previously mentioned eye-popping scene that "delighted" John Patterson. Now alone, Chris wanders around the cabin trying to figure out what happened to Rick and her friends until she is confronted and nearly killed by Jason.



As the film's most vulnerable character both physically and emotionally, Chris embodies the traumatized war veteran of the post-Vietnam era. During their drive, she had revealed to Rick that she was attacked by Jason two years prior to the start of the film's events; she cannot recall what Jason did to her or how she was rescued. She tells Rick that her parents refused to discuss the incident, so viewers would surmise that Chris never received any support or treatment for her trauma and still suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. Even early on in the film, she exhibits several symptoms of PTSD, from recurring visions of Jason kidnapping her to her inability to express her fears to her closest friends. Chris remains on high alert throughout the film, channeling the audience's growing sense of dread as Jason moves stealthily from one victim to the next before cornering Chris in the film's showdown.

Because of her emotional vulnerabilities, Chris initially appears far more terrified than "final girl" Alice (from the original *Friday the 13th*) or Jenny (from *Part 2*). As noted by Maslin, "[Chris's] nerves are so rattled that she shrieks at the sight of a mallard." [12] Yet, like Jenny and other "final girl" characters of the early to mid-1980s (most notably Nancy from *A Nightmare on Elm Street*), [13] Chris is resourceful and repeatedly strikes back at Jason, from dumping bookshelves on him to slashing at him with a knife that she had pulled from her friend Debbie's corpse. The film's treatment of PTSD through Chris's transformation from passive damsel to infuriated attacker is most pronounced when she must repeatedly overcome her own terror to find new ways to stop or destroy her would-be killer.

Still, despite her resourcefulness, Chris's past demons, embodied by the masked Jason, relentlessly pursue her. During the film's penultimate sequence, Chris lures him into the barn and hangs him with the hay pulley. When Jason lunges at her even after she hears his neck snap, her sanity is all but destroyed. Jason then lifts the mask, revealing a grotesque contortion of rubbery skin and drooling fangs grimacing at her in recognition. Chris suddenly realizes that this is the man-creature who had terrorized her two years prior.

When she lands the final axe blow to Jason's head only for him to reach out for her with zombie-like persistence, Chris, now weaponless, flees into the darkness.

The film's final sequence reveals Chris's abandonment by any support systems that might help her cope with this latest trauma. After being escorted by two armed male officers to a squad car and pushed inside, she can only scream hysterically as they attempt to quiet her. There are no ambulances or medical personnel, not even a paramedic to offer comfort. As she is driven away, the camera pans towards the open barn where Jason's body lies motionless, bloody but intact, symbolizing Chris's permanent traumatized state. For



Chris Higgins (Dana Kimmell) sets a trap for Jason Voorhees.

her and her companions, all killed before their crises of confidence or apathy could be solved, there is no resolution. As suggested by the film's ambiguous closing scene, the psychological and social problems that plagued many young men and women of the post-Vietnam War era—from veterans suffering from PTSD and body disfigurement to drug-addled youths without a movement or community to which they could belong—could neither be fled from nor buried. Like Jason's soon-to-be reanimated corpse in the film's closing shot, such problems were lying in plain sight, waiting to wreak havoc again. And that may be one of the most disturbing subtexts of the entire *Friday the 13th* franchise.

Notes:

[1] Uricchio, 13

[2] *"Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 3"*

[3] Spillman, 5D

[4] Patterson, 17

[5] Stone, D6.

[6] Ibid

[7] Maslin, C4

[8] Ibid

[9] Gerber, 545

[10] MacPherson, 326

[11] Wedding, 74-76

[12] Maslin, C4

[13] Piepenburg

## Works Cited:

*Friday the 13th Part III*. Directed by Steve Miner, Paramount, 1982.

"Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 3." *RottenTomatoes.com*,

n.d, [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/friday\\_the\\_13th\\_part\\_3](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/friday_the_13th_part_3).

Gerber, David A. "Reintegration of Disabled Veterans in 'The Best Years of Our Lives.'" *American Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 4, Dec. 1994, pp. 545-574. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/2713383.

MacPherson, Myra. *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*. New Edition. Indiana University Press, 2001.

Maslin, Janet. "'Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part III-In-3-D' Opens." *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 1982, p. C4.

Patterson, John. "Horror Remakes Are Often Seen as Proof of the Movies' Creative Bankruptcy, But They're Really Honouring Genre Traditions." *The Guardian*, 7 Feb. 2009, p. 17.

Piepenburg, Erik. "In Horror Films, the 'Final Girl' Is a Survivor to the Core." *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/movies/in-horror-films-the-final-girl-is-a-survivor-to-the-core.html>.

Spillman, Susan. "A Good Omen for 'Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.'" *USA Today*, 13 May 1988, p. 5D.

Stone, Jay. "Look Out, 3D's Back." *The Gazette* [Montreal], 18 Apr. 2007, p. D6.

Uricchio, Marylynn. "'Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>—Part III' Is More of the Same—In 3D." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 16 Aug. 1982, p. 13.

Wedding, Danny. "Substance Abuse in the Vietnam Veteran." *American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) Journal*, vol. 35, no. 2, Feb. 1987, pp. 74-76.

PEERING THROUGH THE TREES,  
 OR, EVERYTHING I'VE EVER  
 LEARNED ABOUT AMERICAN  
 SUMMER CAMP CAME FROM  
*FRIDAY THE 13TH PARTS 1-4*  
 AND *THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB*  
*SUPER SPECIAL #2*

Erin Harrington

In the early 1980s, first Mrs. Voorhees and then her damaged, homicidal son hacked and slashed their way along the shores of Crystal Lake. Fifteen years later, in New Zealand, my friends and I – all members of the VHS generation and beneficiaries of the Scholastic book club – spent our fifth form science periods at our private, all girls' high school planning how to make our own half-baked slasher film. It was the sort of scheme that's enormously fun to concoct and unlikely to be enacted, traced out in biro on brown chemistry benches. There was a wooded scout camp on the semi-rural outskirts of the city, spitting distance from one friend's house, which was begging to be terrorised by a sexually ambivalent masked killer. (It was also conveniently close to Christchurch Men's Prison, which could perhaps provide justification for a homicidal escapee.) If that didn't work, another friend's family had a holiday home, a chalet-style log house set amongst native forest, in an alpine village a 90-minute drive away. There were loads of places to get lost or grievously injure oneself while fleeing, plus all the comforts you could ask for in the mid-late 90s (hot water, DVD, PlayStation). Her parents also had a clunky, oversized handycam. A perfect plan.

I don't think we got much further than a list of teen archetypes (the jock, the virgin, the slut, the nerd), some detailed death scenes, and a theme song whose plinky-plonky banjo evoked a certain sense of faux-American backwoods horror. But, as an adult who researches and writes about horror, I've often wondered how it was that a group of fifteen-

year-old New Zealanders – some of whom had never watched a horror film at all – had come to internalise the culturally-specific tropes of the American stalker-slasher genre so completely.

The early *Friday the 13th* films are many things: guilty pleasures; portfolios of creative kill shots; the intersection of base instincts and opportunistic marketing. However, little attention has been paid to the way that the United States' low, pop cultural id comes to contribute to the country's international voice, such that one country's margins are seen in another context as a mainstream representation of American cultural hegemony. This franchise, which at its most cynical level aimed to exploit the desires, fears, and wallets of a young audience, has indelibly contributed to broader perceptions of American adolescence and (sexual) rites of passage. Alongside other cultural exports, this in turn shapes non-American understandings of teen culture, genre, and storytelling, contributing to a circuit of meaning-making in which even the most marginal of cultural artefacts can have an outsized effect.

\* \* \*

Given the franchise's remarkable international dissemination, we must recognise that the first four films, those set at summer camps and holiday homes along the shores of Crystal Lake, relish in the power of repetition in myth-making. *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) starts in 1958 with a warning against adolescent malfeasance. The action that plays out in the present, twenty-one years later, serves as comeuppance against those who have not remembered nor respected the circumstances surrounding Jason's death. The startling eruption and irruption of Jason (a real boy? a hallucination?) from the lake in the film's final moments further blurs the line between myth and reality. Later characters repeat the story of Mrs Voorhees and her son until the hazy details have both the ring of truth and the weight of history. Spooky hearsay quickly becomes established fact not only in diegetic time, but in the short periods between the films' releases.

*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2* (1981) immediately acknowledges this cinematic textuality and its roots in urban legend. It begins with a flashback that is almost comical in its length and detail, in which the film we *only just watched* becomes a shimmering, six-minute highlights reel. The film proper plays out like an uncanny, heightened reappraisal of the first: same shtick, but more sex, more blood. The events of the first film are recounted, by firelight, as if they occurred in the distant past, even though it is set only five years later. “I don’t wanna scare anyone, but I’m gonna give it straight to you about Jason,” says Paul, the head camp counsellor, as the others toast their marshmallows; “[I]f you listen to the old timers in town they’ll tell you he’s still out there, some sort of demented creature... some folks claim they’ve even seen him, right in this area.” The story itself is the set up to a prank, but there’s pleasure in the dramatic irony that the counsellors don’t realise that they are already strapped to the Catherine wheel of genre. Time compresses and warps, our privileged viewing position is acknowledged, and we, the spectators, are schooled in the new rules of the game.

*Part 3* (1982) and *The Final Chapter* (1984) likewise rehash endings as beginnings, repudiating closure in order to justify the films’ existence, and maybe sneak in extra gore before the credits. It’s as if the films eat themselves, like a boorish ouroboros. They quickly establish and naturalise culturally-specific tropes, much as the urban legends that the films draw from are seemingly locally-specific but lacking in origin and authorship, free floating and readily transmissible. Similarly, the films (as cultural artefacts) enter into dialogue with the expectations of the audience. These are in turn shaped and challenged by other pop culture forms, including the contemporaneous explosion of slashers. Everything jostles for position within an increasingly crowded field.<sup>[1]</sup> Throughout, Jason becomes (paradoxically) increasingly recondite as a character, but more fixed as an atavistic trope and our most consistent point of contact. Given this unlikely continuity, we kinda start to root for him.

I highlight this playful recursivity because it applies as much to globalised cultural export as it does to the dynamic function of genre itself. It's necessary to note that the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films aren't just horror films. They are *American* independent films, well-pitched commercial products, which achieved significant success and widespread international distribution. This might seem like a redundant observation, but one of the outcomes of the so-called 'American Century' is that we live in a world where American popular culture, concerns and perspectives are situated discursively as the default mode against which everything else must position itself. They remind us of their importance, incessantly, like an MC rapping about their postcode. The horror genre also figures in global fears about Americanisation and cultural imperialism [2], which frame films (like other forms of popular culture) as a type of infection vector or colonising force. [3] It doesn't really matter that many American 'Golden Age' slashers were savaged by contemporaneous mainstream critics, nor that the films gleefully position themselves at the margins of good taste for an audience up for lurid thrills. They are still the products of a cultural hegemon: commercial artefacts that might enter the world in a highly localised manner, but that circulate through global channels. These might include distribution networks and corporate relationships, journalism and reviews, cultural practices such as spectatorship and fandom, franchising and merchandising, and the dissemination of paratexts like trailers and posters. I know I am not the only person whose nascent cultural literacy was moulded by the abject allure of the American-dominated horror section in our local video store, one of many that popped up, like mushrooms, during VHS boom.

\* \* \*

The everyday outcome of this cultural hegemony on non-Americans is that American places, foods, and cultural practices come to feel as familiar as local ones, even if you don't seek them out or even have access to them. Consider this as a great, hyperreal Frankenstein's monster that looks a like Mickey Mouse, wearing a cowboy hat and Air Jordans, eating Twinkies and Thanksgiving turkey in the middle of Times Square, while grooving to some Bruce Springsteen. This is especially apparent in the early *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films' very American summer camp setting. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, organised



sleepaway summer camp is definitely not a big thing. Summer coincides with Christmas, New Year, and six or seven weeks of school holidays, in what amounts to a mass national shutdown. People certainly might go camping or tramping (i.e. hiking); New Zealand's sense of national identity includes a heavy emphasis upon the outdoors, and the country has varied and dramatic geography within a comparatively small space. Rather, many schools have outdoor education programmes that respond to the national curriculum framework. Between intermediate (middle) and high school, I was fortunate to go on camps in a grey-green river valley in subalpine beech forests, a parched high country station marked by limestone outcrops, and a few different sites along the nearby Banks Peninsula, an ex-volcano with two long harbours and multiple bays formed in its ruined cones. Five day programmes were designed to develop water and survival skills in extremely changeable weather, while strengthening character (i.e. driving everyone a bit nuts); think wet and dry caving, 'fun' with ropes at heights, failing at sailing, hiding bags of sweets from your maths teacher, and negotiating icy river crossings with a group of awkward 14-year-olds who are freaking out because you've all suddenly got your periods at once. It seems a bit different to the signature flavour of cheery, sunny opportunities marketed to young Kiwis who want to kick off their gap year by working as camp counsellors in the States.[\[4\]](#)

And yet, via the trickle-down effect of the slurry of American cultural hegemony, I can easily build an idyllic, pop-culture inflected image of summer camp: log cabins, appropriation of Native American iconography, camp spirit, arts and crafts, s'mores, cook outs (a very American term), matching t shirts, archery, canoeing, swimming, talent shows, lanyards (why?), best friends forever, American flags, and poison oak (although I still have no idea what that is). This image draws as much from the first few *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films as it does from that pre-adolescent cultural titan and A-grade American export, Scholastic's *The Baby-Sitters Club* series – specifically *Super Special #2: Summer Vacation*, in which the entrepreneurial tweens apply their childminding skills in an outdoor setting while experiencing appropriate levels of personal growth. I must have read it half a dozen times;

for a non-American reader, who was taunted by inaccessible deals in the backs of the books, both suburban Connecticut and upstate New York seemed like faraway exotic television land. It's there, too, in books like Carol Ellis's *Camp Fear*, a *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*-influenced title in the wildly popular *Point Horror* range of young adult novels, which were passed around like contraband by girls my age in the early 1990s. Add *Meatballs*, *The Parent Trap* and "Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah" into the mix, and I feel like I'm a verified camp expert.

Throughout, summer camp is a wholesome summertime bildungsroman that gorges itself on its own fountain of nostalgia. It is also inflected with uncertainty: an unfurling, embodied affect that comes at the cusp of puberty, or (later) adulthood. In more adult-oriented media, this signals an emergence into a haze of sexuality and eroticism that might be as dangerous as it is tantalising, in that summer camp is the liminal space in which anything – anything! – might happen. Importantly, this gives form to some of the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films' ideological and mythic perspectives. To say that the early *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* films are about sex is a bit like saying that *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is about space – a statement that is an objective fact, but also a surface level, descriptive indication of much deeper metaphysical and ontological conundrums. These films walk a provocative line between innocence and prurience that reflects a peculiarly American strain of puritanism. Teens played by actors in their twenties, horny hairy-chested manchildren and Playboy girls next door, play at being responsible adults before being slaughtered like lambs. Only in America can wholesome white kids in matching camp uniforms engage in a sincere singalong of an African-American Civil War spiritual, abscond to have pre-marital sex, profess innocence when caught, and then be duly dispatched for the benefit of the appraising, disembodied, viewer.

We're offered a wry mission statement in *The Final Chapter* when young Tommy Jarvis gets an unexpected eyeful, as one of the women next door undresses with the curtains open. Tommy has already caught an illicit glimpse of people skinny-dipping, and now he can't

believe his luck. He squeals, bouncing on his bed, overjoyed at the prospect of getting his first, honest-to-God, not-in-a-dirty-magazine glimpse of a woman's naked body. It's a pointed acknowledgement (and celebration) of the series' most base impulses that asks the viewer to recall their own first encounters with sex, while still offering a male-centred voyeuristic fantasy. A more honest moment comes later, though, once Jason has started stalking through the house, a marauding *Thanatos* to the adolescents' sweaty *Eros*. Self-styled player Ted, a little drunk and a little high, has been watching an old stag reel while the others peel off. Startled by a noise, Ted peers around the room, and the film suddenly runs out, its end flapping mechanically. Ted's look of wounded confusion at the disappearance of the vintage nudity only deepens when Jason stabs him through the projection screen with a decidedly phallic knife. Sexual freedom isn't so free; rather, the moralistic cycle between possibility and punishment is as predictable as genre itself. Repackage it and pass it on, and on, until even someone with zero horror literacy can describe the 'Final Girl'.

\*\*\*

This is, of course, all a bit broad brush. From an international perspective, these films are as instructive about the pop cultural construction of (American) sexuality and experience as John Hughes' own mythic account of adolescence, which is itself inflected with both 1950s nostalgia and 1980s American neoliberal self-determination. You might as well structure your understanding of the British educational system on Hogwarts. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that teen culture (movies, television, magazines, music) has long been a staple American export, although transnational cultural circulation and reception is always contested. This is why it is important to identify the cultural specificity of American media in an act of denaturalisation, especially when the iconography and tropes of generic forms become so broadly transmitted as to be immediately legible, even to people with no interest in or knowledge of horror. It is for good reason that a local dinner theatre company in my hometown markets their 'scare' attraction *Friday Night Frights* with the (unlicensed, no doubt) image of a bloodied hockey mask and a pair of crossed machetes, the now-

universal signifier for horror baddie fun times.<sup>[5]</sup> Whether or not you know his name, Jason sells.

To an international reader and viewer, these American exports are also a key component of a dynamic culture that is always-already hybridised. This requires, implicitly, a heteroglossic cultural literacy. It is unsurprising that young people around the world might see them as part of the ‘stuff’ of their everyday lives and use them to their own ends, no matter the degree to which they are then localised or (re)mediated. The same, too, will be true of other viewers who have grown up with their own versions of the myth of Crystal Lake, which they tell and re-tell with the weight of religious litany, before bringing in the American flag for the night.

---

Notes:

[1] The narratives surrounding the first film’s success have likewise taken on the role of myth; see Nowell, 28-44.

[2] See, for example, Gustafsson, 189.

[3] See Crane, 365-382.

[4] See some very wholesome action

at <https://www.campleaders.com/nz/> and <https://www.iep.co.nz/summer-camps/>

[5] The event itself is a peculiar exercise in hybridity as participants come by vintage tram into the Ferrymead Heritage Park, a working replica of an Edwardian township, only to be hassled by actors dressed as iconic horror villains and archetypes during a walk through. I hear the event has gone downhill; a recent Facebook comment notes that there were “Hardly any actors and [I] had to ask a gentleman with a chainsaw if it had finished” (<https://www.facebook.com/janine.stewart.9066/posts/1525305974305190>).

Works Cited:

Crane, Diana. "Cultural Globalization and the Dominance of the American Film Industry: Cultural Policies, National Film Industries, and Transnational Film." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2014, pp. 365-82.

Gustafsson, Tommy. "Slasher in the Snow: The Rise of the Low-Budget Nordic Horror Film." *Nordic Genre Film: Small Nation Film Cultures in the Global Marketplace*, edited by Gustafsson and Pietari Kääpä, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, pp. 189-202.

Nowell, Robert. "'The Ambitions of Most Independent Filmmakers': Indie Production, the Majors, and *Friday the 13th* (1980)." *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 63, no. 2, Summer 2011, pp. 28-44.

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Stella Castelli** holds a BA in English Literature and Linguistics and Theory and History of Photography as well as an MA in English Literature and Linguistics from the University of Zurich. She wrote her MA thesis on *Aestheticized Representations of Death in American Literature and Film: Poe, Hitchcock, Craven*, exploring repressions of death and their symptomatic reappearance in contemporary American culture. She is currently affiliated with the University of Zurich where she is working on her doctoral dissertation *Death is Served: American Recipes for Murder – A Serial Compulsion* furthering her research within this field with a specific interest in the serial depiction of death. Among articles she has published are texts focusing on the ambiguous figure of the clown, the representation of the female body in *The Stepford Wives* and *Her* as well as Foucauldian reading of Ida Lupino's film noir *Hitchhiker*. Her research interests include American cultural studies, seriality and the serial, film, in particular cinematic renditions of horror, terror, fear and death, literary and cultural theory in particular Benjamin, Freud, Foucault, Blanchot and Kristeva.

**Wickham Clayton** is a Lecturer in Film Production at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK. He is author of *See!Hear!Cut!Kill!: Experiencing Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (University Press of Mississippi, 2020), and editor of *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *The Bible Onscreen in the New Millennium: New Heart and New Spirit* (Manchester University Press, 2020).

**Fraser Coffeen** is a former staff writer for Sports Blog Nation affiliate Bloody Elbow and one of the founding editors of LiverKick.com. His work has been published in *One Night Only* magazine and the book *How to Analyze and Review Comics* (coming in 2020 from Sequart), in addition to numerous websites. In addition to writing, he has worked as a comic book model, professional wrestling ring announcer, human blockhead, theater blood FX artist, and, by day, middle school principal. Fraser is a former member

of Chicago's critically acclaimed Defiant Theater, and a graduate of Northwestern University and the National College of Education at National Louis University.

**Caitlin Duffy** is a doctoral candidate in the English Department at Stony Brook University in New York. Her scholarly interests include 19<sup>th</sup> century American gothic literature and American horror cinema. She is particularly interested in exploring how capitalism and liberalism influences and colors gothic texts. Her work has been published in *The Journal of Dracula Studies* and *Poe Studies*. Caitlin currently teaches courses in film, literature, and writing at Stony Brook University.

**Dustin Dunaway** is the Chair of English, Communication, and Philosophy at Pueblo Community College in Pueblo, Colorado. He holds a Masters Degree in Communication from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. His other publications include "Hypermasculinity as Power Currency in the Post-Apocalyptic Political Economy" in McFarland's *The Politics of Race, Gender and Sexuality in The Walking Dead: Essays on the Television Series and Comics*. He also creates video essays as part of Cool Channel Classroom, presents at several conferences as part of the Colorado Coalition for Popular Culture Scholarship, and appears as a regular guest on The Deconstruction Workers podcast.

**Elizabeth Erwin** is a writer, assistant professor/librarian, and digital storyteller. She is currently working on her PhD in English and received her MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh and her MA in American Studies from Lehigh University. Her research interests include American horror, serialized storytelling, LGBT+ media representation, nostalgia and digital literacy. A former blogger for *Entertainment Weekly*, she has presented her research at various fan and academic conferences and has worked on a number of digital history projects, including The Veterans Empathy Project and Beyond Steel. She co-edited (with Dawn Keetley) *The Politics of Race, Gender and Sexuality in The Walking Dead* (McFarland, 2018) and her next co-edited collection (with Gwen

Hofmann) on horror-comedy films is under contract (LUP). You can find her podcasting and writing about all things horror at [www.HorrorHomeroom.com](http://www.HorrorHomeroom.com), a website she co-founded.

**Brian Fanelli** is a previous contributor to *Horror Homeroom*. He also writes about the genre for *Signal Horizon*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, and *HorrOrigins*. His creative writing has been published in *The Los Angeles Times*, *World Literature Today*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Blue Collar Review*, and elsewhere. Brian has an M.F.A. from Wilkes University and a Ph.D. from Binghamton University. He is an assistant professor of English at Lackawanna College. Recently, he joined [Twitter](#).

**David Ruis Fisher** is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Theatre & Dance at the University of Kansas where he has taught classes in Acting, Public Speaking as Performance, Introduction to Theatre, and Theatre History II. Recent publication includes a performance review of Luis Valdez's revival of *Zoot Suit* for *Theatre Journal* (June 2018). Research interests include: Latinx Theatre and Performance, African American Theatre and Performance, Dramaturgy, Performance Studies, Staging Intimacy on Stage and in Film, Popular Culture Studies, and Acting/Directing Theory.

**Erin Harrington** is a lecturer in critical and cultural theory at the University of Canterbury Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. She is the author of *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film: Gynaehorror* (Routledge, 2017). Recent publications and works in progress consider genre in the New Zealand web series *Ao-terror-oo*, televised funeral practice in the reality series *The Casketeers*, female-helmed horror anthologies, the appropriation of horror comedy mockumentary series *Wellington Paranormal* by the New Zealand Police, theatrical adaptations of *Evil Dead*, and the affective potentials, aesthetics and rituals of slow horror. She also works as a theatre and arts critic, and appears regularly as a speaker and panelist.



**Cory Hasabeard** is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and Memphis Theological Seminary, where he focused on Liberation Theology and the Political Ideology of Jesus. He is currently a theologian in residence at Borderland Mission in Nashville, Tennessee. Cory brings his background in Black Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, and Queer Theology to his cultural analysis. He seeks to expose the systemic oppression white straight men have benefited from by using cultural artifacts and writing in a way that elicits a change in the oppressor.

**Matthew Jones** is an independent film scholar and film studies, photography and media teacher at Arizona Conservatory for Arts and Academics and Estrella Mountain Community College with a focused interest in genres and genre films, most notably horror, classical gangster and the Western. His latest writing on the Western, *Demystifying the Myth: The Western's Classical Phase*, can be seen at *Deep Focus Review*, while his most recent study, *Antagonistic Nature: The Loss of Anthropocentric Authority in Eco-Horror of the 1970s and 1980s* is about to surface. He is also a cinematographer, photographer and associate member of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars who tweets @ghostoffire. Matthew received his BA in Media Studies from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and his MH in Art and Visual Media from Tiffin University.

**Dawn Keetley** is professor of English, teaching horror/gothic literature, film, and television at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She has most recently published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Horror Studies*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Journal of Popular Television*, *Journal of Film and Video*, and *Gothic Studies*. She is editor of *Jordan Peele's Get Out: Political Horror* (Ohio State University Press, 2020) and *We're All Infected: Essays on AMC's The Walking Dead and the Fate of the Human* (McFarland, 2014). She has also coedited (with Angela Tenga) *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous Vegetal in Fiction and Film* (Palgrave, 2016), (with

Matthew Wynn Sivils) *The Ecogothic in Nineteenth-century American Literature* (Routledge, 2017), and (with Elizabeth Erwin) *The Politics of Race, Gender and Sexuality in The Walking Dead* (McFarland, 2018). Her monograph, *Making a Monster: Jesse Pomeroy, the Boy Murderer of 1870s Boston*, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2017. Keetley is working on essays on ecohorror and on the contemporary horror film as well as a monograph on folk horror. She writes regularly for Horror Homeroom, which she co-founded, and her personal website is [here](#).

**Kom Kunyosying** completed a PhD in English at the University of Oregon where he studied the overlap between iconic and ethnic representation in U.S. comics in relationship to other visual and prose media. He has published essays on the rise of geek culture and the hyperreal hillbilly (with Carter Soles) and on metonymy and ecology in Charles Burns's *Black Hole*. He teaches literature and writing at Nashua Community College.

**Wade Newhouse** is professor of English and program director for Theatre and Musical Theatre at William Peace University in Raleigh, NC. He teaches a wide range of courses including Southern Literature, Children's Literature, and The Gothic, and he has published articles and book chapters on such writers as William Faulkner, Neil Gaiman, and Randall Kenan. He directs one production per year in the William Peace University Theatre program and acts in local theatrical companies, most recently playing leading roles in *Deathtrap*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Macbeth*. He also writes fiction and has published a handful of horror and science fiction stories in online zines.

**Todd K. Platts** is associate professor of sociology at Piedmont Virginia Community College. He has published many articles and book chapters on horror cinema. His recent publications include "Evolution and Slasher Films" (co-authored with Mathias Clasen) and "'Horror Movies are Already Telling the Story...' of Trump's America" (coauthored

with Kibiriti Majuto) His forthcoming publications include “Reviewing *Get Out*’s Reviews: What Critics Discussed and How Their Race Mattered” (coauthored with David Brunsma) and “The Unmade Undead: A Postmortem of the Post-9/11 Zombie Cycle.” He is currently co-editing *Blumhouse Production: The New House of Horror* with Mathias Clasen and Victoria McCollum.

**Ethan Robles** is a writer working out of Boston, MA. His fiction has appeared in *Aphotic Realm*, *Sirens Call eZine*, and *Shotgun Honey*. He is a staff writer at [morbidlybeautiful.com](http://morbidlybeautiful.com) and a frequent guest writer at [horrorhomeroom.com](http://horrorhomeroom.com). You can follow him on twitter @roblecop.

**Carter Soles** is associate professor of Film Studies in the English Department at SUNY Brockport. He has written on the cannibalistic hillbilly in 1970’s slasher films for *Ecocinema: Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2012), on petroculture, gender, and genre in the *Mad Max* franchise for *Gender and Environment in Science Fiction* (Lexington Books, 2019), and, with Kom Kunyosying, on the hyperreal hillbilly in *The Walking Dead* for *The Politics of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in The Walking Dead* (McFarland, 2018). He is currently co-editing an ecohorror anthology with Christy Tidwell and writing a book on cinematic ecohorror.

**Brennan Thomas** is an associate professor of English at Saint Francis University and directs the university’s writing center. She has published scholarly articles on the social, political and consumerist elements of the films *Casablanca*, *A Christmas Story*, *Bambi*, and *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, as well as the television series *South Park*.

**Jason Wallin** is Professor of Media and Youth Culture in Curriculum at the University of Alberta, Canada. He is the author of *A Deleuzian Approach to Curriculum* (Palgrave MacMillan), *Arts-based Inquiry: A Critique and Proposal* (Sense Publishers) and co-producer of the extreme music documentary BLEKKMETAL (Grimposium, Uneasy

Sleeper). Growing up, one of the only good things about my name was its association to the *Friday the 13th* franchise.

**Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.** is a professor at Loyola Marymount University, as well as an actor, director and stage combat choreographer. He is the author and editor of over two dozen books, including *Post-9/11 Horror in American Cinema*, *Back from the Dead: Reading Remakes of Romero's Zombie Films as Markers of their Time*, *The Empire Triumphant: Race, Religion and Rebellion in the Star Wars Films*, *The Streaming of Hill House*, and the Bram Stoker Award-nominated *Uncovering Stranger Things*. He has also written over a hundred journal articles and book chapters on everything from *Godzilla* to exorcisms, Jesuit horror to African cinema. You can find out more of his publications at [www.SomethingWetmoreThisWayComes.com](http://www.SomethingWetmoreThisWayComes.com).



**HORROR HOMEROOM**