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ProQuest Number: 10694446

ProQuest 10694446

Done to Death? Re-evaluating Narrative Construction in Slasher Sequels

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2017

ABSTRACT

Slasher sequels, such as those in the *Halloween, Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* series, are often criticised for their derivative processes of narrative construction, which are widely perceived to sacrifice development and complexity for the sake of repetition and formula. Thus, although scholars such as Carol Clover, Ian Conrich, and Tony Williams have examined these films from a range of psychoanalytical and sociocultural perspectives, academics have generally avoided engaging in processes of close formal analysis. Where such analyses do exist, in Vera Dika's structural study of the slasher film, for example, the research tends to be geared toward interrogating the *generic* properties of the films, rather than the properties associated with their status as film *sequels*. As a result, there is a general lack of understanding about the narrative construction of the slasher sequel, leaving the dominant critical assumptions to proliferate largely unchallenged. However, for theorists such as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, working within the domain of 'historical poetics,' even the most conventionalised systems of narrative operate according to complex constructive processes, often perceptible only to those willing to engage in close scrutiny.

The reluctance to engage with slasher sequels *as sequels* is indicative of a wider tendency within film studies, where the practice of cinematic sequelisation has traditionally remained beyond the purview of academic analysis. In recent years, however, writers including Stuart Henderson have begun to re-examine the sequel from new critical perspectives, drawing on both historical poetics and Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality to offer fresh insights into the processes involved in constructing a system of narrative continuity over multiple films.

With hypertextuality and historical poetics demonstrating the potential to provide new perspectives on the film sequel, this study draws on both approaches to create a combined framework of analysis capable of answering the question: is there any evidence to suggest that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels are more complex than previously acknowledged?

Using this framework to engage in a formal analysis of the *Halloween* films reveals a network of dynamic narrative processes operating beneath the conventionalised surface of the series. By subjecting the original story to extension, expansion, elaboration, and modification, each *Halloween* sequel serves to enhance, complicate, or compromise the coherence of the narrative system as a whole, and, in doing so, prompts the continual reconceptualisation and recontextualisation of previously-established information. In this way, the processes of narrative construction within the *Halloween* series can be seen to demonstrate complexity at both a formal and cognitive level.

These findings suggest that there is evidence to challenge not only the existing critical assumptions about the *Halloween* sequels, but also the critical assumptions pertaining to other sequels in the slasher sub-genre. With the sequels in the *Halloween* series generally representative of those in other slasher series, sharing many narrative properties and drawing similar criticisms for many of the same perceived deficiencies, the study concludes that the array of dynamic narrative processes shown to operate in the *Halloween* sequels is also likely to be present in other slasher sequels. In drawing this conclusion, the study ultimately establishes that there *is* evidence to suggest that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels are more complex than previously acknowledged. By expanding the existing understanding of slasher sequels in this way, this study succeeds in making an original contribution to knowledge, serving to advance both the established field of research surrounding the slasher sub-genre and the emergent field of research surrounding the film sequel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

INTRODUCTION

Slasher sequels, such as those in the *Halloween, Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* series, are often criticised for their derivative processes of narrative construction, which are widely perceived to sacrifice development and complexity for the sake of repetition and formula. Thus, although scholars such as Carol Clover, Ian Conrich, and Tony Williams have examined these films from a range of psychoanalytical and sociocultural perspectives, academics have generally avoided engaging in processes of formal analysis.[1] Where such analyses do exist, in Vera Dika's structural study of the slasher film, for example, the research tends to be geared toward interrogating the *generic* properties of the films, rather than the properties associated with their status as film *sequels*.[2] As a result, there is a general lack of understanding about the narrative construction of the slasher sequel, leaving the dominant critical assumptions to proliferate largely unchallenged.

However, for theorists such as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, both of whom adopt analytical perspectives within the domain of 'historical poetics,' even the most conventionalised systems of narrative operate according to complex constructive processes, often perceptible only to those willing to engage in close scrutiny.[3] The current reluctance to engage with slasher sequels at this level is indicative of a wider tendency within film studies, where the practice of cinematic sequelisation has traditionally remained beyond the purview of academic analysis. In recent years, however, the emergence of a field of research dedicated to re-examining the film sequel from a range of theoretical perspectives has begun to shed new light on the format. Situated within this field, writers including Stuart Henderson have begun to study the constructive principles of the film sequel, not only adopting an approach within the domain of historical poetics, but also drawing on the work of literary theorist Gérard

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[1] See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Ian Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol,' in *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Cinema*, ed. Ian Conrich (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 173-90; Ian Conrich, 'Seducing the Subject: Freddy Krueger, Popular Culture and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* Films,' in *Trash Aesthetics: Popular Culture and its Audience*, ed. Deborah Cartmell et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 118-31; Tony Williams, 'Trying to Survive on the Darker Side: 1980s Family Horror,' in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), 164-80; and Tony Williams, *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film.* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), particularly Chapters 9 and 10.
[2] Vera Dika, *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (London: Associated University Press, 1990).
[3] See David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Genette – and specifically Genette's concept of hypertextuality – to offer a new perspective on the narrative processes associated with the sequel format.[4]

In light of these developments, I suggest that slasher sequels have been prematurely dismissed and propose that the processes of narrative construction within these films may be more complex than previously acknowledged. In this study I will therefore aim to answer the question: is there any evidence to suggest that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels are more complex than previously acknowledged?

In order to achieve this aim, I will pursue three objectives:

1. I will outline the historical, critical, and theoretical contexts of both the slasher sub-genre and the film sequel in order to analyse the ways in which each of these formal frameworks has contributed to existing critical perceptions of the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels;

2. I will draw on works within the domain of historical poetics to outline the processes of narrative construction involved in classical and complex films, and will combine these works with the concept of hypertextuality to outline the processes of narrative construction involved in film sequels;

3. I will use a combined framework of historical poetics and hypertextuality to analyse the processes of narrative construction in the *Halloween* series.

In completing these objectives, this study will make an original contribution to knowledge by bringing together hypertextuality and historical poetics to analyse the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels from a new perspective, specifically one which foregrounds their formal identity as film sequels. By expanding the existing understanding of slasher sequels in this way, the study will serve to advance both the established field of research surrounding the slasher sub-genre, and, more particularly, the emergent field of research surrounding the film sequel.

As both slasher films and film sequels, slasher sequels are comprised of multiple formal frameworks. The first part of their formal identity denotes a sub-genre of horror

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[4] See Stuart Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel: History and Form, 1911-2010* (London: BFI/Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); and Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

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cinema that emerged in America following the commercial success of John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). As I will go on to elaborate in Chapter One, the slasher film typically features an attacker with a bladed weapon stalking and killing a group of victims in varied and violent ways. The slasher sub-genre has been associated with the practice of sequelisation throughout its history, with popular titles such as *Halloween, Friday the 13th, A Nightmare on Elm Street,* and *Scream* amongst those to inspire multiple sequels.

Sharing many formal qualities with the genre film, most notably its framework of repetition and variation, the film sequel represents a dominant mode of production in mainstream cinema. The word 'sequel' derives from the Latin verb, *sequor, sequī, secūtus sum,* usually translated as 'to follow.'[5] In simplistic terms, a film sequel can therefore be understood as a film designed to follow a previous production. However, such a generalised description reveals little about the form and function of the format. The definition provided by the *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film* proves more illuminating on this count, defining sequels as productions that 'contain characters and continue story lines established in previous films.'[6] These conventions indicate that film sequels do not merely *follow* previous productions, but function explicitly to *continue* previously established narratives.

It is the presence of narrative continuity which serves to distinguish film sequels from similar formats, such as the series film and the genre film. In consideration of this fact, Carolyn Jess-Cooke argues that any effective definition of the film sequel must ascribe sufficient importance to the distinct *narrative* properties of the format.[7] Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg are two writers who have adopted this approach, defining the sequel as a 'chronological extension of a narrative.' This description evokes an earlier definition by Gérard Genette, who regards sequels as a form of continuation designed to *prolong* a text 'beyond what was initially considered to be its ending.'[8]

Envisioned in these terms, the distinct narrative properties of the sequel are clearly exposed: functioning as extensions, continuations, or prolongations, sequels can essentially be understood as individual components of a wider narrative system – a

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[5] See 'Advanced Latin: Deponent and Semi-Deponent Verbs,' *National Archives*, n. d., http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/latin/advanced/lesson10/.

[6] Steve Neale, 'Sequels, Series, and Remakes,' in *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film, Vol. 4: Romantic Comedy – Yugoslavia*, Barry Keith Grant, ed. (London: Thomson Gale, 2007), 56.

[7] Carolyn Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3.

[8] See Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg, introduction to *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*, ed. Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 7; and Genette, *Palimpsests*, 162, 206.

system characterised by its expansion beyond the boundaries of a single text. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter Three, but at this point it is most salient to note that, as chronological extensions of existing narratives, sequels are defined not only by a 'fundamental temporality,' but by associated notions of 'afterwardness' that are indicative of their distinction from original texts.[9] Stuart Henderson elaborates further in his recent study of Hollywood sequels:

> At the most basic level, then, the cinematic sequel is a film which is defined by a dual form of temporal relationship. The first part of that relationship exists at the formal, or textual, level: the events a sequel portrays occur *after* the events of a previous film and, even if there is little causal connection between these two sets of events, it is made clear that there is a chronological relationship between them. The second part of that relationship is extratextual. As in the fictional world, the sequel as a film, as an event in the real world, occurs *after* the original [emphasis added].[10]

If sequels can be understood in terms of 'afterwardness,' it seems logical to presume that the films from which they are derived can be understood in terms of 'beforeness.' It is with this concept in mind that the discussion returns to Jess-Cooke and her appeal for systems of classification to acknowledge the distinct narrative properties of the film sequel.

For Jess-Cooke, the film sequel can be understood as 'a linear narrative extension, designating the text from which it derives as an 'original' rooted in 'beforeness'.'[11] This definition concisely unifies the narrative principles previously outlined, but it also has an additional advantage. By choosing to emphasise the state of 'beforeness' inherently designated *by* the sequel, rather than the state of 'afterwardness' inherently designated *to* the sequel, Jess-Cooke implicitly raises questions about the *transformative* implications of sequelisation, as described above. As this study progresses, the significance of these implications will become increasingly apparent; at this stage, however, it is sufficient to note that Jess-Cooke's definition not only provides an insight into the narrative principles of sequelisation, but also draws attention to the wider implications of these principles. In this way, Jess-Cooke succeeds in foregrounding aspects of sequelisation that are frequently overlooked in favour of an

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[9] See, respectively, Budra and Schellenberg, 'Introduction,' 7; and Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 8.
[10] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 5.
[11] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 3.

emphasis on elements of commercial exploitation. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to adopt Jess-Cooke's definition throughout this study.

Due to the fact that film sequels function to extend an existing story, their production necessitates the construction of a narrative over multiple films. Defined by David Bordwell as the process of 'selecting, arranging and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver,' narrative construction involves both the presentation of story information by a film's plot *and* the perceptual-cognitive activities required for rendering this presentation coherent.[12] The specific details of these processes will be subject to further elaboration in Chapter Three; at this point, however, it is sufficient to note that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels have frequently been criticised for perceived deficiencies seen to result from the frameworks of convention which govern the films.

For many critics, slasher sequels are synonymous with notions of commerce over art and repetition over originality. Widely perceived as preoccupied with the execution of increasingly gruesome moments of spectacle, and seen to be motivated by explicitly commercial objectives – such as the transformation of monstrous characters into commodified pop-culture icons – these films are frequently accused of neglecting processes of narrative construction, both in terms of plot and character development and in terms of establishing logical continuity with their predecessors. Typical examples of such criticisms are provided by Ken Hanke, who suggests that the *Friday the 13th* films 'proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that splatter fans frankly didn't give a damn about any kind of logic;' and by Jeffrey Sconce, who asserts that the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series came to be seen as 'a highly formulaic and thus uninteresting group of films, thin on plot and heavy on special effects, pumped out at regular year-and-a-half intervals for a teen audience that didn't expect much in the first place.'[13]

Regarded as inherently imitative of previous films within both the slasher sub-genre *and* the individual series to which they belong, slasher sequels draw intensified criticism for their conventionalised properties, which are seen to represent little more than 'an endless loop of formulaic repetition.'[14] As a consequence, both the production

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[12] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Methuen, 1985), xi.

[13] See Ken Hanke, *A Critical Guide to Horror Film Series* (London: Garland, 1991), 286; and Jeffrey Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death: Identification, Reflexivity and Contemporary Horror,' in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins (London: Routledge, 1993), 105. For more on the lack of narrative development in the slasher sequel, see also Jonathan Lake Crane, 'Chapter 6: Jason,' in *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 132-58.

[14] David Church, 'The Return of the Return of the Repressed: Notes on the American Horror Film (1991-2006),' *Offscreen*, November 21, 2006, http://offscreen.com/view/return_of_the_repressed.

of these films and the analysis of their narrative properties are often assumed to be somewhat futile pursuits. As Rick Worland comments in his discussion of the *Friday the 13th* series, 'it is hard to believe a movie called *Friday the 13th Part V: A New Beginning* will really contain anything new.'[15]

However, whereas processes of repetition are undoubtedly crucial to the slasher sequel, the individual films within a particular series are far from identical. In discussing the distinctive properties of the film sequel, Jess-Cooke suggests that difference and progress are among the defining characteristics of the format.[16] The fundamental temporality connecting a sequel to its predecessor ensures that the narrative will never remain truly static, but will change and develop as the story unfolds. Peter Hutchings draws attention to such processes in his discussions of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, which serve to highlight the changes and innovations that occur from one film to the next.[17] Others have also identified and examined developmental processes at work within slasher sequels. Harry M. Benshoff, Ian Conrich, Pat Gill, Gary Heba, Reynold Humphries, and Tony Williams are among those to have explored the psychoanalytical and sociocultural significance of thematic developments within the *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Halloween* series; Ian Conrich and Bernard Welt have examined the ways in which the monsters associated with slasher franchises are transformed into icons of popular culture; and Paul Budra has examined these monsters as reflections of a postmodern society, suggesting that the 'appealing stability' of their recurrence represents a welcome certainty within an increasingly unstable world.[18] In addition to these studies, several scholars have also examined the ways in which the slasher sequel has contributed to processes of genre

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[15] Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 105. For similarly dismissive attitudes toward the slasher sequel, see Kim Newman, 'Part 2, Chapter 3: Scream and Scream Again: Franchises, Post-Modernism, Remakes,' in *Nightmare Movies: Horror on Screen Since the 1960s*, rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 379-409; and Robin Wood, 'Foreword: What Lies Beneath?,' in *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud's Worst Nightmare*, ed. Steven Jay Schneider (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), particularly xviii.

[16] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 5.

[17] See Peter Hutchings, 'Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror's New Monsters,' in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victor Sage and Lloyd Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 94-100; and *The Horror Film* (Harlow, England, Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 206-11.

[18] Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 246-9; Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films;' Pat Gill, 'The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family,' *Journal of Film and Video* 54, no. 4 (Winter 2002), 16-30, EBSCOhost (12856116); Gary Heba, 'The Rhetoric of Social Horror in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* Series,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 106-15, doi:10.1080/01956051.1995.9943696; Reynold Humphries, *The American Horror Film: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 158-62; Williams, 'Trying to Survive;' Williams, *Hearths of Darkness*, Chapters 9 and 10; Conrich, 'Seducing the Subject;' and Bernard Welt, 'Jason Voorhees, RIP,' in *Mythomania: Fantasies, Fables and Sheer Lies in Contemporary American Popular Art* (LA: Art Issues Press, 1996), 78-83.

development, both from an historical and a formal perspective. Jim Harper, Kim Newman, and Adam Rockoff have drawn attention to the pivotal role played by the sequel in sustaining the commercial popularity of slasher cinema over a period of almost four decades; and both Carol Clover and Vera Dika have discussed the ways in which the conventions of the sub-genre have manifested within slasher sequels.[19]

However, even in cases where scholars have engaged with the slasher sequel, the processes of narrative construction within these films are still deemed to be somewhat deficient. Although the seamless integration of slasher sequels into genre studies, such as those undertaken by Rockoff, Clover, and Dika, demonstrates that the films are perceived as legitimate and successful examples of *slasher* narratives, comments made within these studies reveal that the films are nonetheless perceived to fail as examples of *sequel* narratives. In all three cases listed above, the writers undermine the narrative identity of slasher sequels by asserting that the films are so repetitious that they function not as sequels but as replicas or remakes.[20] Such a position is indicative of a general lack of interest in the sequel status of these films: only a minority of scholars have engaged with slasher sequels *as sequels* rather than as slasher films. Of the studies that do exist, many are focused on the explicitly self-conscious *Scream* sequels, which foreground their sequel status as part of a generally self-reflexive approach to narrative construction. Thus, although these films have been studied by those including Matt Hills, Andrew Tudor, and Steven Jay Schneider, the object of analysis is usually the sociocultural and generic implications of self-reflexivity, rather than the processes of sequelisation at work within the films.[21]

Despite the general reluctance to engage with slasher sequels as sequels, recent works by Wickham Clayton, Claire Perkins, and Carolyn Jess-Cooke indicate that there

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[19] Jim Harper, *Legacy of Blood: A Comprehensive Guide to Slasher Movies* (Manchester: Critical Vision, 2004); Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies*; Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986* (London: McFarland, 2002); Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*; and Dika, *Games of Terror*. Rather than discussing the role of the sequel within processes of genre development, the historical development of the sequels themselves has been the subject of discussion in a number of production histories. See, for example, Peter M. Bracke and Sean S. Cunningham, *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th* (London, Titan, 2006); David Grove, *Making Friday the 13th: The Legend of Camp Blood* (Surrey: FAB Press, 2005); Jeffrey Cooper, *The Nightmare on Elm Street Companion: The Official Guide to America's Favorite Fiend* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1987); and William Schoell and James Spencer, *The Nightmare Never Ends: the Official Story of Freddy Krueger and the Nightmare on Elm Street Films* (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1992).
[20] See Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 111; Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, 23; and Dika, *Games of Terror*, 173.
[21] Matt Hills, 'Chapter 10: Intertextuality in the Contemporary Field of Horror (II): The "Postmodern" *Scream* Franchise,' in *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005), 182-97; Andrew Tudor, 'From Paranoia to Postmodernism? The Horror Movie in Late Modern Society,' in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), 105-16; and Steven Jay Schneider, 'Kevin Williamson and the Rise of the Neo-Stalker,' *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* 19, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2000): 73-87, ProQuest (2142182).

is growing interest in this area of study. In his analysis of the relationship between the *Friday the 13th* films and the aesthetic development of the slasher sub-genre, Clayton draws attention to the different viewing perspectives afforded to those who are familiar with the series narrative and those who are not; Claire Perkins analyses the means by which processes of self-reflexive genericity serve to consolidate the narrative relationship between the original *Scream* trilogy and the belated fourth instalment; and Jess-Cooke focuses on the same series of films in order to scrutinise 'the ways in which the relationship between genre and sequelisation is played out and employed to serve specific ideological and industrial imperatives.'[22]

Despite the fact that these writers have been willing to engage with slasher sequels as sequels, the focus of their studies nonetheless remains on the *interaction* between the sequel framework and the genre framework, rather than on the sequel framework itself. As a result, the processes of narrative construction associated with this framework have yet to be examined *in their own right*. It is this gap in knowledge that the present study seeks to address.

The lack of analysis pertaining to the narrative construction of slasher sequels is significant because it enables dominant assumptions about the storytelling processes within these films to go largely unchallenged. Having played a vital role in the development of one of the most prolific sub-genres of horror cinema, the slasher sequel has maintained a continual presence within mainstream cinema since the 1980s, succeeding in permeating popular culture and helping to establish sequelisation as a dominant filmmaking practice. Yet, despite this history, there remains a general lack of interest in their status as narrative artefacts, their conventionalised and commercialised frameworks often perceived to preclude the potential for complexity. As I will go on to explain, these assumptions are indicative of wider attitudes towards the film sequel, which is frequently overlooked as a potential source of narrative complexity. Consequently, by addressing the lack of knowledge regarding narrative construction in slasher sequels, it will not only be possible to determine whether there is any evidence to encourage a critical re-evaluation of this particular group of films, but any such evidence may also contribute to wider processes of re-evaluation regarding the general practice of cinematic sequelisation.

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[22] See Wickham Clayton, 'Bearing Witness to a Whole Bunch of Murders: The Aesthetics of Perspective in the *Friday the 13th* Films' (PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2013); Claire Perkins, 'The *Scre4m* Trilogy,' in *Film Trilogies: New Critical Approaches*, ed. Claire Perkins and Constantine Verevis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 88-108; and Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 70.

Despite prevailing assumptions about the lack of complexity in slasher sequels, an analytical approach situated within the domain of historical poetics may have the potential to offer an alternative perspective. Originally emerging out of the work of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, an historical poetics of cinema combines principles derived from Russian Formalist theory with concepts from cognitive-constructivist psychology.[23] The resulting framework is used to analyse the 'principles according to which films are constructed and through which they achieve particular effects;' and to examine 'how and why these principles have arisen and changed in particular empirical circumstances.'[24] Bordwell asserts that the research framework associated with an historical poetics of cinema is characterised by its focus on *particulars*, *patterns*, *purposes*, *principles*, *practices*, and *processing*.[25] Thus, under a framework of historical poetics, an analysis of formal particulars and patterns progresses to a wider examination of constructive principles, purposes, and practices; all of which are ultimately understood in terms of their effect on perceptual-cognitive processing. Ultimately serving to provide a new perspective on processes of formal construction, this approach is intended to look beneath surface frameworks of convention in order to 'lay bare the inner workings' of any given film.[26] As demonstrated in the study of classical Hollywood cinema undertaken by Bordwell, Thompson, and Janet Staiger, such an approach is capable of revealing intricate processes operating beneath even the most conventionalised frameworks of narrative.[27]

The notion of applying a framework of historical poetics to look beneath surface conventions is already proving useful within the burgeoning field of sequel studies. Drawing on the framework established by Bordwell, Stuart Henderson has engaged in a rigorous formal analysis of the Hollywood sequel, identifying and examining the formal characteristics associated with the format and revealing new insights into the wealth of constructive processes involved in establishing a system of narrative continuity over multiple films.[28] In this analysis Henderson draws attention to the work of literary theorist Gérard Genette, asserting that Genette's theory of *hypertextuality* has the potential to prove particularly illuminating for the study of film sequels.

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[23] Although situated firmly within the domain of historical poetics, Thompson's work advocates a specialised approach known as 'neoformalism.' This branch of historical poetics is distinguished by its use of analytical tools derived directly from Russian Formalism, such as the notions of defamiliarisation and the dominant. For more on the neoformalist approach, see Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*.
[24] Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 23.
[25] Ibid., 24.
[26] Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 69.
[27] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, new ed. (London: Routledge, 1988).
[28] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 106.

Defined by Genette as any relationship uniting text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*), 'upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary,' hypertextuality involves the derivation of a text through transformative processes such as extension, expansion, elaboration, and modification.[29] In this way, the concept can be seen to foreground the transformative properties of the sequel, thereby enabling those who adopt a hypertextual approach, such as Henderson, Jess-Cooke, R. Barton Palmer, and Aylish Wood, to draw attention to the dynamic narrative qualities of the film sequel as opposed to its more repetitive characteristics.[30]

With both hypertextuality and historical poetics demonstrating the potential to provide new perspectives on the narrative construction of film sequels, I argue that an analytical framework incorporating both approaches may have the potential to look beneath the conventionalised surface of the slasher sequel and toward its more dynamic narrative depths in order to search for evidence which may suggest that the constructive processes within these films are more complex than previously acknowledged.

The first step toward testing this hypothesis will be to establish a contextual framework capable of explaining the predominantly negative assumptions about the narrative processes in slasher sequels. Thus, Chapter One seeks to understand the ways in which the *generic* identity of these films may have contributed to the existing critical assumptions. The conventions of slasher cinema are outlined and the historical development of the sub-genre is charted before the chapter moves on to discuss the salient critical debates surrounding the slasher film. With this basic contextual information established, the structure of the opening chapter is subsequently paralleled in Chapter Two, which examines the origins and development of cinematic sequelisation and discusses the contemporary debates pertaining to this process in an attempt to understand how the slasher sequel's formal designation as a *sequel* may have helped shape existing critical attitudes.

With the contextual foundations duly established, Chapter Three moves on to outline the theoretical frameworks from which the analytical approach will subsequently be derived. The principles of Bordwell's historical poetics are drawn upon to examine the constructive processes involved in classical and complex narratives, with particular attention paid to the role of the viewer and the cognitive activities required to discern

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[29] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 5.
[30] See Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 129-33; Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 76-9; R. Barton Palmer, 'Before and After, Before Before and After: *Godfather I, II*, and *III*,' in *Second Takes*, ed. Jess-Cooke and Verevis, 65-85; and Aylish Wood, 'Vectorial Dynamics: Transtextuality and Complexity in *The Matrix*,' in *The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded*, ed. Stacy Gillis (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 11-22.

narrative coherence. The final part of the chapter draws upon the poetics of the film sequel established by Henderson and Genette's concept of hypertextuality to explore the implications of extending a narrative over more than one film, thus establishing an analytical framework which will be carried forward to the case study.

This case study consists of an analysis of the processes of narrative construction in the *Halloween* series. Specifically, I will examine in turn John Carpenter's original 1978 film and each of the seven succeeding sequels. In each of the studies, I will interrogate a different aspect of the hypertextual relationship connecting the films; this will permit an examination of the ways in which processes of narrative construction within the *Halloween* series are shaped by the dynamic transformative properties inherent to the sequel format. Limiting the scope of the study to a single series of films will facilitate a formal analysis which is both narrow and deep, thereby permitting a more comprehensive application of theory. The choice to focus specifically on the *Halloween* films has been made in consideration of the fact that this series spans a longer period of time than other major slasher franchises including *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. An examination of the *Halloween* films will therefore permit a more substantive examination of the ways in which empirical circumstances can shape the development of particular formal principles. In addition, whereas this introduction has shown that other slasher series have inspired a wealth of scholarly engagement, a comparable body of research has yet to emerge surrounding the *Halloween* films; the present study therefore represents an attempt to redress this imbalance.

CHAPTER ONE
THE SLASHER FILM

The slasher sequel is a narrative construct comprised of multiple formal frameworks. Central to the formal identity of these films is their *generic* designation, which places them within the slasher sub-genre of horror cinema. In this chapter, I will examine this designation more closely, studying not only questions of taxonomy, but also the historical development of the sub-genre and the most salient critical debates associated with the films therein. In doing so, I aim to establish a basic contextual framework for the study and determine whether there is a relationship between the generic identity of the slasher sequel and the current gap in knowledge pertaining to these films.

Conventions

Slasher films typically feature attackers with bladed weapons stalking and killing victims using violent and varied methods. However, such a general description is insufficient for clearly delineating the boundaries of the sub-genre. As Adam Rockoff explains, it is difficult to describe slasher cinema without also encompassing films that lie firmly outside the accepted parameters of the category. The general description outlined above, for example, may also apply to exceptionally bloody films such as *The Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi, 1981) and *The Thing* (John Carpenter, 1982), or to other films which feature knife-wielding villains such as *Cobra* (George P. Cosmatos, 1986), and *Kalifornia* (Dominic Sena, 1993).[1] The boundaries of slasher cinema are more systematically demarcated by Vera Dika in her seminal structural analysis of the sub-genre. Dika suggests that slasher films are defined by a distinctive formula incorporating salient cinematic techniques, such as subjective point-of view; a stock set of characters, including a strong heroine, a disturbed killer, a young community, and an old community; and an isolated, middle-class American setting.[2] Furthermore, Dika asserts that slasher films usually exhibit a characteristic two-part plot structure:

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[1] Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986* (London: McFarland, 2002), 5. For a more in-depth discussion of problems with defining and delineating the slasher sub-genre, see Brigid Cherry, *Horror* (London: Routledge, 2009), 19-36.
[2] Vera Dika, *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (London: Associated University Press, 1990), 53-9.

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Past event

1. The young community is guilty of a wrongful action.
2. The killer sees an injury, fault or death.
3. The killer experiences a loss.
4. The killer kills the guilty members of the young community.

Present event

5. An event commemorates the past action.
6. The killer's destructive force is reactivated.
7. The killer reidentifies the guilty parties.
8. A member from the old community warns the young community (optional).
9. The young community takes no heed.
10. The killer stalks members of the young community.
11. The killer kills members of the young community.
12. The heroine sees the extent of the murders.
13. The heroine sees the killer.
14. The heroine does battle with the killer.
15. The heroine kills or subdues the killer.
16. The heroine survives.
17. But the heroine is not free.[3]

Dika's structural framework offers a useful insight into some of the most typical features of slasher plots, but such a formula also runs the risk of being somewhat reductive and overly exclusive.[4] Dika has recognised the limitations to her approach, conceding that there are notable variations to her suggested structure and acknowledging that the plot formula does not remain wholly intact beyond the initial period of slasher production from 1978 to 1981.[5] Taking Dika's model as a starting point, Richard Nowell proposes an alternative narrative formula based on story events rather than plot structure:

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[3] Dika, *Games of Terror*, 59-60.
[4] Such issues are discussed by Gary Heba in 'The Rhetoric of Social Horror in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* Series,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 107, doi:10.1080/01956051.1995.9943696.
[5] Dika, *Games of Terror*, 126-8.

Part One: Setup

1. Trigger: Events propel a human (the killer) upon a homicidal trajectory.
2. Threat: The killer targets a group of hedonistic youths for killing.

Part Two: Disruption

3. Leisure: Youths interact recreationally in an insular quotidian location.
4. Stalking: A shadowy killer tracks youths in that location.
5. Murders: The shadowy killer kills some of the youths.

Part Three: Resolution

6. Confrontation: The remaining character(s) challenges the killer.
7. Neutralization: The immediate threat posed by the killer is eliminated.[6]

Nowell's story structure is advantageous due to the fact that it can be articulated in countless ways within individual films. This renders the model more widely applicable and more flexible than Dika's plot-oriented formula.

Another attempt to avoid the reductive inflexibility of a prescribed structural formula has been put forward by Adam Rockoff, who suggests adopting a more malleable definition of the slasher film encompassing the most distinctive and consistent elements of character, narrative, and style.[7] Kent Byron Armstrong concurs in his slasher filmography, suggesting that an outline of the most salient features is more useful than attempting to assert the 'uncompromising' limitations of a precise slasher formula.[8]

The 'consistent elements' and 'salient features' to which Rockoff and Armstrong refer comprise the *conventions* of the slasher sub-genre. Defined by Barry Keith Grant as 'frequently-used stylistic techniques or narrative devices typical of (but not necessarily unique to) particular generic traditions,' genre conventions may include elements of story and plot, character types, locations, structural features, themes, and iconography.[9] Iconographic conventions take on a particularly significant role within the operation of film genres. Bordwell and Thompson describe iconographic elements as 'recurring symbolic images that carry meaning from film to film.' These can include objects, settings, characters, physical attributes, tools and technology, specific actors,

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[6] Richard Nowell, *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle*, (London: Continuum, 2011), 21.

[7] Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 5.

[8] Kent Byron Armstrong, *Slasher Films: An International Filmography, 1960 through 2001* (London: McFarland, 2003), 1.

[9] Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 10. See also Douglas Pye, 'Genre and Movies,' *Movie* 20 (Spring 1975): 34.

and even the 'general mise-en-scène of a genre.'[10] Armstrong suggests that the prototypical slasher film exhibits a combination of the following conventions:

1. An introductory murder or an event that evokes future murders.
2. A setting that does not inspire terror, but which may be confined.
3. Visualized killings and killers.
4. A human or human-like killer.
5. The systematic killing of characters.
6. A theme that connects the murders.
7. An unhappy, often unresolved, ending.[11]

This general overview can be supplemented with a more detailed breakdown of the most common elements of narrative, character, and iconography found within slasher cinema (see *Table 1.*).

A framework of conventions is essential for delineating the general parameters of a particular genre, but such a framework is neither fixed nor comprehensive, serving only to illustrate the most typical features of a genre. Exceptions to the framework are commonplace. In slasher cinema, for example, the villain is conventionally male, but female killers also feature, with *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), *Happy Birthday to Me* (J. Lee Thompson, 1981), and *Scream 2* (Wes Craven, 1997) all providing examples. In another variation, the *Sleepaway Camp* films (1983; 1988; 1989) focus on a transgender killer, presumed to be female until the truth is revealed in a shocking scene at the conclusion of the first film.

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[10] See, respectively, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 9th ed. (London: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 330; and Grant, *Film Genre*, 12. The relationship between iconography and film genre has been the subject of extensive critical analysis; see, particularly, Edward Buscombe, 'The Idea of Genre in American Cinema,' in *Film Genre Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 11-25; Lawrence Alloway, *Violent America: The Movies 1946–1964* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971); Colin McArthur, *Underworld USA* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972); and Grant, *Film Genre.*

[11] Armstrong, *Slasher Films*, 1.

Convention type	Conventional element	Typical representation
Narrative	Plot structure	A psychotic killer pursues and murders a series of victims using a variety of violent methods; the killer is usually defeated at the end of the film; this defeat may prove to be temporary.
	Significant dates	Significant dates function as plot devices; these dates may denote the anniversary of a traumatic past event; the killer may return on this date to exact vengeance.
	Death scenes	High body count; creative; violent; graphic special effects.
Character	Killer	Obscured identity; usually male; psychotic; seeks vengeance for past trauma or injustice; asexual with voyeuristic tendencies; distinctive costume elements; relentless; vaguely or explicitly supernatural – evidenced most frequently by strength and immortality; the killer's presence is sometimes represented via subjective point-of-view.
	Victims	Usually teenage; relatively indiscriminate; both male and female; may include a lone survivor who defeats the villain – at least temporarily.
	Adults	Tendency to assume limited roles within the narrative: the killer, the wise elder who offers advice to younger characters; or the ineffectual authority figure.
Iconography	Setting	Everyday locations: high school, college, suburbia; isolated locations: campsites, cabins; the setting may be associated with the traumatic past event.
	Weapons	Bladed instruments including knives, machetes, and axes; seemingly innocuous household objects; particular weapons may be associated with specific villains.
	Costume	Masks are used to obscure the villain's identity; distinctive costume elements may be associated with specific villains.

Table 1. Slasher conventions.[12]

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[12] The information contained in this table is a result of personal observation, with supplementary notes drawn from Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 5-22. For expanded overviews of slasher conventions, see Dika, *Games of Terror*, 53-63; Jim Harper, *Legacy of Blood: A Comprehensive Guide to Slasher Movies* (Manchester: Critical Vision, 2004), 31-60; and John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 20-32.

Many of the conventions associated with slasher cinema are drawn from earlier forms of entertainment, with several writers drawing parallels between the sub-genre and the Parisian Theatre of the Grand Guignol (1897-1962), which presented live audiences with fictional scenes of murder, mutilation, rape, and torture – often by means of spectacular effects.[13] Several years before the theatre closed, a gruesome incident in America brought the fictional horrors of the Grand Guignol into reality. In 1957, Wisconsin police discovered the decapitated body of a female shop assistant strung up in a barn belonging to local man, Ed Gein. Further investigation uncovered grisly evidence of grave-robbing; with the exception of rooms belonging to his late mother, Gein's house was littered with bones, body parts, and decorations and clothing made from skulls and human skin. One of the most terrifying aspects of the case was the fact that the incident had occurred within everyday society. Gein was not an inhuman monster conjured up by a Gothic imagination; he belonged to a local community and his crimes were apparently motiveless. The highly-publicised case shocked American society, but simultaneously provided writers and filmmakers with a macabre source of creative inspiration. Novelist Robert Bloch drew on the case when writing his 1959 novel *Psycho*, subsequently adapted by director Alfred Hitchcock to become a cinema classic and an important precursor of the slasher sub-genre.

     Psycho (1960) tells the tale of Norman Bates, a psychologically-disturbed motel owner who has an unhealthy obsession with his late mother. The film exhibits many elements that went on to become synonymous with slasher cinema, including a killer with an obscured identity and voyeuristic tendencies; a confined, isolated setting; the use of a knife as a murder weapon; and the spectacular presentation of death.[14] In the same year, British director Michael Powell presented audiences with a disturbing study of voyeurism in his thriller *Peeping Tom* (1960). Highly controversial on its release, the film tells the story of serial killer Mark Lewis, who uses a camera to capture the

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[13] See, in particular, Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 23-6; and Ian Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol,' in *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Cinema*, ed. Ian Conrich (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 173-90. For general historical overviews of the Theatre of the Grand Guignol, see Mel Gordon, *Grand Guignol: Theatre of Fear and Terror* (New York: Amok Press, 1988); and Richard J. Hand and Michael Wilson, *Grand-Guignol: French Theatre of Horror* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002).

[14] For an elaborated discussion of *Psycho* as an antecedent to slasher cinema, see Constantine Verevis, 'For Ever Hitchcock: *Psycho* and its Remakes,' in *After Hitchcock: Influence, Imitation and Intertextuality*, ed. David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), 15-29. John Carpenter cites *Psycho* as a direct influence on *Halloween*, the film that went on to initiate the first cycle of slasher cinema. See *A History of Horror – Part 3: The American Scream* (2010).

terrified reactions of his victims in their final moments. The film features tropes that would later become familiar slasher conventions, including the use of subjective point-of-view to represent the killer's presence and a killer who is traumatised by a past event.[15]

At around the same time, British studio, Hammer, was pushing the boundaries of cinematic horror and on-screen sexuality with its full-colour Gothic productions. Films such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Dracula* (1958) were hugely successful with audiences, using graphic make-up and special effects to create grotesque characters and spectacles of violence and death. Although Hammer's Gothic horrors introduced new levels of gore into the genre, the studio also produced a series of less graphic psychological thrillers. In the wake of *Psycho*, titles including *Taste of Fear* (1961), *Paranoiac* (1963), *Maniac* (1963), and *Fanatic* (1965) capitalised on the contemporary taste for suspenseful horror and psychological terror. Both of these tropes went on to feature in the slasher films that followed.

Slasher films also have antecedents within the field of European horror; J. A. Kerswell suggests that the formal attributes of some German *krimi* films position them as precursors to the slasher sub-genre.[16] Krimis are crime or mystery thrillers that were particularly popular from the 1950s to the mid-1960s. The films are typically based on the work of British crime writer Edgar Wallace and feature devious villains, often dressed in elaborate costumes. For Kerswell, the narrative structure and stylistic elements of *The Phantom of Soho* (1964) draw particular parallels with the later slasher films. Focusing on a spate of murders in London, the film contains stalking sequences, point-of-view shots, and periodic death scenes.

The krimis also draw parallels with the Italian *gialli* – one of the most frequently-cited precursors to the slasher sub-genre. The 1960s witnessed a surge in Italian horror cinema, and it was during this period that gialli became prominent, establishing a reputation for their vivid and visceral visual style.[17] Gialli typically feature a serial killer who is being hunted by a police detective; the identity of the killer is usually obscured; and victims are usually killed in a series of highly stylised and intricately choreographed death scenes. Emphasis is usually placed on these spectacular scenes of extreme violence, with somewhat less attention dedicated to narrative

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[15] For further discussion of parallels between *Peeping Tom* and the slasher sub-genre, see Isabelle McNeill, '*Peeping Tom* (1960),' in *Fifty Key British Films*, ed. Sarah Barrow and John White (London: Routledge, 2008), 103-8.

[16] J. A. Kerswell, *Teenage Wasteland: The Slasher Movie Uncut* (London: New Holland, 2010), 38-43.

[17] The word 'giallo,' meaning 'yellow,' was adopted in reference to the yellow covers of Italian pulp-crime novels.

coherence. Mario Bava is widely recognised as the pioneer of the giallo: the mix of eroticism and creative death scenes in *Blood and Black Lace* (1964) and *Twitch of the Death Nerve* (1971) position the films as clear precursors to the slashers that followed. The work of Bava's protégé, Dario Argento, became similarly influential, with films such as *Deep Red* (1975) exhibiting a baroque style which displayed a 'propensity for beautifully orchestrated violence.'[18]

The 1960s also witnessed the rise of the splatter film, an excessively graphic sub-genre of horror cinema featuring visceral special effects.[19] Typified by the films of Herschell Gordon Lewis, the splatter sub-genre is marked by extreme violence, questionable acting, low-budget special effects, and an edge of black humour.[20] Lewis' 'Blood Trilogy,' consisting of *Blood Feast* (1963), *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964), and *Color Me Blood Red* (1965), is teeming with gory scenes, all filmed in colour for maximum impact. Unashamedly outrageous, these films indulged in the type of visceral terror that would go on to become a hallmark of the slasher genre.

The splatter cinema inaugurated by Lewis inspired a graphic approach that went on to permeate the horror genre in subsequent years. Nowhere was this more immediately apparent than in the exploitation films of the late 1960s and 1970s.[21] Many of these films had a lasting impact on horror cinema, and particularly on the emergence of the slasher sub-genre. Rockoff suggests that *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) provided a template for producing lucrative and effective horror films on a low budget,[22] while more viciously terrifying films including *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) demonstrated the powerful impact of intensely disturbing representations of violence. The popular success of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* confirmed beyond doubt that there was potential for profit in the commercial exploitation of violence and death, leaving the doors wide open for the proliferation of slasher films in the coming years.

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[18] Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 45. The narrative and stylistic parallels between gialli and slasher films have led some critics to suggest that slasher films *are*, in fact, North American gialli. See Mikel J. Koven, *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 2.

[19] For further discussion of the splatter film, see John McCarty, *The Official Splatter Movie Guide* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1989); and *John McCarty's Official Splatter Movie Guide, Vol. II* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

[20] For a comprehensive overview of the films of Herschell Gordon Lewis, see Christopher Curry, *A Taste of Blood: The Films of Herschell Gordon Lewis* (London: Creation Books, 1999).

[21] Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 34.

[22] Ibid., 35.

The conventions associated with slasher cinema clearly perform an important *taxonomic* function, defining and distinguishing the slasher film while simultaneously delineating the boundaries of the sub-genre. However, in addition to this taxonomic function, genre conventions also perform a vital *economic* function, providing a reliable way for filmmakers to maximise the potential for a film to achieve financial success. As Christine Gledhill observes, the film industry is 'notoriously difficult to predict and control,' with the potential for profit dependent on the 'successful identification and capture of particular audiences.'[23] Genre films aim to minimise unpredictable levels of risk by targeting a pre-existing audience base; in this way, they adhere to a commercial philosophy succinctly summarised by Wheeler Winston Dixon: 'why take risks when you can play it safe, recycle the past, and reap presold rewards…?'[24]

In essence, audiences who enjoy a particular viewing experience are likely to seek out similar films, creating a demand for the production of more pictures characterised by the same elements. Genre films satisfy this demand, using existing conventions as a guide to replicate formulas that have previously achieved commercial success. It is for this reason that genre productions are often regarded as inherently exploitative and formulaic – enhancing their own mass market appeal through processes of repetition that capitalise on the popularity of other films. Such strategic forms of repetition serve the interests of filmmakers and viewers alike, the viewer's demand for predictability 'meshing harmoniously' with the economic advantages of standardised production practices.[25]

Tom Ryall suggests that the framework of structuring rules provided by genre conventions acts as a form of 'supervision,' presiding over the work of construction by a filmmaker and the work of reading by the viewer.[26] This notion is elaborated by Jim Kitses, who explains that genre conventions function 'as a means both of meeting audience expectations and of organising their experience and comprehension.'[27] In this way, the conventions of a genre can be said to perform an essential *cognitive* function, helping to shape the way audiences make sense of particular films. To elaborate,

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[23] Christine Gledhill, 'History of Genre Criticism: Introduction,' in *The Cinema Book*, 2nd ed., ed. Pam Cook and Meike Bernink (London: BFI, 1999), 141.

[24] Wheeler Winston Dixon, introduction to *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000): 8.

[25] Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 79.

[26] See Tom Ryall, *Teachers' Study Guide No. 2: The Gangster Film* (London: BFI, 1978), 4.

[27] Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*, new ed. (London: BFI, 2004), 3.

conventional elements achieve recognition and assume meaning through repeated use. As elements of narrative, character, and style become widely established, audiences begin to associate particular components with specific types of films. This enables familiar elements to function as triggers for cognitive activity; their presence encourages the viewer to draw on prior knowledge and experience in order to form expectations and hypotheses about the developing narrative. As Barry Keith Grant explains, 'Genre films work by engaging viewers through an implicit contract. They encourage certain expectations on the part of spectators, which are in turn based on viewer familiarity with the conventions.'[28] As viewers gain more experience, their repertoire of generic knowledge expands, helping to maximise cognitive engagement with subsequent films. Genre filmmakers routinely take advantage of the viewer's existing generic knowledge, employing familiar conventions as a form of shorthand expression to facilitate the economical conveyance of meaning. In slasher films, for example, subjective point-of-view shots are often used as an efficient way to signify the killer's presence. For audiences who are familiar with this convention, the presence of such a technique signifies danger and raises the expectation for an imminent scene of attack.[29]

In this way, the conventions of a particular genre can be said to provide a communal frame of reference for comprehension. Tom Ryall elaborates:

> The notion of each genre evoking a 'world', a particular configuration of 'fictional reality' with its own rules of behaviour, its particular fictional trajectories, its distinctive visual surface, its overall verisimilitude or structure of plausibility, is useful if regarded as a background mental set which readers of genre cinema bring to the individual film and through which the film sustains at least some of its levels of comprehensibility and maybe its dominant level of comprehensibility.[30]

Drawing on the work of Ryall, Paul Watson suggests that signifying specific generic contexts enables frameworks of convention to function as part of a cognitive process

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[28] Grant, *Film Genre*, 21. For a more detailed discussion of the systems of expectations and hypothesis involved in genre spectatorship, see Steve Neale, 'Questions of Genre,' *Screen* 31, no. 1 (Spring, 1990), 46.

[29] For more on the notion of genre conventions as a form of shorthand expression, see previously cited sources on iconography. In addition, see Thomas Sobchack, 'Genre Film: A Classical Experience,' in *Film Genre Reader III*, 3rd ed., ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003), 107-9; and Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 86.

[30] Tom Ryall, 'Genre and Hollywood,' in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church-Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 336.

which 'delimits the number of possible meanings of any individual film by activating certain conceptual constellations while leaving others dormant.'[31]

Recurrent conventions may serve vital taxonomic, economic, and cognitive functions, but they are not sufficient to sustain a genre for an extended period of time. In order to maintain audience interest and avoid generic exhaustion, conventional frameworks must also accommodate change. As Ryall notes,

> A genre film is always a balance between formula and variation, between the familiar and the novel. Audiences may have been willing to go and see western after western during the heyday of Hollywood, but they did not want to see the *same* western week in and week out.[32]

The successful operation of genre films depends on the provision of 'difference *in* repetition,' or, the introduction of unfamiliar elements into established frameworks of convention.[33] This strategy ensures that genre films provide novelty and difference while still meeting the basic conventional requirements; the audience's expectations are thus challenged and redefined without being wholly transgressed.[34]

The presence of variation prevents genre films from becoming entirely repetitive and predictable. Although these films may adhere to formulaic structures and exhibit conventional elements, there is virtually unlimited potential for variation at the 'moment by moment' level.[35] This is not only achieved through the introduction of unfamiliar elements, but also through the recombination and rearrangement of existing conventions. For Douglas Pye, this 'variable combination of elements' makes every genre film, 'unique in some respects even if it appears highly stereotyped.'[36] The level of subtlety involved in processes of generic variation has led to genre cinema being dubbed an 'art form for connoisseurs,' where audiences familiar with the generic framework derive pleasure from the appreciation of minor variations within particular films.[37] In this way, the processes of genre spectatorship and analysis can be perceived as somewhat specialised intertextual activities: the recognition of subtle processes of

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[31] Paul Watson, 'Approaches to Film Genre,' in *Introduction to Film Studies*, 5th ed., ed. Jill Nelmes (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 199.

[32] Ryall, *The Gangster Film*, 32.

[33] Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: BFI, 1980), 50.

[34] Ibid., 54.

[35] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 209.

[36] Pye, 'Genre and Movies,' 34.

[37] Robert Warshow, 'Movie Chronicle: The Westerner,' in *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 116.

variation, and the appreciation of their significance, is dependent on an awareness of the wider generic context. As Rick Altman observes,

> Each new genre film ingests every previous film, a process often literalized by the recycling of popular titles. In order to understand the later films, we must also know the earlier films that they contain.[38]

However, developing and sustaining this knowledge may be easier said than done. As Steve Neale explains, the relentless drive to strike a balance between repetition and variation means that, 'the elements and conventions of a genre are always *in* play rather than being, simply *re*-played; and any generic corpus is always being expanded.' Neale envisions genres as dynamic processes with continually fluctuating boundaries; they are neither fixed nor stable, and are subject to continual change and redefinition.[39]

This approach draws on concepts put forward by the Russian Formalist theorists, who suggest that genres engage in a constant struggle to break away from previously established traditions. For the Russian Formalists, the 'defamiliarization' of dominant conventions is what makes it possible for genres to differentiate themselves from what came before.[40] In opposition to theorists who suggest that genres evolve in smooth and organic stages of development, the Russian Formalists emphasise 'discontinuities and breaks,' thereby rejecting the notion that the process of generic change involves a steady forward momentum.[41] Film historian Tag Gallagher concurs with this perspective, suggesting that even 'a superficial glance at film history suggests cyclicism rather than evolution.'[42]

Bordwell and Thompson define genre cycles as distinct periods over which genre films enjoy intense popularity and influence. Such cycles usually occur when a successful film 'produces a burst of imitations.'[43] When the popularity of a genre starts to wane, the cycle draws to a close, and when the genre regains momentum, a new cycle

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[38] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), 26.

[39] Neale, 'Questions of Genre,' 56.

[40] For an overview of the Russian Formalist approach to genre, see Boris Eichenbaum, 'The Theory of the "Formal Method",' in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. and ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 132-6.

[41] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 213-4. For works on a more 'organic' approach to genre development, see, in particular, Henri Focillon, *Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Hogan and George Kubler (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); Christian Metz, *Language and* Cinema, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); John G. Cawelti, '*Chinatown* and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films,' in *Film Genre Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant, 183-201; and Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Film Making and the Studio System* (New York, NY: Random House, 1981), 16, 36-41.

[42] Tag Gallagher, 'Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral: Problems in the "Evolution" of the Western,' in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry Keith Grant, 268.

[43] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 335.

begins. This may appear to suggest that history is repeating itself, but films within a new genre cycle are never exactly the same as their predecessors; as Christine Gledhill describes, 'The life of a genre is cyclical, coming round again in corkscrew fashion, never quite in the same place.'[44]

Intermittent surges in the popularity of the slasher film have led several writers to describe its history in terms of cyclical development.[45] The cycles associated with the sub-genre have come to denote distinct historical eras: a Golden Age (1978-1984) in which the basic conventions of the genre were established; a period of decline (1985-1995), involving a proliferation of sequels and straight-to-video productions; a revival (1996-2000), marked by tendencies towards self-reflexivity; and a contemporary era (2000 onwards) characterised by a surge in remakes and 'reboots' of films from the Golden Age.[46] Examining the emergence and development of these eras will provide a way to demonstrate how patterns of repetition and variation have enabled the slasher sub-genre to remain successfully *in play* for almost forty years.[47]

The emergence of the slasher sub-genre was pre-empted by the Canadian film *Black Christmas* (Bob Clarke, 1974), in which the teenage members of a sorority house are terrorised by an unidentified killer. In a chilling twist, the killer is revealed to be hiding inside the house alongside the intended victims – a narrative device that was subsequently reused in *When a Stranger Calls* (Fred Walton, 1979). *The Redeemer: Son of Satan* (Constantine S. Gochis, 1978) was another precursor; exhibiting many of the narrative tropes that went on to become slasher conventions, the film tells the story of a psychopathic killer picking off the attendees at a high-school reunion.

Despite various forerunners, it was not until the release of John Carpenter's independent production *Halloween* (1978) that the slasher sub-genre became more widely established. Recounting the story of disturbed killer Michael Myers, *Halloween* brought together some of the most effective formal devices from antecedents such as *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) and the Italian gialli: a masked killer voyeuristically stalking teenage victims; a knife employed as the murder weapon; subjective point-of-view representing the killer's presence; a seemingly innocuous setting; and a plot

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[44] Christine Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre,' in *Reinventing Film Studies,* ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 227.

[45] See, in particular, Dika, *Games of Terror;* Peter Hutchings, *The Horror Film* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2004), 192-217; Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*; and Nowell, *Blood Money*.

[46] J. A. Kerswell is one of a number of writers to describe the period between 1978 and 1984 as the 'Golden Age' of the sub-genre. See *Teenage Wasteland*.

[47] Due to the volume of films discussed in the historical development section of this chapter, directorial information is provided only for the first film in any given series. Full directorial information for all films cited is available in the slasher filmography provided at the end of the study.

structured around shocking sequences of violence and death. With the simple addition of a significant calendar date on which to set the action, *Halloween* effectively created a blueprint for the slasher film. In combination with Carpenter's chilling score and atmospheric treatment of light and shadow, this amalgamation of formal devices resulted in a box-office hit. Produced for approximately $325,000, the film went on to become one of the most successful independent releases of all time, grossing over $45 million at the U.S. box office and initiating a series of films that spanned a quarter of a century.[48]

In the wake of *Halloween*'s success came the first truly graphic slasher film, *Friday the 13th*. Directed by Sean S. Cunningham, *Friday the 13th* adopted the gory traditions of splatter cinema to tell the story of a group of teenage counsellors brutally killed at a summer camp. The perpetrator of these crimes is Pamela Voorhees, a middle-aged woman set on seeking revenge for the death of her son, Jason Voorhees, who drowned at the camp years earlier, apparently as a result of the counsellors neglecting to pay sufficient attention. The marketing campaign surrounding the film was intentionally designed to emphasise the spectacular death scenes and excessive body count. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the original trailer, which appealed to the young audience's taste for gruesome horror by revealing glimpses of the bloody death scenes, made all the more realistic by Tom Savini's graphic special effects. Although the low-budget film was produced independently, it was picked up for national distribution by Paramount Pictures and went on to become a widespread success, eventually generating a total of nine sequels. With box-office returns of $40 million, the success of *Friday the 13th* was enough to convince producers that spectacles of death had the potential to generate profit.[49]

The period between 1978 and 1984 witnessed a surge in the production of slasher films. During this time, the conventions established in earlier pictures were consolidated and elaborated in films such as *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980), *Terror Train* (Roger Spottiswoode, 1980), *Maniac* (William Lustig, 1980), *The Burning* (Tony Mylam, 1981), *Happy Birthday to Me*, *My Bloody Valentine* (George Mihalka, 1981), *The Funhouse* (Tobe Hooper, 1981), *The Prowler* (Joseph Zito, 1981), *The Slumber Party Massacre* (Amy Holden Jones, 1982), *The House on Sorority Row* (Mark Rosman, 1983), and *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hiltzik, 1983).

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[48] '*Halloween*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween.htm.
[49] '*Friday the 13th*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=friday13th.htm.

This period also saw processes of sequelisation begin to take root within the sub-genre. *Halloween* was succeeded by *Halloween II* (1981) and *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982), the latter of which departed from the story of Michael Myers to explore a new narrative direction. *Friday the 13th Part 2* (1981) saw Jason Voorhees take over the murderous reins from his mother, while *Friday the 13th Part III* (1982) furnished the character with his now-infamous hockey mask. During the same period, the release of *Psycho II* (1983) demonstrated that the classic slasher precursor was not exempt from the trend toward sequelisation, with the first sequel subsequently followed by *Psycho III* (1986) and a made-for-television movie, *Psycho IV: The Beginning* (1990).

The Golden Age of slasher cinema began to wane as the 1980s progressed, with almost every imaginable scenario and calendar date having been used, and recycled, by slasher filmmakers.[50] It was at this time that New Line Cinema released *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984), revitalising the sub-genre by injecting an explicitly supernatural dimension. Wes Craven's supernatural slasher explored the psychological realm of terror via the figure of Freddy Krueger – a child-murdering villain who inhabits the Dream World, finding ever-more creative ways to slaughter teenagers in their sleep. The film was a huge success, making over $25 million at the U.S. box office and going on to generate seven sequels.[51] *A Nightmare on Elm Street* signalled the beginning of a wider trend toward situating slasher conventions within supernatural contexts. The *Child's Play* films (1988-) featured a psychopathic doll named Chucky who was possessed by the evil spirit of a serial killer. Beginning with *Child's Play* in 1988, the series extended to a total of six films over the next twenty years, with an additional instalment scheduled for release in 2017. A similarly supernatural approach was adopted by the *Candyman* trilogy (1992-1999), which featured a vengeful killer whose wrath was invoked when unwitting victims naively recited his name.

The mid-1980s saw slasher cinema become embroiled in the 'video nasties' debate that gripped the British tabloid press. The rise of home video technology had created a demand for exploitative forms of low-budget horror. Such films were relatively accessible due to the fact that video releases were not initially subject to the same legislation as theatrical releases. Concerns surrounding the violent content of unregulated video releases led the Director of Public Prosecutions to release a list of titles deemed to be in violation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Over seventy

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[50] Kerswell, *Teenage Wasteland*, 144.
[51] 'A Nightmare on Elm Street,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=elmst.htm.

films appeared on the list at one time or another, including slasher films such as *The Funhouse* and an uncut version of *The Burning*. In 1984, the Video Recordings Act was passed, requiring all video releases to obtain certification from the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). This effectively led to certain films being banned from the public sphere for decades.

At around the same time, slasher cinema incurred further public criticism following the release of *Silent Night Deadly Night* (Charles Sellier, 1984). Featuring a killer dressed as Santa Claus – a point that was heavily emphasised in publicity and marketing – *Silent Night Deadly Night* was considered both offensive and controversial. Despite the fact that previous releases had explored a similar concept – 'killer Santas' feature in *Tales from the Crypt* (Freddie Francis, 1972), *To All a Goodnight* (David Hess, 1980), and *Christmas Evil* (Lewis Jackson, 1980) – angry parents embarked on a campaign to boycott cinemas screening the film. This controversy did not prevent the subsequent production of sequels: the film was succeeded by *Silent Night, Deadly Night Part 2* (1987) and a direct-to-video release, *Silent Night, Deadly Night 3: Better Watch Out!* (1989); a further two films were also produced which deviated from the preceding system of narrative continuity.

As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, it appeared that the end of slasher cinema was in sight. Audiences began to grow tired of the familiar conventions present in the films, and the sub-genre was increasingly sustained by sequelisation and straight-to-video releases. Many of the films from the Golden Age were subject to sequelisation during this period. *Prom Night*, for example, was succeeded by *Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night II* (1987), *Prom Night III: The Last Kiss* (1989), and *Prom Night IV: Deliver Us from Evil* (1992); *The Slumber Party Massacre* was followed by *Slumber Party Massacre II* (1987), and *Slumber Party Massacre III* (1990); and the story of *Sleepaway Camp* was continued in *Sleepaway Camp II: Unhappy Campers* (1988) and *Sleepaway Camp III: Teenage Wasteland* (1989).

Meanwhile, the *Halloween* series also continued to expand, with the release of *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers* (1988), *Halloween 5* (1989), and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* (1995). The *Friday the 13th* series also grew at an impressive rate: the first three films in the series were succeeded by *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984), *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* (1985), *Jason Lives: Friday the 13th Part VI* (1986), *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (1988), *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* (1989), and *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* (1993). The producers of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* also embraced the

sequelisation trend; *A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2: Freddy's Revenge* (1985), *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* (1987), *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master* (1988), *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Dream Child* (1989), and *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991) were released in rapid succession following the success of the original film.

As *Halloween, Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* expanded into franchises, the seemingly-indestructible villains associated with the series succeeded in infiltrating popular culture. By the mid-1990s, Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, and Freddy Krueger had become virtually synonymous with the slasher film, dominating the sub-genre and emerging as undisputed icons of cinematic horror.

It was the creator of one of these iconic figures who began to sow the seeds of a slasher revival. In 1994, Wes Craven's *New Nightmare* hinted at a new direction for the sub-genre by exploring a self-reflexive take on established slasher conventions. Aspects of self-reflexivity had been previously explored – the opening sequence of *He Knows You're Alone* (Armand Mastroianni, 1980), for example, depicts a psychopath killing a girl in a cinema as she watches a slasher film – but the device had yet to play a central role within a slasher narrative. In *New Nightmare*, the cast and crew from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* appear as themselves, rather than the fictional characters they originally portrayed. Heather Langenkamp, Robert Englund, and Wes Craven are terrorised by a dark and menacing version of Freddy Krueger that has succeeded in breaching the boundary between fiction and 'reality.' *New Nightmare* demonstrated the creative potential of introducing unfamiliar narrative techniques into the established parameters of the slasher framework, but it was Craven's subsequent slasher film, *Scream* (Wes Craven, 1996), that truly signalled the beginning of a new slasher cycle characterised by explicit – and often humorous – forms of generic self-consciousness.

Scream provided Craven with an opportunity to elaborate the reflexive approach he had begun to explore in *New Nightmare*. Focusing on a spate of killings by a masked figure nicknamed Ghostface, the film simultaneously adhered to and deconstructed typical slasher conventions, demonstrating a level of self-consciousness that appealed to genre fans. Characters within the film were, themselves, horror aficionados – a strategy that provided ample opportunity for intertextual reference, particularly in relation to traditional slasher conventions. The film was an instant hit with audiences, making over $100 million at the box office.[52] Three sequels followed, all adopting a similarly reflexive approach. *Scream 2* (1997) and *Scream 3* (2000) focused on deconstructing

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[52] '*Scream*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=scream.htm.

the conventional rules of sequels and trilogies, whereas *Scre4m* (2011), produced in the midst of a slasher remake cycle, subjected the rules of film remakes to a similar treatment.

In the wake of *Scream's* success, the slasher sub-genre experienced something of a revival: *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Jim Gillespie, 1997) and *Urban Legend* (Jamie Blanks, 1998) returned to a classic slasher format; while *Final Destination* (James Wong, 2000) took a more inventive approach, featuring death itself as the villain. All three films proved popular enough to warrant the production of subsequent sequels. This era also witnessed the release of *Scary Movie* (Keenen Ivory Wayans, 2000) – a slasher parody that became a massive financial success. The film made $157 million at the box office and generated four sequels, each of which parodied a different aspect of the horror genre.[53] *Scary Movie* has become a particularly well-known slasher parody, but it was far from the first film to adopt this approach. Parodies have been part of slasher cinema since the Golden Age, when films such as *Student Bodies* (Mickey Rose, 1981), *Pandemonium* (Alfred Sole, 1982), *Wacko* (Greydon Clark, 1982), and *Return to Horror High* (Bill Froehlich, 1987) adopted a comedic approach to slasher conventions. In a similar vein, although not a parody as such, *April Fool's Day* (Fred Walton, 1986) provides a tongue-in-cheek rendering of typical slasher conventions. The film appears to go through the familiar motions of killing characters one-by-one, only to defy the audience's expectations by revealing the whole series of murders to be an elaborate prank.

The revival era also bore witness to new levels of narrative complexity in the form of *Saw* (James Wan, 2004). Perhaps not a slasher in the strictest sense, but certainly deriving from the same formal heritage, *Saw* focuses on a sadistic villain named Jigsaw, who imprisons victims using a variety of macabre traps designed to subject victims to intense physical and psychological torture. Drawing influences from puzzle films such as *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), the plot of the film does not unfold in chronological order. Instead, a flashback structure is employed to gradually reveal the sequence of events that led to the opening scene. Such a device restricts the audience's access to story information and disrupts their conception of temporal and spatial coherence. The flashback structure is further elaborated over the course of six sequels, resulting in a particularly intricate treatment of a typical slasher narrative.

Alongside such narrative innovations, the previously-established slasher franchises continued to grow. The twentieth anniversary of *Halloween* was marked with

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[53] '*Scary Movie*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=scarymovie.htm.

the release of *Halloween H20* (1998), which reunited characters from the original film; this was followed by *Halloween: Resurrection* (2002), the film which stands as the final entry in the series to date. The *Friday the 13th* franchise continued with *Jason X* (2001), which saw Jason Voorhees launched into space and transformed into a cyborg-like creation; and, as previously mentioned, *New Nightmare* provided an inventive continuation to the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series. In addition to these sequels, the revival period also saw the release of New Line Cinema's *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), which brought together two slasher villains in a crossover narrative. The film made over $80 million at the box office, but also became the final entry in both series, suggesting that the classic franchises had at last reached a point of narrative exhaustion. After leaving an influential legacy of sequels, all three of the longest-running slasher series had now come to an end.[54]

True to form, the end of one era signalled the beginning of another, and the mid-2000s saw a cycle of film remakes surface within the slasher sub-genre. A few years earlier, director Gus Van Sant made the decision to remake *Psycho* using Hitchcock's original shots and shooting schedule. Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) was neither a critical nor a commercial success, but it did pre-empt a more widespread move towards remakes in slasher cinema. The trend began with the release of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel, 2003) and *Toolbox Murders* (Tobe Hooper, 2004) – remakes of films that had been influential in the emergence of the slasher sub-genre. As the remake movement gathered momentum, a host of Golden Age slashers provided the inspiration for films including *Black Christmas* (Glen Morgan, 2006), *When a Stranger Calls* (Simon West, 2006), *Prom Night* (Nelson McCormick, 2008), *My Bloody Valentine 3D* (Patrick Lussier, 2009), *Sorority Row* (Stewart Hendler, 2009), and *Maniac* (Franck Khalfoun, 2012). The original films from the most prolific slasher series were also remade, with *Halloween* (Rob Zombie, 2007) closely followed by *Friday the 13th* (Marcus Nispel, 2009) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Samuel Bayer, 2010). In many cases, these remakes serve to develop the character of the central villain, either by elaborating biographical information, or by depicting story information omitted from the original films. Some of these remakes have since gone on to acquire sequels of their own, signalling a truly corkscrew-like, and sometimes confusing, process of genre development.

Slasher films have maintained a commercially-viable presence within mainstream horror cinema for almost forty years. Demonstrating some of the

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[54] '*Freddy vs. Jason,' Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=freddyvsjason.htm.

fundamental principles of genre theory, the sub-genre has remained continually *in-play*, introducing new elements into a conventional framework to strike an effective balance between repetition and variation. By satisfying audience expectations while simultaneously providing challenging innovations, slasher cinema has succeeded in generating the popular appeal required to become an established bastion of cinematic horror. Central to this achievement has been the proliferation of sequels within the sub-genre. As this historical overview has shown, the relationship between slasher cinema and the process of sequelisation has been reinforced during every cycle of the sub-genre's development. Andrew Tudor has commented on the prevalence of sequels within slasher cinema, asserting that the reliance on rapid sequences of sequels is a distinctive feature of 1980s and 1990s horror, and suggesting that the proliferation of sequels during this time had the effect of establishing the process of 'sequelling' as a major convention of the genre.[55]

Critical Debates

The popular appeal of the slasher film has been the subject of discussion amongst theorists keen to understand the attraction of such a violent form of entertainment.[56] The general appeal of graphic horror is concisely summarised by Philip Brophy:

> The gratification of the contemporary Horror film is based upon tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism – a disposition that is overall both tasteless and morbid. The pleasure of the text is, in fact, getting the shit scared out of you – and loving it; an exchange mediated by adrenaline.[57]

Although by no means a new insight, or one which is particular to Brophy, this description encapsulates a notion which has always been fundamental to the existence of horror fiction: that audiences *enjoy* being scared. In this way, the appeal of the

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[55] Andrew Tudor, 'From Paranoia to Postmodernism? The Horror Movie in Late Modern Society,' in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), 106.

[56] Although this discussion is necessarily limited to the appeal of slasher cinema, attempts to understand the attraction of cinematic horror on a more general level have resulted in extensive theoretical debate. See, in particular, Morris Dickstein, 'The Aesthetics of Fright,' in *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, rev. ed., ed. Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 50-62; Andrew Tudor, 'Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre,' *Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (1997), 443-63; and Matt Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005). For a general discussion of the appeal of cinematic violence, see Jeffrey Goldstein, 'The Attractions of Violent Entertainment,' *Media Psychology* 1, no. 3 (1999): 271-82.

[57] Philip Brophy, 'Horrality: The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films,' *Screen* 27, no. 1 (1986), 2-13.

slasher film can be seen to lie in the tension that arises as a result of being attracted to something that is essentially horrifying. Brophy draws specific attention to the role of psychosexual gratification in horror spectatorship – a concept that recurs frequently in discussions pertaining to the perceived pleasures of slasher cinema. According to such notions, scenes of attackers stalking and slaying terrified victims – particularly when presented using subjective point-of-view camerawork – appeal to the audience's repressed psychosexual needs by indulging latent voyeuristic, fetishistic, sadistic, and masochistic desires.[58] The appeal of slasher cinema has also been explained in terms of a perceived cathartic effect. Isabel Christina Pinedo is a prominent proponent of this perspective, suggesting that the films offer a safe environment in which, women in particular, can experience the cathartic pleasures of 'recreational terror,' providing an opportunity to work through taboo emotions, act out vicarious fantasies, and overcome repressed fears.[59] Others, including Cynthia A. Freeland and Jeffrey Sconce, have suggested that aesthetic pleasure is the key attraction of these films, with cinematically creative scenes of violence and death providing visually exciting forms of spectacle to thrill and captivate the audience.[60]

There also exists a school of thought that veers away from such all-encompassing explanations. Following Andrew Tudor's suggestion that the appeal of individual features within the horror genre can be understood in relation to specific socio-historical contexts,[61] theorists such as Sarah Trencansky and Pat Gill assert that the pleasure derived from slasher cinema is related to its provision of familiar points of cultural reference, and to its reflection of issues that are relevant to the social experience of the audience.[62] Aside from such explanations, there are also those that cite the

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[58] See, in particular, Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (Surrey: Columbia University Press, 1986), 195-6; Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 191-2; Linda Williams, 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,' *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer 1991), 2-13; Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Isabel Cristina Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).
[59] Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, particularly 84-6.
[60] See Cynthia A. Freeland, *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), 180-90, 241-71; and Jeffrey Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death: Identification, Reflexivity and Contemporary Horror,' in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (London: Routledge, 1993), 103-19. See also Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), 193. Although Carroll does not adhere to the notion of spectacle-as-attraction, he singles out slasher films as a specific case in which audiences appear to be attracted by the sheer 'gross-out factor' of spectacular special effects.
[61] See Tudor, 'Why Horror?,' 459.
[62] See, in particular, Sarah Trencansky, 'Final Girls and Terrible Youth: Transgression in 1980s Slasher Horror,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 29, no. 2, (Summer 2001): 63-73, doi:10.1080/01956050109601010; and Pat Gill, 'The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family,' *Journal of Film and Video* 54, no. 4, (Winter 2002): 16-30, EBSCOhost (12856116).

pleasures associated with genre spectatorship as the source of the slasher's appeal. Vera Dika draws on the work of genre theorists including Will Wright and John G. Cawelti to claim that the highly conventionalised structure of slasher films initiates a socialised gaming response; while others have suggested that the primary attraction, particularly in the post-*Scream* era, lies in the processes of fan connoisseurship associated with heightened forms of generic self-consciousness.[63]

Whatever reasoning may be put forward to explain the enduring appeal of slasher cinema – and I suspect it to be a combination of the suggestions outlined above – there is no doubting the strength of the sub-genre's popularity. However, commercial success far from guarantees universal appreciation, and the same elements that have historically attracted mass audiences to the slasher film have also found themselves at the centre of public controversy and critical condemnation. In detailing the development of the sub-genre, I indicated that, throughout their history, slasher films routinely incurred the wrath of social action groups and drew the attention of censorship campaigns. In addition to prompting such public processes of condemnation, the emergence of these films has also incited fervent critical reaction from those who perceived the sub-genre as a dangerous and subversive cinematic phenomenon.

As the production of slasher films began to increase throughout the early 1980s, their endemic scenes of terror, violence, and death soon became the focus of a widespread critical backlash. At the forefront of the stance against slasher cinema were Chicago-based film critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, for whom the sub-genre constituted nothing more than a 'depressing development in American movies.'[64] Siskel and Ebert condemned *Friday the 13th*, *When a Stranger Calls*, *Prom Night*, and *Terror Train* as violently misogynistic, and suggested that these films exhibited a preoccupation with the systematic exploitation and brutalisation of women. As Siskel asserted at the time, 'These women in danger films all really boil down to just one same image, one disturbing image, a woman screaming in abject terror.'[65] For Siskel and Ebert, slasher

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[63] For discussions of the socialised gaming response, see Dika, *Games of Terror*; Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (London: University of California Press, 1975); and John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975). For discussions of fan connoisseurship and generic self-consciousness, see, in particular, Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, 182-97; Valerie Wee, 'The *Scream* Trilogy, Hyperpostmodernism, and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,' *Journal of Film and Video* 57, no. 3 (Autumn, 2005): 44-61, EBSCOhost (20708423); and Asbjørn Grønstad, *Transfigurations: Violence, Death, and Masculinity in American Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 67-8. For dedicated works on fan culture, see Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992); and Hills, *Fan Cultures*.
[64] Gene Siskel in conversation with Roger Ebert, *Sneak Previews: Women in Danger* (1980).
[65] See Siskel and Ebert, *Sneak Previews*; and Roger Ebert, 'Why Audiences Aren't Safe Anymore,' *American Film* 6, no. 5 (March, 1981): 54-6.

films were guilty of directing graphic violence towards women, sexualising such violence through gratuitous scenes of nudity, promiscuity, and rape, and encouraging spectatorial identification with the attacker – primarily by using subjective camerawork to present scenes of terror from the killer's perspective. For Ebert, this last point was particularly disconcerting:

> The lust to kill and rape becomes the true subject of the movies. And the lust is not placed on screen, where it can be attached to the killer-character; it is placed in the audience. The missing character in so many of these films can be found in the audience; we are all invited to be him, and some... gladly accept the role.[66]

The observations made by Siskel and Ebert, and further popularised by critics such as Janet Maslin, positioned slasher cinema as a subversive form of filmmaking that explicitly promoted violence towards women. Such perceptions were reinforced by the work of social scientists including Daniel Linz, Edward Donnerstein, and Steven Penrod, whose investigations into slasher content suggested a disproportionate representation of women as victims of extreme violence.[67]

For some, the slasher's transformation of independent, sexually liberated women into cowering, helpless victims at the mercy of dominant male villains constituted a violent reaction against the rise of the women's movement in America.[68] Widespread critical opinion held that the women in slasher films were often attacked following sexual scenes, suggesting that they were being punished for defying their gender roles and indulging in the immoral behaviour of liberated feminism. As observed by vocal critic of slasher cinema, Robin Wood, 'the women who are terrorized and slaughtered tend to be those who *resist* definition within the virgin/wife/mother framework.'[69] The notion of meeting promiscuity with punishment led to wider claims that an implicitly

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[66] Ebert, 'Why Audiences Aren't Safe Anymore,' 56. Ryan and Kellner also suggest that the use of point-of-view camerawork in slasher films renders audiences complicit in stalking victims; see *Camera Politica*, 191. It is worth noting that not all slasher films were subject to such indiscriminate condemnation from Siskel and Ebert; both critics praised the artistry in *Halloween*, employing the film as a counter-example to illustrate ways of representing women in danger without crossing the line into exploitative misogyny; see *Sneak Previews*.

[67] See Janet Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies and Audiences,' *New York Times*, November 21, 1982, S2, 1, 13, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/21/movies/film-view-bloodbaths-debase-movies-and-audiences.html; Daniel Linz, Edward Donnerstein, and Steven Penrod, 'The Effects of Multiple Exposures to Filmed Violence against Women,' *Journal of Communication* 34, no. 3 (September 1984): 137; and Edward Donnerstein, Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod, *The Question of Pornography: Research Findings and Policy Implications* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1987), 113.

[68] See Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 195-7; Siskel and Ebert, *Sneak Previews*; and Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 191-3.

[69] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 197.

conservative agenda was in operation within the slasher sub-genre, with the pervasive scenes of slaughter seen both to reprimand women for stepping out of line and to reproach the immoral behaviour of a 'mindlessly hedonistic' teenage population.[70]

Perceived links between sex and violence pervaded critical notions of slasher cinema throughout the 1980s. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* director Wes Craven has since suggested that many contemporary critics considered the films to be 'one notch above pornography.' This attitude was exemplified by Maslin, who condemned slasher cinema for debasing audiences using tactics reminiscent of hard-core sexual pornography. There was little doubt that slasher films placed a similarly excessive emphasis on visceral spectacle, employing graphic special effects and make-up to present scenes of violence in horrifically realistic detail. This focus led feminist theorist Jane Caputi to brand the sub-genre 'gorenography' – a term used to denote features that specialise in sensationalised and fetishised scenes of violence.[71]

The sensationalised exploitation of extreme violence and death drew further criticism from those concerned about the implications of repeated exposure to such scenes. Jonathan Lake Crane suggested that the endless spectacles of death in slasher films encouraged audiences to take up the perverse perception of 'extermination as fun,' a notion underlined by the frequent combination of violence and comedy within the sub-genre, and by the glorification of monstrosity in franchises such as *Halloween, Friday the 13th,* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.[72] For Crane, the emphasis on death-as-spectacle in the slasher film had the particularly dangerous effect of stripping life of any meaningful value, resulting in the human body achieving 'a pittance of worth only when it is reduced to a weeping pile of scattered exuviate.'[73] Writing more recently, Gregory Desilet echoes Crane's concerns, suggesting that the 'aestheticization of depictions of slaying, mutilation, and torture risks, or more likely invites, an extremely dangerous trivialization and dehumanization of violence.'[74] For some, these processes of

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[70] Ibid., 195-6; Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 191-2; Dave Kehr, 'Heartland,' *Film Comment* 26, no. 3 (May/June 1990): 62; and Dika, *Games of Terror*, 126.

[71] See interview with Wes Craven in the documentary *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film* (2006); Janet Maslin, 'Tired Blood Claims the Horror Film as a Fresh Victim,' *New York Times*, November 1, 1981), S2, 15, 23, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/01/movies/film-view-tired-blood-claims-the-horror-film-as-a-fresh-victim.html; Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies,' 13; and Jane Caputi, 'Advertising Femicide: Lethal Violence against Women in Pornography and Gorenography,' in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, ed. Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), 210.

[72] Jonathan Lake Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* (London: Sage, 1994), 140.

[73] Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life*, 141.

[74] Gregory Desilet, *Our Faith in Evil: Melodrama and the Effects of Entertainment Violence* (London: McFarland, 2006), 253.

dehumanisation represented the most dangerous aspect of slasher cinema, having the perceived effect of desensitising audiences to the moral implications of extreme acts of brutality. As Maslin asserted at the time, 'Violence in the real world becomes much more acceptable after you've seen infinitely greater violence on the screen.'[75] Such concerns led some to claim that slasher films were psychologically damaging – particularly in the case of the young and impressionable teenagers that made up the majority of the audience.[76] Jane Caputi was among those to suggest that the ultimate implication of such desensitising and damaging spectacles of on-screen violence was the inspiration of similar acts of violence off-screen. In this way, the slasher sub-genre was said to be guilty of 'normalizing, legitimating, creating desires for, lowering inhibitions against, and providing imitable scripts for femicide.'[77]

On-screen violence and scenes of death do not necessarily render films subversive or offensive; however, the perceived contexts, aesthetic style, and alleged implications of slasher violence were deemed particularly problematic by contemporary critics.[78] As Roger Ebert commented in 1980, 'There is a difference between movies which are violent but entertaining, and movies that are gruesome and despicable.'[79] However, it was not solely the controversial content in slasher films that drew negative criticism towards the emerging sub-genre; the conventionalised formal framework at the heart of slasher cinema also came under attack.

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[75] Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies.' See also Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod, 'The Effects of Multiple Exposures'; and Daniel Linz, Edward Donnerstein, and Steven Penrod, 'Effects of Long-Term Exposure to Violent and Sexually Degrading Depictions of Women,' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55, no. 5 (November, 1988): 758-68.

[76] See Jon Nordheimer, 'Rising Concern with VCRs: Violent Tapes and the Young,' *New York Times*, May 18, 1987, A1, B9, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/18/us/rising-concern-with-vcr-s-violent-tapes-and-the-young.html.

[77] See Caputi, 'Advertising Femicide,' 217-8. Also see Chris Domingo, 'What the White Man Won't Tell Us: Report from the Berkeley Clearinghouse on Femicide,' in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, ed. Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), 196-8. For further examples of perceived connections between slasher films and real-life violence, see Karen Boyle, *Media and Violence: Gendering the Debates* (London: Sage, 2005), 131-2.

[78] Violence and death are traditional features of mainstream Hollywood cinema, with several classical genres employing violent set pieces and suspenseful death scenes as conventional narrative components; audiences viewing westerns or gangster films would routinely expect to encounter such elements. An overview of the history of screen violence is provided by Jim Kendrick in *Film Violence: History, Ideology, Genre* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009). For more elaborated analyses of violence in Hollywood cinema, see Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003); and Steven Jay Schneider, ed., *New Hollywood Violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). In addition to general studies of cinematic violence, specific analyses of the function of death in classical Hollywood cinema are provided by David Thomson in 'Death and its Details,' *Film Comment* 29, no. 5 (September-October, 1993): 12-18; and Boaz Hagin, *Death in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[79] Roger Ebert, *Sneak Previews*.

To elaborate, slasher films were accused of taking basic elements from *Halloween* – primarily the notion of a woman being chased by an attacker – and using them as the building block for an entire genre.[80] As a result, the films drew specific criticism for foregrounding such exploitative elements while overlooking fundamental processes of narrative development. As Tania Modleski describes, 'these films tend to dispense with or drastically minimize the plot and character development that is thought to be essential to the construction of the novelistic.'[81] For many, the emphasis on spectacular scenes of violence and death came at the expense of other narrative considerations. Writing in 1989, Andrew Tudor suggested that 'many of the youth-focused terrorising narratives of recent years sacrifice almost all pretence to narrative coherence in favour of an accelerating sequence of shock effects.'[82] The slasher film was perceived to privilege spectacle over substance, with narrative interludes functioning only to connect sensationalised sequences of attack. Processes of characterisation drew similar criticisms, with one-dimensional functionality appearing to replace well-balanced representation, meaningful motivation, and in-depth psychological development. For critics, the slasher's apparently endless procession of indistinguishable, anonymous, and dim-witted teenagers served no meaningful purpose other than fulfilling a pre-determined body-count quota.[83] As Crane suggested, 'it is best to divest oneself of any hopeful interest in character as all extant protagonists are nothing more than thinly drawn stereotypes whose time is soon.'[84] Perceived as lacking any distinguishing detail of character or motivation, both villains and victims were seen to assume value only in terms of their narrative function, existing solely to kill or be killed.

As slasher films found success with audiences and the framework of conventional elements was replicated across multiple films, the sub-genre began to gain a reputation for repetitive adherence to formula. The plots of slasher films were widely regarded as being overly reliant on existing conventions, and, as a consequence, the '15-dead-babysitters format' was held to be invariably predictable. As Maslin describes, 'These movies have now become so crude and imitative that the violence occurs on

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[80] See Ebert and Siskel, *Sneak Previews;* and Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 68-9.
[81] Tania Modleski, 'The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory,' in *The Horror Reader,* ed. Ken Gelder (London: Routledge, 2000), 290.
[82] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 203. See also Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies,' 13; Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death,' 113; and Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life*, 145.
[83] See Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 195-6; Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies,' 13; Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life*, 198-201; and Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death,' 112-13.
[84] Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life*, 198.

cue... the genre has grown so derivative that it seldom comes up with anything surprising.'[85]

The notion that slasher cinema was inordinately reliant on the exhibition of familiar conventions led to the perception that the sub-genre existed as an homogenous mass of indistinguishable films. One vocal proponent of such a perspective was Robin Wood, who described slasher films as:

> one undifferentiated stream of massacre, mutation, and terrorization, a single indeterminable chronicle of blood-letting called something like *"When a Stranger Calls after Night School on Halloween or Friday the Thirteenth, Don't Answer the Phone and Don't Go Into the House because He Knows You're Alone and is Dressed to Kill."*[86]

Such comments indicate that the sub-genre was held to be entirely dominated by a commercially successful framework of conventions. Having apparently 'fused themselves one horrible confused image of sex-and-slaughter,' slasher films were assumed to lack any significant elements of variation and development, a perception which was compounded by the prevalence of sequels within the sub-genre.[87]

To summarise, the controversial content and conventional form associated with slasher cinema resulted in the films acquiring a widespread reputation for reductive exploitation.[88] Assumptions that slasher films operated on a 'very low level of artistic or thematic interest' discouraged critics and academics from engaging with the sub-genre, and the potential for meaningful analysis was generally disregarded.[89] Negative critical perceptions remained dominant throughout the 1980s, and widespread derision and dismissal soon made slasher cinema an accepted 'target of indiscriminate ridicule by the film cognoscenti.'[90] Effectively written off as 'a convenient doormat of popular film criticism,' this 'most disreputable form of the horror film' was perceived to exist firmly at the 'bottom of the horror heap,' a position which was seen to consolidate its low culture status, apparently rendering the films even less deserving of study than the rest

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[85] Maslin, 'Bloodbaths Debase Movies,' 1, 13.
[86] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 194-5.
[87] Robin Wood, 'Foreword: What Lies Beneath?,' in *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud's Worst Nightmare,* ed. Steven Jay Schneider (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xviii.
[88] Tony Williams, 'Trying To Survive on the Darker Side: 1980s Family Horror,' in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), 164.
[89] Robin Wood, 'Foreword: What Lies Beneath?,' xviii.
[90] Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death,' 103.

of the genre.[91] For those who believed that the slasher film was beyond critical redemption, there appeared to be few long-term prospects for the sub-genre. As Maslin proclaimed in 1981, 'The best news about the nameless-killer-and-his-trail-of-carnage movie is that the genre has begun to look exhausted; its moment in the sun seems just about over.'[92]

Such pervasive negativity initially created a barrier to further examination and analysis, but Maslin's proclamation was somewhat premature. As slasher cinema continued to experience commercial success, it became increasingly difficult to disregard the potential for meaningful academic engagement with the films. As Robin Wood somewhat reluctantly acknowledged, 'Their popularity, especially – indeed, almost exclusively – with youth audiences, suggests that, even if they were uniformly execrable, they shouldn't be ignored.'[93] Thus, from the late 1980s onwards, slasher films began to undergo something of a critical re-evaluation. Up to this point, the sub-genre had lain largely 'beyond the purview of respectable criticism,' but after years of derision and dismissal, academics began turning their attention toward slasher cinema, transforming some of the most problematic elements into opportunities for further study and analysis.[94]

One of the first strands of debate to develop saw a group of theorists engage with the sub-genre from a feminist perspective. At the forefront of this movement was Carol Clover, whose influential studies sought to re-examine some of the most contentious elements of the slasher film.[95] Offering an alternative to existing critical interpretations, Clover suggested that the processes of identification and representation in the sub-genre were more complex than previously acknowledged. In contrast to the views of critics such as Ebert, Siskel, and Maslin, Clover asserted that the films encouraged male viewers to identify with victims rather than villains. For Clover, this resulted in a viewing experience that oscillated between masochistic and sadistic pleasure in a reflection of narrative developments which saw victims overcome an initial phase of passive terrorisation to become empowered and masculinised Final Girls.[96] Clover's re-interpretation was followed by analyses from other feminist film

[91] See, respectively, Sconce, 'Spectacles of Death,' 104; Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 71; Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 21; and Trencansky, 'Final Girls and Terrible Youth,' 63-4.

[92] Maslin, 'Tired Blood Claims the Horror Film,' 23.

[93] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 195.

[94] Carol J. Clover, 'Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film,' in *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 187.

[95] See Clover, 'Her Body, Himself'; and *Men, Women and Chainsaws*.

[96] Clover's study remains widely influential despite criticism from a range of commentators. According to such critics, Clover is guilty of placing too much emphasis on psychoanalytic significance, engaging in

theorists including Linda Williams, Barbara Creed, Isabel Christina Pinedo, Cynthia A. Freeland, and Brigid Cherry.[97] Together, these works provided an in-depth interrogation of some of the most controversial aspects of the slasher sub-genre, focusing on links between sex and violence, notions surrounding viewing pleasures, questions of identification, and forms of gender representation.

By engaging with slasher cinema from a range of different feminist perspectives, this group of theorists revealed that the sub-genre was more multidimensional than previously acknowledged. The significance of this development was subsequently acknowledged by Peter Hutchings, who observed that, 'While not usually celebratory of the slasher, there was a willingness here to acknowledge that these films were complex and worthy of scrutiny.'[98] In demonstrating that controversial content could act as a catalyst for, rather than a barrier against, detailed analytical discussion, feminist analysis heralded the beginning of a period of change in which critical attitudes towards the slasher film became less condemnatory.

This shift in attitude gained momentum as a result of emerging findings from the field of social science, where content analyses revealed evidence to challenge some of the most generalised and obstructive notions surrounding the slasher sub-genre. Calling into question the claims of earlier studies which reinforced perceptions of the slasher film as controversial and subversive, Fred Molitor and Barry S. Sapolsky disputed claims that the sub-genre demonstrated a violent bias towards women.[99] In combination with other empirical studies, the work of Molitor and Sapolsky systematically undermined previous assumptions regarding slasher content, demonstrating that female

reductive generalisations regarding viewer characteristics, adhering to stereotyped gender notions, overlooking female spectatorship, and ignoring generic contradictions. For further elaboration on such issues, see Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 83; Williams, '*How to Survive*'; and Hutchings, *The Horror Film*, 203-6.

[97] See Williams, 'Film Bodies'; Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993); Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*; Cynthia A. Freeland, 'Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films,' in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. Noël Carroll and David Bordwell (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 195-218; Brigid Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse to Look: Female Viewers of the Horror Film,' *Identifying Hollywood Audiences*, ed. Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes (London: BFI, 1999), 187-203; and Freeland, *The Naked and The Undead*.

[98] Hutchings, *The Horror Film*, 193.

[99] See Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod, 'The Effects of Multiple Exposures'; Donnerstein, Linz, and Penrod, *The Question of Pornography;* Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod, 'Effects of Long-Term Exposure'; Fred Molitor and Barry S. Sapolsky, 'Sex, Violence and Victimization in Slasher Films,' *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 233-42; Fred Molitor and Barry S. Sapolsky, 'Violence towards Women in Slasher Films: A Reply to Linz and Donnerstein,' *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 247-50; Barry S. Sapolsky and Fred Molitor, 'Content Trends in Contemporary Horror Films,' in *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions*, ed. James B. Weaver and Ron Tamborini (Mahwah. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), 33-49; and Barry S. Sapolsky, Fred Molitor, and Sarah Luque, 'Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: Re-examining the Assumptions,' *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 28-38.

characters were no more likely to be the target of violence than male characters, and that the films did not commonly link sex and violence.[100]

These burgeoning processes of re-examination were reinforced by a developing strand of debate focused on the potential for sociocultural reflection within the sub-genre. In the late 1980s, links between slasher films and real life were flagged up by Ryan and Kellner, who suggested that the popularity of such a violent form of entertainment was an indication of 'heightened levels of anxiety in culture, particularly with regard to the family, children, political leadership, and sexuality.'[101] This concept was further elaborated by Andrew Tudor, who suggested that such forms of 'paranoid horror' reflected the personal confusions associated with a world undergoing major social change.[102] As discussion continued to develop along these lines, writers including Tony Williams, Sarah Trencansky, Pat Gill, and Valerie Wee argued that the despondent teenage experience depicted in slasher films reflected a declining faith in family, the adult world, and – following a post-1990s rise in high school violence – peers.[103] Engaging with slasher films as reflectionist texts enabled analysts to reveal the films as culturally significant artefacts that encapsulated contemporary anxieties. This perspective formed a direct challenge to the dominant notion that the slasher sub-genre was entirely devoid of thematic interest.

This challenge was further bolstered by studies engaging with slasher cinema from a postmodern perspective. Such studies not only ascribed new significance to the violent content of slasher films, but also to the underdeveloped narratives and conventionalised elements of generic formula which were seen to characterise the sub-genre. Although these aspects were routinely dismissed as examples of an inartistic and commercially exploitative approach to filmmaking, re-interpreting their function from a

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[100] It is worth noting that some of these findings were disputed by Daniel Linz and Edward Donnerstein, two of the authors who conducted the original studies that went on to be re-evaluated by Molitor and Sapolsky. Linz and Donnerstein contested that the new wave of research should compare slasher content to other genres in order appropriately to contextualise the representation of violence towards women. See Daniel Linz and Edward Donnerstein, 'Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: A Reinterpretation,' *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 243-6. For examples of other empirical studies supporting the work of Molitor and Sapolsky, see Gloria Cowan and Margaret O'Brien, 'Gender and Survival vs. Death in Slasher Films: A Content Analysis,' *Sex Roles* 23, no. 3-4 (August 1990): 187-96; James B. Weaver, 'Are Slasher Horror Films Sexually Violent? A Content Analysis,' *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 385-92; and Justin M. Nolan and Gery W. Ryan, 'Fear and Loathing at the Cineplex: Gender Differences in Descriptions and Preferences of Slasher Films,' *Sex Roles* 42, no. 1-2, (January 2000): 39-56.
[101] Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 168.
[102] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, particularly 221-3
[103] Williams, 'Trying to Survive'; Tony Williams, *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), particularly 211-237; Trencansky, 'Final Girls and Terrible Youth'; Gill, 'The Monstrous Years'; and Valerie Wee, 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of *Scream*,' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 50-61, doi:10.3200/JPFT.34.2.50-61.

postmodern perspective revealed their role in complex processes of textual construction and viewer engagement.

To elaborate, building on Andrew Tudor's conception of the slasher narrative as a form of 'paranoid horror,' Isabel Christina Pinedo suggested that slasher films construct an 'unstable, open-ended universe in which categories collapse, violence constitutes everyday life, and the irrational prevails.'[104] Several commentators viewed the slasher's depiction of such a world as a distinctly postmodern approach to cinematic horror.[105] This approach was said to be exemplified by the nihilistic representation of violence as part of everyday life, as well as by textual characteristics including the rejection of traditional narrative pleasures, illustrated by the sub-genre's lack of closure and minimal plot and character development; the transgression and violation of generic boundaries, including the contravention of classic horror conventions and the incorporation of elements from other generic traditions; and, particularly in the post-*Scream* era, a heightened level of generic self-consciousness – usually demonstrated through the use of humour and intensified forms of self-reflexivity and intertextual reference.[106]

The implications of such self-conscious features have been examined by scholars including Pinedo, Paul Wells, Matt Hills, and Valerie Wee, whose studies have revealed complex relationships among postmodern slasher films, audiences, and popular culture.[107] At the centre of such relationships is the notion that self-aware slasher films invite viewers with 'insider knowledge' to engage in 'knowing deconstructions of the subgenre.'[108] In this way, the conscious acknowledgment of frameworks of convention

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[104] Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 48.

[105] The validity of this position has been subject to close scrutiny by Andrew Tudor; see 'From Paranoia to Postmodernism?,' in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale,105-16.

[106] On the slasher's lack of closure and minimal processes of development, see Modleski, 'The Terror of Pleasure'; on the incorporation of elements from other generic traditions, see Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 13-34; and on aspects of self-reflexivity and intertextuality, see Michael A. Arnzen, 'Who's Laughing Now? The Postmodern Splatter Film,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 176-84, doi: 10.1080/01956051.1994.9943985; Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 44-50; Todd F. Tietchen, 'Samplers and Copycats: The Cultural Implications of the Postmodern Slasher in Contemporary American Film,' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 98-107, doi: 10.1080/01956059809602780; Steven Jay Schneider, 'Kevin Williamson and the Rise of the Neo-Stalker,' in *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* 19, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2000), 73-87, ProQuest (2142182); Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, 182-97; Wee, 'The *Scream* Trilogy,'; and Wee, 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher.'

[107] Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 44-6; Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch* (London: Wallflower, 2000); Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, 182-97; Wee, 'The *Scream* Trilogy'; and Wee, 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher.'

[108] Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, 44-6; and Wells, *The Horror Genre*, 97.

enables postmodern slasher films to initiate a participatory viewing experience revolving around processes of generic game play.[109]

    The postmodern perspective is not the only approach to suggest that slasher films involve a playful gaming process. This notion was earlier discussed by Philip Brophy in his examination of the conventions of graphic horror, and by Vera Dika in her structural analysis of early slasher narratives.[110] According to Dika, the repetition of formal conventions in slasher films functioned to facilitate processes of cinematic game play. Predictable elements of formula supplied the ground rules for this game, while minor variations generated the shock and suspense that encouraged audiences to participate. As Dika explained, 'the central question asked by the stalker film game is not so much Will he win? but Where is the killer? and When will he strike?'[111] Dika is not the only writer who has engaged with slasher cinema on a formal level. In his recent study of horror film aesthetics, Thomas M. Sipos examines the stylistic components of slasher films, encouraging critical appreciation of the formal dynamics within the sub-genre by drawing attention to the cinematic techniques used effectively to create on-screen horror.[112] Some writers have chosen to focus on individual techniques more closely, with Nick Redfern subjecting the editing structures of the slasher film to close scrutiny, and Wickham Clayton eschewing analyses of the psychological and social implications of point-of-view camerawork in favour of a formal analysis which considers both the narrative implications of this technique and its role within the development of the sub-genre.[113] In addition to this work, Clayton has recently edited a collection of essays dedicated to the analysis of style and form in the slasher film, thereby demonstrating that the formal analysis of the sub-genre remains a developing field of research.[114] In each case, these studies have revealed that even the most

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[109] The perception of slasher cinema as a particularly playful sub-genre is reinforced by popular texts that both celebrate and lampoon the most familiar generic conventions. See Seth Graham-Smith, *How to Survive a Horror Movie: All the Skills to Dodge the Kills* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Productions, 2007); Meredith O'Hayre, *The Scream Queen's Survival Guide: Avoid Machetes, Defeat Evil Children, Steer Clear of Bloody Dismemberment, and Conquer Other Horror Movie Clichés* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2010); and Jessica Robinson, *Life Lessons from Slasher Films* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2012).

[110] Brophy, 'Horrality,' 5; and Dika, *Games of Terror*.

[111] Dika, *Games of Terror*, 22-3, 84.

[112] Thomas M. Sipos, *Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating the Visual Language of Fear* (London: McFarland, 2010).

[113] Nick Redfern, 'Exploratory Data Analysis and Film Form: The Editing Structure of Slasher Films,' *Research into Film: An Empirical Approach to Film Studies* (blog), May, 2012, https://nickredfern.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/nick-redfern-the-editing-structure-of-slasher-films.pdf; and Wickham Clayton, 'Bearing Witness to a Whole Bunch of Murders: The Aesthetics of Perspective in the *Friday the 13th* Films' (PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2013), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17040913.pdf.

[114] Wickham Clayton, ed., *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

repetitive conventions and formulaic structures have the potential to yield worthwhile insights into the construction and comprehension of cinematic narratives.

Although formal analysis of the slasher film may remain a developing area of study, research into the historical development of the sub-genre is more firmly established. Peter Hutchings has provided an historical overview which draws out the most distinctive features of the sub-genre to examine the ways in which their form and function changes across individual films and throughout different historical periods; J. A. Kerswell's account shines a light on some of the more obscure slasher titles, drawing attention to the diverse range of material within slasher cinema; Adam Rockoff's comprehensive history provides in-depth information and behind-the-scenes stories relating to mechanisms of production, distribution, and exhibition; and Richard Nowell's industry-focused study of the first slasher cycle examines the commercial imperatives that helped shaped the sub-genre.[115]

Despite the fact that the controversial content and conventionalised form associated with slasher cinema initially formed a barrier to academic engagement, the gradual development of an extensive body of scholarly research has since established that the sub-genre is more diverse and enigmatic than initially presumed. This demonstrates the value in adopting the perspective of a genre connoisseur, willing to look beyond dominant critical assumptions in order to engage in a search for 'detail, nuance, and innovation.'[116]

The processes of re-examination and re-valorisation detailed in this chapter extend across the slasher sub-genre, encompassing not only stand-alone films and the progenitors which subsequently inspire sequels, but also the sequels themselves. This is because *every* film within the sub-genre shares the same generic properties, irrespective of individual variations which may otherwise distinguish their formal identity. However, in the case of slasher sequels, processes of re-examination remain incomplete. Due to the fact that genre analysis is specifically designed for the purpose of interrogating the *generic* identity of a film, any insights derived from such an analysis are naturally geared toward addressing assumptions and criticisms associated with the *generic* framework. However, as previously established, slasher sequels are also governed by another formal framework which inspires its own set of negative assumptions and criticisms. Lying beyond the purview of genre analysis, criticisms

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[115] See Hutchings, *The Horror Film*, 192-217; Kerswell, *Teenage Wasteland*; Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*; and Nowell, *Blood Money*.
[116] Hutchings, *The Horror Film*, 195.

pertaining to the sequel status of these films remain unaddressed, and consequently unchallenged, by processes of re-examination pertaining specifically to the generic framework. With a generic re-examination clearly insufficient to challenge *all* of the negative assumptions and criticisms associated with slasher sequels, it will therefore be necessary to find an alternative analytical framework capable of addressing the remaining issues. In order to do so, I propose turning away from the generic identity of these films, and toward their identity as *film sequels*.

CHAPTER TWO
THE FILM SEQUEL

Chapter One explored the relationship between the generic identity of slasher sequels and the culture of critical dismissal surrounding these films. However, the gradual emergence of a dynamic field of scholarly research dedicated to the slasher sub-genre suggests that the relegation of slasher sequels beyond the purview of 'serious' academic analysis cannot be solely attributed to their generic identity. In consideration of this argument, this chapter will examine the second part of the formal identity of these films – namely their designation as sequels. By outlining the origins and development of cinematic sequelisation, and by situating this outline within a wider critical context, it will be possible to explore the relationship between the formal designation of the slasher sequel and the prevailing assumptions and criticisms associated with these films. With this established, the chapter will move on to outline the contemporary debates within the emerging field of sequel studies. In doing so, I aim to determine whether this field can offer an analytical framework with the potential to provide a new perspective on the slasher sequel.

Origins

Although the process of sequelisation has become virtually synonymous with Hollywood cinema and blockbuster filmmaking, the sequential narrative is by no means a contemporary phenomenon, and is by no means restricted to the cinematic mode of storytelling. In charting the development of the sequel, Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg reveal a chronological shift in the form reflective of changing 'ascendancies' within the dominant narrative mode:[1]

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[1] Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction,' in *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*, ed. Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 12.

Period	Sequelised narrative mode
Antiquity	Myth
Middle Ages	Catalogue/compendium
Renaissance	Theatre
Eighteenth to twentieth century	Novel
Late twentieth century	Film

Table 2. Chronological shifts in sequel forms.

Budra and Schellenberg's overview indicates that the process of sequelisation has its roots in the classical myths of antiquity. Indeed, several historians have suggested that the practice of sequential storytelling dates back at least as far as the eighth century B.C., when the *Iliad* served to continue Homer's ancient Greek epic, the *Odyssey*.[2] Continuing to develop across a range of popular modes throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, sequential narratives emerged in twelfth-century France incorporated into the *chansons de geste* – epic poems including the *Cycle du Roi, Cycle de Garin de Monglane*, and *Cycle de Doon de Mayence*, which formed ever-expanding narratives around characters including Charlemagne and Guillaume d'Orange.[3] Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, elements of sequential storytelling manifested in French literary romances such as the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle, which intricately interwove individual episodes to create elaborate tales of Arthurian love and chivalry;[4] and in French parody cycles which charted the continuing escapades of characters such as Reynard the Fox across multiple episodes written by multiple authors.[5] As detailed by

[2] For further elaboration on the classical origins of sequelisation, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), particularly Chapter 30; and Ingrid Holmberg, 'Homer and the Beginning of the Sequel,' in *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*, ed. Budra and Schellenberg, 19-33.

[3] See Jennifer Forrest, 'The Poetics of Film Series,' in *The Legend Returns and Dies Harder Another Day: Essays on Film Series*, ed. Jennifer Forrest (London: McFarland, 2008), 31.

[4] Umberto Eco cites such tales as early, and illustrious, examples of sequential storytelling in his seminal essay on the relationship between repetitive narrative forms and the mass media. See Umberto Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics,' *Daedalus* 114, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 167, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025015.

[5] See Forrest, 'The Poetics of Film Series,' 30-1. For a general introduction to French Medieval literature, see Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to French Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); for additional resources on the specific narrative traditions cited, see Catherine M. Jones, *An Introduction to the Chansons de Geste* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014); Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); and Kathryn Gravdal, *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (London: University of Nebraska Press 1989).

Jennifer Forrest, the tradition of situating recurrent characters in familiar plot scenarios was continued by the Italian *commedia dell'arte* – improvised comedy performance art that was particularly popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[6] Episodic storytelling structures also flourished in the Spanish picaresque novel, which rose to popularity from the sixteenth century onward. Detailing the ongoing adventures of roguish drifters, picaresque novels included narrative elements which were subsequently incorporated into Cervantes' *Don Quixote* – a novel often considered to be a direct, albeit distant, antecedent to the film sequel due to its original publication in two parts (1605 and 1615).[7] Sequential storytelling was further popularised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by playwrights including Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare,[8] while the concurrent rise of print culture led to the publication of literary sequels, including John Milton's *Paradise Regained* (1671); Daniel Defoe's *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720); and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the practice of publishing novels in multiple volumes also rose in popularity, with Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760-1767) and Anthony Trollope's Palliser novels (1864-1880) representing what Thomas Leitch refers to as a 'tropism toward endless narrative.'[9]

As detailed in Roger Hagedorn's history of the development of serial narratives, the advent of industrialisation saw sequential storytelling begin to realise its true

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[6] Both the presence of recurrent characters, many of whom became synonymous with specific costumes, masks, gestures, phrases, and situations, and the tradition of using improvisational skills to introduce elements of variation into standard plot scenarios have led Jennifer Forrest to draw specific parallels between the *commedia dell'arte* and the series film. These parallels can also be extended to other 'recycled-script' formats, including the film sequel. See Forrest 'The Poetics of Film Series,' 31. For further discussion on the *commedia dell'arte*, see Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[7] For further discussion on the Spanish picaresque novel, see Peter N. Dunn, *Spanish Picaresque Fiction: A New Literary History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). A more comprehensive overview of the general development of the picaresque tradition is provided in J. A. Garrido Ardila, ed., *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature: From the Sixteenth Century to the Neopicaresque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[8] See Marlowe's *Tamburlaine Part One and Part Two*; Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part One* and *Part Two*; and Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy. Shakespeare is also purported to have written a sequel to *Love's Labour's Lost* in the shape of the 'lost' work, *Love's Labour's Won*. However, the validity of this claim has long been contested, with some suggesting that the title refers to an alternative play. For a summary of this debate, see Holly Williams, 'Whatever Happened to "Lost" Work *Love's Labour's Won*? The Royal Shakespeare Company Might Have the Answer,' *Independent Online*, October 12, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/whatever-happened-to-lost-work-loves-labours-won-with-their-new-pairing-of-plays-the-royal-shakespeare-company-might-have-the-answer-9787888.html.

[9] Thomas Leitch, 'Sequel-Ready Fiction: After Austen's Happily Ever After,' in *Second Takes: Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel*, ed. Carolyn Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis (Albany: NY, State University of New York Press, 2010), 48.

commercial potential.[10] The development of large-scale publication led to the rise of formats such as newspapers and magazines. As these formats became cheaper to produce and achieved more extensive distribution, profit-oriented publishers came under pressure to fill their empty pages with material that would appeal to a wide audience of potential subscribers. As a result, newspapers soon began serialising novels by well-known authors including Honoré de Balzac, Eugene Sue, and Charles Dickens. Defined by Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund as 'a continuing story over an extended time with enforced interruptions,' the literary serial proved to be hugely popular with readers, and was subsequently subject to intensive commodification throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century.[11] However, Jennifer Forrest warns against oversimplifying the commercial development of seriality. Taking issue with Hagedorn's emphasis on the role of newspaper serials in disseminating the process of serialisation to the masses, Forrest draws attention to an important class distinction in the appropriation of serialised forms. For Forrest, although serials in newspapers such as *La Presse* may have been successful in reaching the reading elite, seriality was truly extended to the popular audience via other forms, such as the American dime novel and the English penny dreadful.[12] Emerging in the later part of the nineteenth century – and taking full advantage of the popular interest in sensational subject matter – dime novels and penny dreadfuls were a publishing phenomenon, providing a cheap, easily-accessible form of sequential fiction to an eagerly-awaiting mass readership.[13]

By the end of the nineteenth century, sequential forms of storytelling were firmly entrenched within popular culture. As the twentieth century beckoned, this fact would not be overlooked by producers eager to exploit the commercial potential of the newly emerging cinematic medium. Throughout the early twentieth century, film serials and series played an instrumental role in the development of mainstream cinema, not

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[10] Roger Hagedorn, 'Technology and Economic Exploration: The Serial as a Form of Narrative Presentation,' *Wide Angle* 10, no. 4 (1988): 4-12.

[11] Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 2.

[12] Forrest, 'The Poetics of Film Series,' 28-30. It is worth noting that Hagedorn does acknowledge the role of class distinction in the dissemination of serialised forms. His suggestion that newspapers such as *La Presse* were responsible for extending seriality to the mass audience is based on the fact that the price of subscribing to these publications was significantly cheaper than previous newspapers that had served as expensive consumer items of the privileged classes. In this way, cheaper subscription prices made publications such as *La Presse* accessible to a comparatively wide readership. See Hagedorn, 'Technology and Economic Expression,' 6.

[13] For more on the development of such popularised forms of serial fiction, see Michael Anglo, *Penny Dreadfuls and Other Victorian Horrors* (London: Jupiter, 1977); Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1998); and Larry E. Sullivan and Lydia Cushman, eds., *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies, and Private Eyes: Dime Novels, Series Books, and Paperbacks.* (New York: Haworth Press, 1996).

only dominating production schedules but also establishing many of the conventions, commercial strategies, and critical traditions that would subsequently come to be associated with the sequel.

In a scenario that bears some similarity to the proliferation of newspapers following the advent of mass-publication technology, the arrival of cinema led to the rapid development of nickelodeons and movie houses, which required product to fill their empty screens. At the same time, competition was intensifying in the newspaper industry, with publishers searching for ways to differentiate their product in order to gain a commercial advantage over their competitors. Recognising the opportunity for a mutually beneficial arrangement, Edison Studios teamed up with publisher William Randolph Hearst of the *Chicago Evening American* to produce *What Happened to Mary* (1912) – a story with twelve instalments that were serialised simultaneously on screen and in the pages of Hearst's supplement *McClure's Ladies World*.[14] Consisting of a sequence of adventures that were largely self-contained but linked by a loose arc of continuity, *What Happened to Mary* served as an important precursor to the film serial proper. Following the success of the collaboration between Hearst and Edison, it did not take long for rival newspaper publishers to embark on 'circulation building stunts' of their own.[15] In 1913, the *Chicago Tribune* teamed up with producer William Selig to make *The Adventures of Kathlyn* (1913), a thirteen-part serial that took a more suspenseful, action-oriented approach than its predecessor. Unlike the loose continuity arc that connected the instalments of *What Happened to Mary*, narrative continuity was established more definitively throughout *The Adventures of Kathlyn*, with individual episodes ending in the middle of the action – a strategy employed to bring audiences back for the next instalment. Film serials continued to develop following the success of *The Adventures of Kathlyn*, with the 1914 Pathé-Hearst productions *The Perils of Pauline* and *The Exploits of Elaine* incorporating the classic 'cliffhanger endings' that would go on to become a defining feature of the format. Designed to leave the audience in suspense, these cliffhanger endings proved to be an effective commercial strategy, with one contemporary reviewer commending *The Exploits of Elaine* for succeeding to 'arouse the most rabid interest as to what is to follow.'[16]

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[14] For a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between newspaper publishers and the first film serials, see Ed Hulse, the introduction to *Distressed Damsels and Masked Marauders: Cliffhanger Serials of the Silent-Movie Era* (Maurice Plains, NJ: Murania Press, 2014).

[15] Hulse, *Distressed Damsels*, 15.

[16] Margaret I. McDonald, '*The Exploits of Elaine*,' *The Moving Picture World*, January 2, 1915, http://bigvriotsquad.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/the-exploits-of-elaine-begins-january.html.

The circumstances surrounding the emergence of film serials positioned the format as an overtly commercial enterprise. As Ed Hulse describes,

> The American motion-picture serial was strictly a child of commerce, delivered into the world to serve a narrowly defined purpose. It was born not to advance the art of narrative filmmaking but to increase the circulations of magazines and newspapers. In other words, the chapter play was a cross-promotional device.[17]

The inherently commercial identity of the film serial is discussed at length by Roger Hagedorn, who examines the ways in which serial narratives consistently act to 'promote the medium in which they appear.'[18] Hagedorn suggests that serialised forms are an ideal strategy for developing the mass appeal of new media technologies, and as a consequence have been appropriated throughout history by those seeking to establish a consumer for a new medium. Seriality undoubtedly played a significant role in establishing a consumer base for the cinema. Following the success of the early film serials, the widespread popularity of the format played a key role in 'binding' the spectator to the cinematic mode of entertainment – a process described by Thomas Elsaesser as the 'institutional function' of the serial.[19] The publishers and producers of early film serials employed a range of tactics to cultivate consumer loyalty: promotional tie-ins were produced, including novelisations and compendiums of successful serials; attention-grabbing marketing campaigns were organised, using brash, colourful posters emblazoned with sensational taglines to advertise the latest and greatest serial adventures; and publicity gimmicks were widely employed – as exemplified by public competitions offering cash prizes to those who could predict or suggest the course of action for subsequent instalments.[20]

Such strategies helped assure the commercial dominance of the film serial until the 1920s, when the popularity of the format began to wane and serials were largely downgraded to B-status pictures.[21] As the 1920s drew to a close, the transition from

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[17] Hulse, *Distressed Damsels*, 11.

[18] Hagedorn, 'Technology and Economic Exploration,' 6.

[19] Thomas Elsaesser 'Fantasy Island: Dream Logic as Production Logic,' in *Cinema Futures: Cain, Able or Cable: The Screen Arts in the Digital Age*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Key Hoffmann (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998): 145.

[20] Examples of such public competitions are discussed by Carolyn Jess-Cooke in *Film Sequels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 18-19.

[21] Film historians have cited a range of reasons for the change of fortune that occurred in the 1920s. Raymond William Stedman suggests that the value of the serial as a promotional gimmick for newspapers and magazines had 'eroded from overuse,' particularly as the feature film rose to dominance as the preferred narrative format for cinematic storytelling. Kalton C. Lahue, meanwhile, points not only to a change in audience tastes following World War One, the advent of which resulted in less desire for the

silent to sound cinema placed further pressure on the serial. Struggling to gain a competitive edge in the rapidly changing technological environment, cinematic seriality fell into serious decline, and it was not until the rise of the superhero comic strip in the 1930s that the fortunes of the film serial began to change. Seizing the opportunity to exploit the popularity of comic-strip characters, the adventures of heroes including *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* were transposed to the screen via serials, resulting in the popular Saturday matinee programme that saw the format firmly appropriated by the youth audience. Deemed particularly derivative by critics, the serials of this era were perceived to exhibit what Hagedorn refers to as a 'parasitic' reliance on pre-sold properties.[22] The derivative characteristics of the film serial were not the only aspect of the format to attract negative criticism. An 'extraordinarily formulaic product,' the serial's strong emphasis on 'elementary plots, furious action, and unambiguous characters' proved to be something of a point of contention as early as 1913, when a reviewer for *The New York Dramatic Mirror* complained that the later instalments of *What Happened to Mary* had transformed the serial into an overdrawn thriller where the episodes had 'developed into melodramas of action rather than dramas of characterization.'[23] Indeed, Ed Hulse suggests that the straightforward formula offered by the serial format – particularly in the early years – was commodified so effectively that the creative spark was soon compromised as studios began 'manufacturing episodes on an assembly-line basis, one looking very much like another.'[24]

Although the serial remained commercially viable throughout the 1930s, it was not long before the format began to lose its mass-market appeal. The continued strength of the feature film and the rising popularity of new media technologies – first radio and then television – played a significant role in the decline of the serial over the next decade, and by the mid-1950s seriality had largely migrated to television. In 1956, the production of *Blazing the Overland Trail* (Spencer Gordon Bennet) signalled the end of the film serial, but with the end of one era came the beginning of another and the film

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simple escapist fantasies of serial adventures, but also to spiralling production costs and increased censorship, which prohibited many of the plot elements traditionally associated with the early serials. See, respectively, Raymond William Stedman, *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); and Kalton C. Lahue, *Continued Next Week: A History of the Moving Picture Serial* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964).

[22] Hagedorn, 'Technology and Economic Exploration,' 9.

[23] See, respectively, Ben Singer, 'Child of Commerce, Bastard of Art! Early Film Melodrama,' in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2004), 61; Hulse, *Distressed Damsels*, 7; and reviews of episodes 'A Will and A Way,' *New York Dramatic Mirror*, March 12, 1913, 32, and 'The High Tide of Misfortune,' *New York Dramatic Mirror*, May 7, 1913, 30. Quoted in Singer, 'Child of Commerce,' 63.

[24] Hulse, *Distressed Damsels*, 186.

sequel soon began its rise to become the dominant form of sequential storytelling in mainstream cinema.

The film serial may have privileged commerce over creativity, delivering thrills and adventure 'directly, unsubtly, and forcefully' rather than cultivating a reputation as a 'vehicle of artistic expression,' but this should in no way undermine the historical significance of the format, or its contribution to the development of early cinema. As Ed Hulse argues, the serial not only helped to change advertising and distribution practices, consolidate synergistic connections between mass-media forms, and codify narrative devices, but also helped to make cinema attendance habitual by facilitating the rapid growth of one of the nation's most profitable industries.[25] In terms of the development of the film sequel, Stuart Henderson suggests that the serial also played other important roles, both inaugurating 'integrated, synergistic marketing strategies' and demonstrating that 'when blessed with a phenomenally successful cinematic product, producing a sequel was a perfectly valid response.'[26] *What Happened to Mary* and *The Exploits of Elaine* were two of the most popular serials subject to sequelisation, with *What Happened to Mary* succeeded by six-part follow-up *Who Will Marry Mary?* (1913) and *The Exploits of Elaine* followed by both *The New Exploits of Elaine* (Louis J. Gasnier, Leopold Wharton, Theodore Wharton, 1915) and *The Romance of Elaine* (George B. Seitz, Leopold Wharton, and Theodore Wharton, 1915).

Historical Development

Although the feature-length film sequel did not rise to dominance until the demise of the serial, sequels did exist in the earliest days of cinema. In writing about the emergence and consolidation of the sequel format, Carolyn Jess-Cooke suggests that the familiar conception of the sequel as a narrative continuation grew out of two-part precursors such as Biograph's *Wages of Sin: A – Murder* (1903) and *Wages of Sin: B – Retribution* (1903), and D. W. Griffith's *His Trust* (1911) and *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911), both of which experimented with ways of expanding a story over multiple films without losing narrative coherence.[27] Following such early experiments, the first feature-length sequels began to emerge, with German film *The Golem and the Dancing*

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[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Stuart Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel: History and Form, 1911-2010* (London: BFI/Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 15.

[27] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 28-9.

Girl (Paul Wegener, 1917), a follow up to *The Golem* (Paul Wegener and Henrik Galeen, 1915), and Swedish comedy *Thomas Graal's Best Child* (1918), a sequel to *Thomas Graal's Best Film* (1917), considered among the first examples of the form. According to Henderson, this was also the era which helped establish the notion of the film sequel as commercial 'fodder,' feeding a production line for a 'vertically integrated business model in which the star was the central commodity.'[28] Productions such as *The Son of the Sheik* (George Fitzmaurice, 1926), starring Rudolph Valentino, and the Douglas Fairbanks vehicles *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (Donald Crisp, 1925) and *The Iron Mask* (Allan Dwan, 1929), sequels to *The Sheik* (George Melford, 1921), *The Mark of Zorro* (Fred Niblo, 1920), and *The Three Musketeers* (Fred Niblo, 1921), respectively, laid down the template for the star-oriented sequel which would eventually become the Hollywood norm. In addition, *Don Q, Son of Zorro* and *The Iron Mask* also set an early precedent for sequels which were 'considerably more lavish and expensively produced than their predecessors' – an atypical treatment of the format at the time, but a trend which would re-emerge in later decades as the sequel came to assert its dominance within mainstream cinema.[29] According to Jess-Cooke, the practice of placing an emphasis on the elements of excess present within these early sequels enabled the associated marketing campaigns to entice audiences into the cinema by differentiating sequels from their predecessors in ways which positioned them as 'improvements on an already popular production.'[30]

Despite the proclamations of such campaigns, at the beginning of the Classical Hollywood era the production of inordinately lavish sequels remained far from the status quo. As Hall and Neale establish in their history of big-budget Hollywood cinema, sequels in the 1930s and 1940s were rare among prestige pictures, manifesting much more frequently at the 'B' level of series programmers.[31] Thus, sequels – generally distinguished from the series film proper by the presence of narrative continuity – became increasingly conflated with long-running series, such as MGM's Hardy family and Columbia's Blondie films.[32] Other notable examples of films subject to sequelisation during this era include MGM's *The Thin Man* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1934) and *Tarzan the Ape Man* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1932), each of which was succeeded by a

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[28] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 18.
[29] Ibid., 23.
[30] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 23.
[31] Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 200.
[32] The conflation between sequel and series films during this era is discussed at length by Stuart Henderson in *The Hollywood Sequel*.

further five films at the studio; and Warner Bros.' *Four Daughters* (Michael Curtiz, 1938), followed by two sequels which retained narrative continuity, *Four Wives* (Michael Curtiz, 1939) and *Four Mothers* (William Keighley, 1941), as well as the narratively-divergent *Daughters Courageous* (Michael Curtiz, 1939).

For Henderson, the production of 'hundreds' of sequels and series films during this period serves as evidence that cinematic seriality was integral to the survival of the Hollywood studios in the financially-strained years following the Depression.[33] One studio which became particularly notorious for exploiting the commercial potential of sequels during this time was Universal, whose long-running Dracula, Frankenstein, Mummy, and Wolf Man series helped establish an enduring association between horror cinema and sequelisation. Following the success of *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931), and *The Mummy* (Karl Freund, 1932), Universal gradually embarked upon a production cycle which resulted in what Michael Druxman describes as 'the most interwoven and bizarre set of sequels to ever grace the screen.'[34] Beginning with the critically-acclaimed *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), the studio began a tradition of reviving its most popular monsters in sequels. Often stretching the limits of narrative plausibility in order to accommodate miraculous feats of survival, the Universal horror sequels represented an ideal opportunity for the studio to capitalise on the continued public interest surrounding the literary characters it had made its own. With the introduction of *The Wolf Man* (George Waggner, 1941) subsequently helping to consolidate the studio's catalogue of recurrent monsters, it was clear that the horror film – and the horror sequel – had become Universal's most important product.[35] As the 1940s progressed, the studio turned increasingly to narrative gimmicks as a way to sustain its horror series. Thus, two of Universal's most popular monsters were paired in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (Roy William Neill, 1943) – a film which paved the way for subsequent cross-over pictures, such as *House of Frankenstein* (Erle C. Kenton, 1944) and *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1945), in both of which Frankenstein's Monster and the Wolf Man were joined by Count Dracula. The sequels produced by Universal in the 1940s formed an important part of what Henderson refers to as the 'high-volume low-cost strategy' in operation at the studio at

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[33] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 29.
[34] Michael B. Druxman, *One Good Film Deserves Another: A Pictorial Survey of the Film Sequels* (Cranbury, NJ: A. S. Barnes, 1977), 11.
[35] Bruce Dettman and Michael Bedford discuss Universal's horrors and the associated sequels in such terms in their study of the studio's horror output. See Bruce Dettman and Michael Bedford, *The Horror Factory: The Horror Films of Universal 1931-1955* (New York: Gordon Press, 1976), 51.

the time.[36] In elaborating on this strategy, Peter Hutchings explains that the process of producing films in cycles enabled the studio to make the most of its limited resources, keeping production costs to a minimum by reusing sets, costumes, and even film footage.[37] However, with the studio dedicating less time and money to the horror sequels produced in the 1940s, and with the 'growingly weary exploits' of the monsters indicating a general sense of narrative exhaustion, the films soon came to encapsulate a commercial mentality focused squarely on 'grinding out films year after year, not for story value but simply to feed the hungry maws of an unsophisticated public.'[38] Indeed, for one contemporary reviewer, Universal's attempt to reassemble its 'old Hobgoblin league' for *House of Dracula* resulted in nothing short of a 'cinematic nightmare.'[39]

In a last attempt to reinvigorate the series which had become such a consistent feature at the studio, Universal decided to introduce the classic monsters to comedic duo Abbott and Costello, a move which resulted in the production of *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Charles Barton, 1948) and *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* (Charles Lamont, 1955). After this point, with the sequel format generally 'worn out by industrial practices,' the Universal horror cycle finally collapsed, the Abbott and Costello comedies representing the last films to feature the classic monsters.[40] However, although the Universal cycle had come to an end, it had succeeded in laying the foundations for future processes of cinematic sequelisation – particularly within the horror genre. This was demonstrated when many of the practices associated with the Universal cycle subsequently re-emerged at Hammer, the British studio which was to become synonymous with sequelisation over the coming decades.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, serialised storytelling became less prevalent in Hollywood cinema, with the production of sequels, serials, and series entering a general period of decline.[41] However, while sequels had fallen out of favour in Hollywood, at Hammer Studios in Britain they were becoming a staple feature of the production schedule. After the success of *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957) and *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958) alerted the studio to the popularity of its

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[36] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 44.
[37] Peter Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 19.
[38] Dettman and Bedford, *The Horror Factory*, 100, 75.
[39] Bosley Crowther, *'It Happened at Inn*, French Picture of Humor and Violence, Has Splendid Cast-Horror Film Opens,' *New York Times*, December 22, 1945, http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9E05E7DA173BE333A05751C2A9649D946493D6CF.
[40] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 35.
[41] For a discussion of the reasons for this decline, see Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 55-72; and Joseph R. Dominick, 'Film Economics and Film Content: 1964-1983,' in *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law, Vol. 3*, ed. Bruce A. Austin, Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1987), 136-53.

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colourfully graphic brand of Gothic horror, Hammer seized the opportunity to exploit this popularity by embarking upon a long-running programme of sequel production.[42] Between 1957 and 1974, the studio released nine Dracula films, the majority of which featured Christopher Lee in the starring role; seven Frankenstein films, which established an enduring association between Peter Cushing and the role of Baron Frankenstein; and four Mummy films. The production history at Hammer reveals a long-standing relationship with sequelisation. Having found success in the 1940s with a trilogy of films based on popular radio series *Dick Barton*, the studio returned to this strategy in the 1950s, producing film adaptations of series including *The Adventures of P.C. 49* and *Life with the Lyons* and subsequently subjecting such adaptations to processes of sequelisation. The studio also found success with its adaptations of the *Quatermass* television series (1954-59), first producing *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Val Guest, 1955) before moving on to *Quatermass 2* (Val Guest, 1957) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (Roy Ward Baker, 1967).

Relying on strategies such as adaptation and sequelisation not only allowed Hammer to exploit the popularity of existing works, but also provided a way for the studio to maximise its profit. Following the example set by Universal, Hammer employed the sequel as a way to lower production costs, frequently reusing and repurposing sets, props, and costumes from one film to the next.[43] The sequel format also enabled Hammer to perfect a commercially-successful narrative formula which remained popular with audiences for over a decade. A key component of this formula was the recurrence of popular characters such as Count Dracula, Van Helsing, and Baron Frankenstein, following a 'constitutive-destructive' cycle similar to the model of narrative development employed at Universal.[44] However, although characters, themes, and plot scenarios often remained the same across multiple sequels, strategic elements of variation also helped to sustain the interest of series viewers. In Hammer's Frankenstein series, for example, the monster changes from film to film: *The Curse of Frankenstein* features Christopher Lee as a zombie-like creature bearing little resemblance to the Universal monster, primarily due to copyright restrictions on the

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[42] In discussing the overtly exploitative approach to sequel production at Hammer, studio writer Jimmy Sangster describes how managing director James Carreras once presented him with a poster for *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1958) and asked him to 'write a movie to fit.' See Marcus Hearn and Alan Barnes, *The Hammer Story: The Authorised History of Hammer Films*, rev. ed. (London: Titan Books, 2007), 34.

[43] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between Universal and Hammer, including a consideration of the ways in which Hammer both developed and deviated from the traditions established at Universal, see Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond*, 'Chapter 4: Frankenstein and Dracula,' 98-129.

[44] Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond*, 103

make-up associated with Boris Karloff's character; in *Frankenstein Created Woman* (Terence Fisher, 1967) the creature assumes a female form in the shape of Susan Denberg; *The Horror of Frankenstein* (Jimmy Sangster, 1970) presents a monster with a distinctly Karloff-like appearance, a result of a loosening of the aforementioned copyright restrictions; and *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* (Terence Fisher, 1974) sees the creature take on a grotesque ape-like form. Hutchings discusses similar processes of variation in the Dracula series, which employs a continually-evolving catalogue of methods to resurrect and dispatch the evil Count.[45]

Although Hammer's strategic balance of repetition and variation proved hugely successful on a commercial level, from the late sixties onward the critics grew increasingly tired of the studio's ongoing dedication to formula. This is not only made apparent in the wearily-prophetic response to the fifth Frankenstein film, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (Terence Fisher, 1969): 'The ending is typical. Baron Frankenstein is destroyed by flames, but he'll probably escape somehow for another sequel,' but also in the disparaging review of *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, described as 'the latest Hammer rewrite of the same old story,' and in the negative reaction to *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (Freddie Francis, 1968), widely perceived as 'a jaded charade,' 'noteworthy only as an indication of sagging morale... at the Hammer studios.'[46]

Like Universal before it, Hammer attempted to introduce new narrative strategies in order to retain its audience base over the course of its long-running series, most notably by updating the Dracula films to a contemporary setting for *Dracula A.D. 1972* (Alan Gibson, 1972) and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (Alan Gibson, 1973).[47] However, by 1974 signs of narrative exhaustion were becoming increasingly explicit, with Dracula/kung-fu cross-over *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (Roy Ward Baker, 1974), eventually marking the end of Hammer's long-running horror series.

While sequel production had proliferated at Hammer throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the format had not been entirely neglected elsewhere. This period not only saw the production of the *Magnificent Seven* films (1960-1972), each of which,

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[45] Ibid., 115-25.

[46] See, respectively, *Boxoffice*, 'Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed,' January 5, 1970, A11, ProQuest (1476131791); *Independent Film Journal*, 'Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell,' July 24, 1974, 15, ProQuest (1014670365); Rich, '*Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*,' *Variety*, November 20, 1968, 34, ProQuest (150580083); and *Independent Film Journal*, '*Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*,' April 15, 1969, 987, ProQuest (1505905200).

[47] For further discussion on Hammer's 'contemporary Gothics,' see Leon Hunt, 'Chapter 8: Grim Flarey Tales: British Horror in the 1970s,' in *British Low Culture: From Safari Suits to Sexploitation* (London: Routledge, 1998), 142-59.

according to Michael B. Druxman, 'was increasingly worse than the one before it,' but also witnessed the release of the *Planet of the Apes* films (1968-1973), and the first films in the Dirty Harry series (1971-1988).[48] In addition, the big-budget James Bond series also rose to prominence during this time, with the producers continually dreaming up new stunts, twists, and gimmicks to ensure that each entry was 'bigger, better, more spectacular' than the last.[49]

The trend toward big-budget sequels was soon echoed in Hollywood, where the success of *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) led to the production of *The Godfather Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) – a follow-up which cost more than double the amount of its predecessor.[50] Although Coppola's efforts to utilise the sequel format 'to champion creativity and narrativity' were ultimately successful, resulting in six Academy Awards including Best Picture and widespread recognition of the film as a Hollywood 'masterpiece,' *The Godfather Part II* was to remain the exception rather than the rule when it came to critical perceptions of the film sequel.[51] In 1975, the production of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) heralded a new era of 'blockbuster' cinema, where Hollywood became defined by 'unusually expensive productions designed to earn unusually large amounts of money.'[52] It was during this era that the sequel began its ascent to cinematic dominance, with follow-ups to blockbusters including *Jaws, Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981), and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise, 1979) helping the format shed its predominantly B-level image and assume a reputation for big budget excess. So extravagant were these productions that they began to expand beyond the boundaries of the screen, with *Star Wars* and its sequels harnessing the power of merchandising to provide an early indication of the financial advantages of product diversification. In this way, the *Star Wars* series can be perceived as an early example of a film franchise – defined by Richard Maltby as 'A

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[48] Druxman, *One Good Film*, 20.

[49] Peter Noble, 'Broccoli Goes One Bigger and Better,' *Screen International*, no. 195 (June 23, 1979): 17; ProQuest (1040545593). For more on the success of the early Bond films, see Hall and Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*, 175-6.

[50] The production budget for *The Godfather* was just over $6 million, whereas *The Godfather Part II* cost $13 million; these two films were subsequently followed by *The Godfather Part III* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1990), a later sequel with a significantly increased budget of $54 million. See *Box Office Mojo*, '*The Godfather,*' http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=godfather.htm; '*The Godfather Part II,*' http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=godfather2.htm; and '*The Godfather Part III,*' http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=godfather3.htm.

[51] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 42. In discussing the historical significance of *The Godfather: Part II*, Jess-Cooke highlights the fact that many critics were sceptical about the film's potential when it was first released. According to Jess-Cooke, it was only after the film had received multiple awards that its status as a Hollywood 'masterpiece' was assured. See *Film Sequels*, 43-4.

[52] Hall and Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*, 1.

phenomenon of Hollywood after 1980, in which a movie launches not only a series of sequels, but also an extensive line of ancillary products, including toys, games, and clothing.'[53] Although the practice of creating ancillary products had previously been exemplified by earlier film series – most notably the Universal and Hammer horrors, and the *Planet of the Apes* films – it was not until the 1980s that franchising was established as the preferred industrial strategy for minimising financial risk, a point which will be elaborated as the chapter progresses. By providing viewers with multiple points of textual engagement, the sequels and ancillary products associated with *Star Wars* essentially offered an opportunity to experience a heightened sense of participation with the fictional world – a strategy which ultimately helped cultivate a dedicated fan culture surrounding the series.[54] For Scott Bukatman, the extension of *Star Wars* into a 'multimedia, global consciousness' was a development representative of wider trends evident throughout the 1980s and 1990s, where sequelisation and other franchising strategies were routinely employed as ways to grant successful films an 'extended afterlife.'[55]

Particularly popular during this period were action-oriented series focused on male heroes: multiple sequels were generated by films including *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976), *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979), the inaugural Rambo picture *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982), *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1987), and *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988). Other notable films subject to sequelisation during this period included *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984), *Police Academy* (Hugh Wilson, 1984), *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), and *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989). It was also during this period that slasher franchises rose to prominence, as I will go on to discuss later in the chapter.[56]

In exploring the reasons for the proliferation of film sequels since the commencement of the blockbuster era, Stuart Henderson points to three significant factors: the growing importance of generating revenue from outside North America; an ever-increasing focus on expensive event movies designed to appeal to all audiences,

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[53] Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 583.
[54] For more on fan culture and participatory spectatorship, see Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[55] Scott Bukatman, 'Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space,' in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 249.
[56] For an examination of the relationship between sequelisation and action cinema during this period, see Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

everywhere; and a need to minimise the high-level risk involved in such a strategy.[57] As Joseph R. Dominick explains, when there is pressure to keep profits rising, either in times of economic uncertainty or when production costs increase, distributors and producers become more careful in risking their money. One way to decrease risk and maximise profit in such an environment is to spend less on experimentation and more on 'safer' films – such as sequels – which are explicitly designed to duplicate the success of prior hits.[58]

  With studios increasingly turning to sequel production as a means of minimising financial risk, a critical backlash soon ensued. Stephen Silverman, Leslie Wayne, and J. Hoberman were among those to express their concern about the apparent oversaturation of sequels during the late seventies and early eighties, with Hoberman's oft-quoted complaint about the industry becoming infected with a case of 'sequelitis' neatly exemplifying critical attitudes at this time.[59] According to Robert B. Ray, one of the chief concerns during this period was the notion that the industry's reliance on sequels, 'testified to a sudden loss of resourcefulness' – a sentiment echoed by Janet Maslin, who warned that the increase in sequel production attested to the fact that Hollywood was becoming 'dangerously and unimaginatively beholden to its own past.'[60] With the repetitive qualities inherent to the sequel format seen as evidence of a general lack of originality, some critics – including Robin Wood – have suggested that the proliferation of film sequels throughout the 1980s contributed to an age of artistic 'bankruptcy' within mainstream cinema.[61] Two specific trends within sequels of the 1980s and 1990s are routinely cited in support of such claims: the emphasis on cinematic spectacle which is plainly evident in many of the films; and the apparent abandonment of narrative and character – a consequence widely perceived to result from the aforementioned preoccupation with spectacular excess. Writing in 1991, Timothy Corrigan suggests that

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[57] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 73. For an in-depth analysis of the factors which contributed to the sequel's rise to dominance during this period, see 'Chapter 4: The End is Just the Beginning, 1978-2010,' 73-102.

[58] Dominick, 'Film Economics.'

[59] J. Hoberman, 'Ten Years that Shook the World,' *American Film* 10, no. 8 (June 1985): 38. See also Stephen M. Silverman, 'Hollywood Cloning: Sequels, Prequels, Remakes, and Spin-Offs,' *American Film* 3, no. 9 (July-August 1978): 24-30, http://americanfilm.afi.com/issue/2014/6/archives#.U5XEJ3JdWJQ; and Leslie Wayne, 'Hollywood Sequels Are Just The Ticket,' *New York Times*, 18 July, 1982, A1, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/18/business/hollywood-sequels-are-just-the-ticket.html.

[60] Robert B. Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980*, (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1985), 261; and Janet Maslin 'Gimmicks Alone Can't Make a Sequel Fly,' *New York Times*, June 26, 1983, 1, 17, http://www.nytimes.com/1983/06/26/movies/film-view-gimmicks-alone-can-t-make-a-sequel-fly.html.

[61] See Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond*, rev. ed. (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2003), 124.

film sequels – along with series and remakes – serve as the strongest indicators of a 'wasting and evacuation of contemporary narrative,' their commercially shameless emphasis on technological and stylistic extravagance exemplifying a trend toward 'the attenuation of plot and the related breakdown of character motivation.'[62] For Corrigan, the temporally extended and fragmented narratives associated with film sequels generate a distracted and interrupted viewing experience, where moments and images may be remembered but the associated motivations are forgotten. As he describes: 'To watch and enjoy these movies is not to watch for a story... it is to watch and participate in those moments of special effect that exceed an original story.'[63] With what Jess-Cooke refers to as the 'inherent excesses' of the sequel consolidating its status as a box office star over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the perception that film sequels sacrifice narrative for the sake of spectacle became increasingly ingrained in the critical consciousness.[64]

Significantly, it was during this period that slasher sequels became prevalent within mainstream cinema. As detailed in the previous chapter, films such as *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* generated multiple sequels in the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in the creation of long-running series that were immensely popular with viewers. When the first slasher sequels were released at the beginning of the 1980s, they emerged into a critical environment which was primed to react with hostility. Not only were general perceptions of the film sequel as an excessively commercial and conventional framework already well-established, but Universal's monster cycle and Hammer's Gothic pictures had created a particularly strong association between the horror genre and the commercial exploitation of the film sequel. In addition, growing concerns about the perceived oversaturation of blockbuster sequels had exacerbated the sense of critical frustration regarding the format. If these factors alone were not sufficient to discourage academic engagement with the slasher sequel, an even more powerful deterrent soon presented itself. As established in the introduction to the study, the diversification of popular slasher series into big-budget franchises throughout the 1980s and 1990s resulted in a widespread perception of the slasher sequel as an embodiment of, and contributor to, the aforementioned state of 'artistic bankruptcy' seen to characterise mainstream cinema at the time. Indeed, in citing the slasher sequel as a prime example of the 'valorization of repetition beyond

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[62] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 162.
[63] Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls*, 171.
[64] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 46.

narrative differences,' Timothy Corrigan suggests that these films were at least partly responsible for the contemporary 'evacuation' of cinematic narrative.[65]

Despite the prevalence of such views in relation to sequels of the 1980s and 1990s, recent developments within the field of cinematic sequelisation have begun to encourage new processes of critical and academic engagement. Since the turn of the millennium, the film sequel has entered an important stage of development, emerging in what Jess-Cooke describes as 'more experimental and progressive forms' than witnessed in times past.[66] Alongside sequels which may be perceived as narratively 'conventional,' such as those associated with the *American Pie* (1999-2012), *Harry Potter* (2001-2011), and *Lord of the Rings* series (2001-2003), the 2000s have also witnessed the emergence of a wave of film series which employed more explicitly dynamic processes of narrative construction. This is largely due to the contemporary rise in *convergence culture*, a term used by Henry Jenkins to describe 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.'[67] Convergence culture enables narratives to spread exponentially, thereby encouraging processes of *transmedia storytelling*, whereby a story 'unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.'[68] Described by Jenkins as 'the art of world making,' the practice of transmedia storytelling is exemplified by the Wachowskis' *Matrix* series (1999-2003), in which the narrative is constructed over a trilogy of films (*The Matrix*, 1999; *The Matrix Revolutions*, 2003; and *The Matrix: Reloaded*, 2003); an animated anthology (*The Animatrix*, 2003); a computer game (*Enter The Matrix*, 2003); and a multiplayer online game (*The Matrix Online*, 2005).[69] According to Jenkins, the process of transmedia storytelling requires consumers to adopt a more participatory role in the narrative process, assuming the role of 'hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience.'[70] The *Matrix* series is not the only venture to take advantage of the

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[65] Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls*, 168.
[66] Ibid., 48.
[67] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, rev. ed. (London: New York University Press, 2008), 2.
[68] Ibid., 97-8.
[69] Ibid., 21.
[70] Ibid.

contemporary rise in convergence culture, with the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films (2003-) using similar techniques to create an immersive narrative world in which viewers become active participants; and both the *X-Men* series (2000-) and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (2008-) drawing on an impressive back catalogue of comic superheroes to create intricate narrative networks expanded across multiple franchises.[71]

In each case, the act of expanding a story across multiple films and multiple media platforms results in the creation of what Matt Hills refers to as a *hyperdiegesis* – 'a vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text, but which nevertheless appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension.'[72] Encouraged to participate in these expansive and immersive environments, viewers become steadily attached to the hyperdiegetic world and its inhabitant characters. As the hyperdiegesis grows increasingly elaborate, and the viewer's knowledge of, and familiarity with, the fictional world expands, the intensity of their emotional and intellectual involvement can become heightened – a development which contributes to the creation of fan cultures surrounding particular film series.[73]

Contemporary Debates

Despite the fact that film sequels are still widely perceived as commercial vehicles deficient in both creativity and complexity, the contemporary developments within the field of cinematic sequelisation appear to have prompted an increase in scholarly activity regarding the format. Henry Jenkins, Jonathan Romney, and Aylish Wood are among those to have studied the transmedial architecture of the *Matrix* series, examining the mechanics of multi-platform world-building while simultaneously considering the resulting implications for the viewer; Carolyn Jess-Cooke has engaged in a paratextual examination of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, analysing the ways in which processes of spectatorship are becoming redefined by the 'synergistic activities propagated by film franchises'; and the *X-Men* series and the Marvel Cinematic Universe have also begun attracting academic attention, with Claudia Bucciferro's

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[71] The Marvel Cinematic Universe incorporates franchises based on comic superheroes including, but not limited to, Iron Man, the Incredible Hulk, Thor, and Captain America.

[72] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

[73] For more on both the creation of fan cultures and the intense emotional and intellectual involvement of fan viewers, see Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*; and Hills, *Fan Cultures*.

collection of essays on the *X-Men* films seeking to explore the cultural significance of the franchise by examining the political and social themes running through the series, and Martin Flanagan, Mike McKenny, and Andy Livingstone's analysis of Marvel's global media phenomenon offering new insight into the industrial, textual, and cultural factors involved in the creation of expansion of a transmedia universe.[74] Although the emergence of these explicitly dynamic series has undoubtedly contributed to a surge in scholarly writing on the sequel, the recent increase in academic engagement extends far beyond the parameters of these films.

As Stuart Henderson observes, despite the fact that some film sequels, such as those in the *Godfather, Alien*, and *Terminator* series, have historically succeeded in attracting the attention of academic writers keen to explore subjects such as authorship and gender representation, there has been little interest in the status of such films *as sequels*.[75] However, recent years have witnessed the steady emergence of a burgeoning field of study dedicated to interrogating the form and function of the sequel format more closely. In 1998, Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg brought together a collection of essays seeking to question the existing assumptions about the sequel form. In doing so, they revealed evidence to suggest that:

> the sequel phenomenon is far from boring, far from a monument to flawed and unfulfilled intentions, far from tragic. On the contrary, we have found it to be a revealing instance of the unique and intricate relations among author, narrative, and audience within any cultural moment...[76]

Since the release of this collection, the observations made by Budra and Schellenberg have been echoed across an ever-expanding body of scholarly research seeking to re-examine the process of cinematic sequelisation. Thus, not only has the historical development of the film sequel been charted by scholars including Carolyn Jess-Cooke

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[74] See, respectively, Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 93-130; Aylish Wood, 'Vectorial Dynamics: Transtextuality and Complexity in the *Matrix*,' in *The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded*, ed. Stacy Gillis (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 11-22; Jonathan Romney, 'Everywhere and Nowhere,' *Sight and Sound* 13, no. 7 (July 2003): 24-7, http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/40; Carolyn Jess-Cooke, 'Sequelizing Spectatorship and Building Up the Kingdom: The Case of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, or, How a Theme-Park Attraction Spawned a Multibilllion-Dollar Film Franchise,' in *Second Takes,* ed. Jess-Cooke and Verevis, 207; Claudia Bucciferro, ed., *The X-Men Films: A Cultural Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 17-30; and Martin Flanagan, Mike McKenny, and Andy Livingstone, *The Marvel Studios Phenomenon: Inside a Transmedia Universe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[75] See Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 2.

[76] Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Introduction' in *Part Two: Reflections on the* Sequel, ed. Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 17.

and Stuart Henderson, and not only have writers such as Susan Aronstein, Robert Torry, and Simon McEnteggart undertaken sociocultural analyses identifying ways in which patterns of thematic development in sequels can serve to reflect wider societal contexts, but, more significantly in terms of this study, recent discussions surrounding questions of taxonomy have also initiated a re-examination of the formal properties of the film sequel.[77] As indicated in the introduction to the study, in seeking to define the film sequel and distinguish the format from similarly 'formulaic' modes, such as the series film and the genre film, writers including Jess-Cooke, Henderson, and Jennifer Forrest have begun to provide new insights into the distinct *narrative* properties of the film sequel, highlighting not only the importance of repetition but of difference, progress, excess, and, above all, *continuity with its textual predecessor*.[78] Taking his examination of these properties one step further, Stuart Henderson has undertaken a comprehensive formal analysis of the Hollywood sequel. Through identifying and examining the recurrent formal characteristics associated with the format, Henderson has established a tentative 'poetics of the cinematic follow up,' the details of which will be subject to further scrutiny in Chapter Three.[79]

For those engaging with the sequel at a formal level, the narrative theories of Gérard Genette – and particularly the concept of hypertextuality – appear to have served as useful frameworks for analysis. Defined by Genette as any relationship uniting text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*), 'upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary,' hypertextuality involves the derivation of a text through processes of *transformation*, usually involving extension, expansion, elaboration, and modification.[80] Through examining these hypertextual operations more closely, writers are beginning to reveal fresh insights into the narrative processes associated with cinematic sequelisation. Stuart Henderson, for example, discusses ways in which the

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[77] See, respectively, Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*; Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*; Susan Aronstein and Robert Torry, 'Who's Your Daddy? Politics and Paternity in the *Star Wars* Saga,' in *The Legend Returns and Dies Harder Another Day*, ed. Forrest, 158-77; and Simon McEnteggart, 'Sequelizing the Superhero: Postmillennial Anxiety and Cultural "Need",' in *Second Takes*, ed. Jess-Cooke and Verevis, 171-89. For an insightful earlier study examining the film sequel's function as a sociocultural artefact, see Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, particularly 'Chapter 3: Fathers and Sons: Continuity and Revolution in the Reagan Years,' 64-90, and 'Chapter 6: Terminal Masculinity: Men in the Early 1990s,' 140-77.
[78] Works discussing the definition of the film sequel and distinctions between the sequel and series film include Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 3-6; Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 3-6; Forrest, introduction to *The Legend Returns*, ed. Forrest, 1-10; and Jennifer Forrest, 'Of "True" Sequels: The *Four Daughter* Movies, or the Series That Wasn't,' in *Second Takes*, ed. Jess-Cooke and Verevis, 31-44. For discussions of the relationship between the film sequel and genre films, see Jess-Cooke, 'Chapter 2: Screaming, Slashing, Sequelling: What the Sequel Did to the Horror Movie,' in *Film Sequels*, 52-71; and Henderson, 'Chapter 7: A Formula of Formula: Genre and the Sequel,' in *The Hollywood Sequel*, 144-61.
[79] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 106.
[80] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

prescribed narrative relationship between a hypertext and its predecessor(s) undermines traditional notions of intertextuality; Carolyn Jess-Cooke examines the connection between hypertextuality and the deconstruction of the reader-text relationship; R. Barton Palmer uses the *Godfather* films as a case study to discuss the ways in which hypertexts can offer retrospectively interpretive contexts of their narrative predecessors; and Aylish Wood's hypertextual examination of the narrative architecture in the *Matrix* series raises questions about how nonlinear relations between textual elements can affect accepted notions of chronology and origin.[81]

By highlighting the transformative dimension of the film sequel, hypertextuality appears to succeed in offering a new perspective on the narrative processes at work within the format. With this in mind, I argue that the application of a hypertextual framework of analysis may have the potential to provide a new perspective on the processes of narrative construction associated with the slasher sequel. However, before this hypothesis can be explored any further, it is first necessary to outline the fundamental principles of narrative theory, for it is only with such principles established that it will be possible to subject the slasher sequel to a more rigorous process of narrative analysis.

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[81] See, respectively, Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 129-33; Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, particularly 76-9; R. Barton Palmer, 'Before and After, Before Before and After: *Godfather I, II,* and *III*,' in *Second Takes*, ed. Jess-Cooke and Verevis, 65-85; and Wood, 'Vectorial Dynamics.'

CHAPTER THREE
NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION

Defined by Carolyn Jess-Cooke as a 'linear narrative extension,' the film sequel is characterised by the presence of temporal, spatial, and causal connections with its predecessor(s).[1] Situated within a shared framework of continuity, both the original film and the sequel therefore function as individual components of an expanded narrative system, the purpose of which is to tell a story. The fragmented nature of this expanded system means that the process of narrative construction in sequels must take place *across time and space.* In order to determine how this is possible, it is first necessary to gain a greater understanding of the processes involved in constructing a narrative system within the boundaries of a single film.

Classical Narratives

David Bordwell defines narrative construction as a process of 'selecting, arranging and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver.'[2] According to this definition, put forward as part of Bordwell's historical poetics of cinema, both formal *and* perceptual-cognitive activities are involved in the process of narrative construction. For Bordwell, a film narrative is not merely the presentation of story information passively received by the spectator; it is a dynamic process that seeks to involve viewers in the creation of a story. Drawing on principles from cognitive-constructivist psychology, Bordwell suggests that the activity of comprehending film narratives draws on the same mental processes that are used in everyday life to make sense of the world around us:

> Our eyes, on this account, yield us incomplete and degraded data; yet
> we manage to grasp a coherent, consistent world. Our visual systems
> must select, arrange, and extrapolate from the information we get. At
> the level of cognition, we do much the same thing. In a story, the
> whole of everything relevant isn't directly declared so we must fill in a
> great deal through presupposition... and through inference...[3]

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[1] Carolyn Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3.

[2] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Methuen, 1985), xi.

[3] David Bordwell, 'The Viewer's Share: Models of Mind in Explaining Film,' in *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*, ed. Arthur P. Shimamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48-9.

According to this concept, perceiving and thinking are active, goal-oriented processes; in the face of 'incomplete and degraded' information, perceptual-cognitive activities are employed to discern some degree of coherence and consistency.[4] For Bordwell, this helps explain the process of narrative comprehension in film. As I go on to discuss in more detail later in the chapter, film narratives can be perceived as inherently 'incomplete and degraded' representations of stories – the presentation of story information may be manipulated or complicated in various ways, or particular events may be omitted entirely. In order to construct an intelligible story out of fragmented narrative information, spectators must exert mental effort; they must assume an active, goal-oriented role in the viewing process. Just as the perceptual-cognitive activities of presupposition, inference-making, hypothesis-forming, problem-solving, recognition, and memory are required to bring coherence to experiences in everyday life, so, too, are such skills required to discern coherent stories from film narratives.

To elaborate, Bordwell suggests that films employ patterns and gaps to cue viewers to execute the mental operations necessary to construct stories with causal, temporal, and spatial coherence. Typical operations include seeking causal connections, filling in missing information, and re-arranging events into linear sequences. Central to these operations are *schemata* – structures of prior knowledge acquired through experience of everyday life and other artworks.[5] Building on the work of Meir Sternberg, Bordwell suggests that spectators use schematic structures to 'extrapolate beyond the information given'; in other words, schemata are drawn upon to form inferences and to frame and test hypotheses.[6] These processes enable viewers to navigate their way through the viewing experience. There are many different types of schemata, but arguably the most pertinent to film viewing is the 'canonical story' structure derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*.[7] Bordwell defines this structure as follows: introduction of settings and characters–explanation of a state of affairs–complicating action–ensuing events–outcome–ending.[8] This basic narrative schema, acquired as a result of experience gained from engaging with other artworks, acts as a referential framework for viewers, facilitating the formation of expectations about the developing

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[4] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 31.

[5] Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1988), 30.

[6] David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008), 137. See also Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

[7] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996).

[8] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 35.

film, while also providing a guide for organising narrative information into a coherent story.

It might be assumed that the information provided by a classical narrative film requires minimal organisation on the part of the viewer – after all, such films are widely associated with the sense of 'uncluttered clarity' that comes from presenting narrative action in an unambiguous and unified fashion.[9] Featuring linear chains of cause-and-effect structured around goal-oriented protagonists, well-defined segments and scenes linked by appointments, deadlines, and other clearly-discerned motivations, and the successful resolution of causal chains, classical Hollywood narratives are geared toward ensuring that causal, temporal, and spatial connections can be recognised and understood with ease.[10] However, despite the fact that these narrative strategies are so evidently geared towards unity and coherence, subjecting the constituent parts of the narrative system to closer scrutiny soon reveals that the process of storytelling in classical films is not as straightforward as it seems.

The classical film narrative is comprised of three primary elements: story, plot, and style. Following the distinction established by the Russian Formalist theorists, Bordwell envisions story (fabula) as the *logically and chronologically coherent chain of events constructed in the mind of the viewer*; and plot (syuzhet/sujet) as the *way in which story events are explicitly arranged and presented in the film*. Meir Sternberg elaborates: 'the fabula involves what happens in the work as (re)arranged in the "objective" order of occurrence, while the sujet involves what happens in the order, angle, and patterns of presentation actually encountered.'[11] The plot can present story information in ways which are more straightforward, or less so, by interacting with the stylistic system of a film. Employing cinematic devices and techniques such as cinematography, editing, sound, and mise-en-scène enables the plot to control the flow of story information. Depending on the stylistic choices made, the plot can either progress story construction by supplying cues that enable viewers easily to infer the causal, temporal, and spatial relations between scenes; or it can complicate or delay story construction by manipulating, distorting, and obscuring these connections. Bordwell defines this process of information-regulation as *narration*: 'the process

[9] Noël Carroll, 'The Power of Movies,' in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 87.
[10] See Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 156-233; and David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, new. ed. (London: Routledge, 1988), 1-87.
[11] Sternberg, *Expositional Modes*, 8-9.

whereby the film's syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channelling the spectator's construction of the fabula.'[12]

The complexity of cinematic narration is dependent upon the formal strategies employed to control the flow of story information. Drawing on work by Sternberg, Bordwell suggests that this process is governed by three principles: knowledgeability, self-consciousness, and communicativeness.[13] These principles determine the range, depth, and pertinence of story information available to the viewer at any particular moment. Manipulating the range of information (withholding or revealing details) usually serves to generate surprise, curiosity, or suspense; manipulating the depth of story information (providing objective or subjective access to characters' psychological states) can alter the viewer's perception of a character, ultimately influencing their expectations about the developing film. The plot can choose to regulate the presentation of story information at a causal, spatial, or temporal level. The viewer's knowledge of the spatial dynamics pertaining to a particular narrative world, for example, is determined by the information selected for presentation on screen. Anything that may – or may not – lie beyond these boundaries must be determined through processes of conjecture and inference. Julian Hochberg suggests that combining these cognitive processes with cues provided by the film allows viewers to create mental maps which enable them to orient themselves within the virtual space depicted in the film, thereby facilitating the logical inference of spatial constructs located beyond the boundaries of the screen.[14] To take a second example, the plot can complicate the process of narrative construction by refusing to present all of the story events as they occur. This obstructs the viewer's attempts to create coherent chains of cause-and-effect by creating gaps in the timeline. When such temporal gaps occur, viewers must make assumptions and inferences about the missing information, thereby exerting mental effort in the attempt to assemble an intelligible chain of events. The temporal dimension of narrative construction has been comprehensively discussed by Gérard Genette in his study of literary narratives.[15] Bordwell applies Genette's concepts to film in order to examine three aspects of narrative time: order, duration, and frequency.[16] The plot can manipulate these aspects in a variety of ways: the chronological order of story events

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[12] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 53.
[13] Ibid., 57-61.
[14] Julian Hochberg, 'Representation of Motion and Space in Video and Cinematic Displays,' in *Handbook of Perception and Human Performance: Vol. 1. Sensory Processing and Perception*, ed. K. R. Boff, R. Kaufman, and J. P. Thomas (Chichester: Wiley, 1986), 22.1–22.64.
[15] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
[16] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 77-81.

can be rearranged (flashbacks, flashforwards); the duration of story events can be expanded or condensed (slow-motion effects, montage sequences); events can be omitted entirely (ellipses); and events can be repeated any number of times (for example, in flashbacks).[17]

Temporal distortions, narrative gaps, and other complicating devices defy the viewer's schematic templates, posing a challenge to their expectations. When faced with such challenges, viewers seek explanations by considering the *purpose* of the device. Building on concepts from Russian Formalist theory, and particularly on the work of Boris Tomashevsky, Boris Eichenbaum, and Yuri Tynianov,[18] both David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson suggest that the significance of an individual formal device can be determined by examining its *function* and *motivation* within the context of the overall narrative.[19] Thus, a device may be motivated realistically (plausible according to real-world logic), compositionally (relevant to story necessity), artistically (present simply for its own sake; occurs only when the other three types of motivation are withheld), or transtextually (appeals to conventions of other artworks; this type of motivation can only be discerned by those with prior knowledge of the relevant formal context being evoked). By identifying the type of motivation at work, the viewer can better understand the purpose of a complicating device, thereby helping to render such a device coherent.

In addition to using devices which complicate the delivery of story information, narrative films also employ strategies of *retardation* and *redundancy* intentionally to delay the progression of the story. Derived from the work of Victor Shklovsky,[20] the concept of retardation, or 'stairstep construction,' refers to the process of periodically interrupting story progression with digressive events that serve to prolong the narrative and delay the fulfilment of expectations. Redundancy refers to repetitions within the narrative that serve to reinforce assumptions, inferences, and hypotheses about the story

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[17] For an early account of flashbacks and flashforwards in film, see Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (London: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), https://archive.org/details/photoplayapsycho005300mbp. Münsterberg precedes cognitive film theory by decades in his account of the mental processes employed by film viewers in the comprehension of cinematic devices. He recognises 'cut-backs' to be a uniquely cinematic strategy for representing processes of memory, attention, and imagination. For a comprehensive historical survey of the form and function of the flashback device in film, see also Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[18] See Boris Tomashevsky, 'Thematics,' in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. and ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 61-95; Boris Eichenbaum, 'The Theory of the "Formal Method",' in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. and ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, 99-139; and Yuri Tynianov, 'On Literary Evolution,' in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pormorska, trans. C. A. Luplow (London: MIT Press, 1971), 66-78.

[19] See Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 36; and Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 15-21.

[20] Victor Shklovsky, 'Sterne's *Tristam Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary,' in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. and ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, 27. See also Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 37-8.

information.[21] In most films, complicating and delaying devices operate alongside devices that promote coherence and progression. Kristin Thompson describes this duality as 'a tension between those strategies that are included to make the form easily perceptible and comprehensible and those that are used to impede perception and understanding.'[22] For Thompson, this tension is essential to the creation of an enjoyable viewing experience, with cognitively-active, goal-oriented viewers taking pleasure in the mental effort required to overcome devices which complicate processes of perception and comprehension by 'roughening' the narrative form.[23]

The tension between complication and coherence performs a distinctive function in the 'highly motivated' narratives associated with classical films. In most highly-motivated films, the purpose of formal devices can be easily discerned, leading to a general impression of narrative coherence and unity. However, highly-motivated films also contain the types of complicating and delaying devices that are common to most cinematic narratives. The combination of these strategies results in a situation where the highly-motivated devices designed to ease the process of narrative comprehension actively conceal the complicating strategies of delay which are operating within the film. According to Kristin Thompson, this 'double layering of motivation is what makes classical films complex, while at the same time lending them an appearance of simplicity.'[24] In this way, it becomes clear that the process of filmic narration – even in the most 'straightforward' films – serves both to cue *and* to constrain the mental activities of story construction.[25] Highly-motivated devices progress the story by providing easily-discernible cues, while complicating devices impede progress by prompting viewers to exert increased mental effort. This creates a viewing experience which is challenging, yet ultimately enjoyable and rewarding. At the same time, delaying tactics, such as retardation and redundancy, enhance spectatorial pleasure by prolonging engagement with the cinematic narrative. In order successfully to overcome complicating devices, delaying tactics, and other interruptions to narrative unity, viewers must be both active and adaptive – they must be prepared to demonstrate flexibility to construct the story of a film, exerting appropriate levels of mental effort in accordance with the demands of the narrative. As discussed above, even the most classical narrative films present story information in a fragmented and degraded form;

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[21] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 55-7.
[22] Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 36.
[23] Ibid., 36-7.
[24] Ibid., 52.
[25] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 49.

73

existing familiarity with these films may render viewers more fully prepared to embark on the activity of story construction, but the cognitive operations required to complete this task 'are no less active for being habitual and familiar.'[26] In this way, it is possible to assert that the notion of narrative complexity is not only determined by the arrangement of formal devices but also by the mental activities required to comprehend this arrangement.

Complex Narratives

Although classical narrative films may harbour 'hidden' levels of complexity, not all films are so subtle in their treatment of obstructive narrative devices. Explicitly complex films place specific emphasis on these devices, overtly employing complications and delays to tell stories in more dynamic ways than may be expected within mainstream cinema. By examining the constructive strategies employed by these films, and by outlining the cognitive activities required to discern coherence in such circumstances, it becomes possible to reveal the implications of less conventional narrative structures on the viewer's activity and experience.

David Bordwell suggests three periods during which practices of 'dynamic storytelling' were particularly prolific within mainstream cinema: 1940 to 1955; the mid-1960s to mid-1970s; and the 1990s onwards.[27] According to Bordwell, the period between 1940 and 1955 was a particularly rich era for dynamic storytelling in Hollywood: flashback devices featured in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *The Locket* (John Brahm, 1946), and *Stage Fright* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1950); dream sequences were employed in *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944); misleading plots shaped the narrative of pictures including *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945); and innovative treatments of focalization added a creative edge to films including *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947). Innovative strategies were also employed to explore the role of the narrator: *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946) and *All About Eve* (Joseph Mankiewicz 1950) were among the films to employ multiple narrators; *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) was narrated by a deceased character; and *Susan Slept Here* (Frank Tashlin, 1954) employed a non-human narrator in the form of an Oscar

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[26] Ibid., 164.
[27] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (London: University of California Press, 2006), 72-3.

74

statuette. Such imaginative narrational techniques demonstrated the extent to which mainstream Hollywood cinema was willing to embrace experimental approaches to storytelling. This was confirmed when a second wave of narrative experimentation saw Hollywood adopt influences from European art cinema. During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, mainstream filmmakers began to incorporate loose narrative structures, elliptical flashbacks, character and conceptual ambiguity, and self-conscious narration, creating an 'oblique and ambiguous form of storytelling' which was exemplified by films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (Sydney Pollack, 1969).[28]

Todd Berliner suggests that the art-cinema influences evident in Hollywood during this period resulted in an era defined by moments of narrative incoherence and elements of narrative perversity.[29] Martin Scorsese, Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, and William Friedkin were among the filmmakers to embrace 'perverse' narrative devices – defined by Berliner as elements which represent a 'counterproductive turn away from a narrative's linear course.' Story detours, dead ends, logical and characterological inconsistencies, distracting stylistic ornamentation and discordances, irresolutions, ambiguities, and other impediments to straightforward narration exemplify what Berliner refers to as the key modes of perverse narration in 1970s cinema: *narrative frustration*, *genre deviation*, and *conceptual incongruity*.[30] For Berliner, this 'Golden Age' of perversity led to narrative incongruity becoming an established practice within mainstream cinema. Not only did the perversities of the period enable a widespread audience to become familiar with alternative narrative strategies, but they also encouraged filmmakers to push the boundaries of classical Hollywood cinema, thereby establishing an environment in which incongruous elements were allowed to flourish.[31]

Following the perversities of the 1960s and 1970s, a third period of dynamic storytelling emerged in the 1990s, when mainstream narrative cinema witnessed a surge in 'flashy nonconformity.'[32] Parallel timelines, temporal loops, tangled chronologies, spatial disorientation, and plots woven around multiple protagonists signalled a period of narrative complexity that mounted a serious challenge to the norms of classical

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[28] Ibid., 72.
[29] See Todd Berliner, *Hollywood Incoherent: Narration in Seventies Cinema* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 9-10. Berliner uses 'incoherence' in the literal sense to mean 'a lack of connectedness or integration among different elements'; this is defined in contrast to 'coherence' which, 'refers to a congruity of elements, the separate parts united to form a harmonious whole.' Ibid., 25.
[30] Ibid., 9-10; 53.
[31] Ibid., 217-18.
[32] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 73.

Hollywood storytelling. The 'forking-path' film represents one form of dynamic narrative that became particularly prolific during this period. In forking-path films, the narrative proceeds from a fixed point and presents mutually exclusive lines of action leading to different futures.[33] This type of narrative is exemplified by *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998), in which the action splits into two lines running in parallel towards different futures, and by films including *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993) and *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998) in which a central protagonist repeats events in a temporal loop, resulting in different futures each time. Another type of dynamic narrative prevalent in mainstream cinema at this time was the 'network narrative.' Also known as the ensemble or converging-fate film, network narratives usually involve multiple protagonists whose storylines are intertwined in some way, either taking place in the same locale, as in *Dazed and Confused* (Richard Linklater, 1993), *Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999), *Gosford Park* (Robert Altman, 2001), and *Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004), or in different times and/or locations, as in *Traffic* (Stephen Soderbergh, 2000) and *The Hours* (Stephen Daldry, 2002).

Forking-path films and network narratives can be perceived as sub-categories of the 'puzzle film' – a term Warren Buckland uses to describe films that 'embrace non-linearity, time loops, and fragmented spatio-temporal reality.'[34] Exemplified by pictures such as *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995), *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1996), *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001), *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001), *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), and *The Butterfly Effect* (Eric Bress, 2004), puzzle films typically obstruct the process of story construction by misleading the viewer, often by withholding salient narrative information without their knowledge.[35] In order to achieve this effect, puzzle films typically blur the boundaries between different levels of reality, or exhibit plots which are riddled with gaps, deception, labyrinthine structures, ambiguity, and overt

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[33] David Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' in 'The American Production of French Theory,' special issue 97, *SubStance* 31, no. 1 (2002): 89, doi: 10.1353/sub.2002.0004. The term 'forking-path' refers to Jorge Luis Borges' short story, *The Garden of Forking Paths*. Originally written by the Argentinean author in 1941, the story recounts the tale of Ts'ui Pen, a sage tasked with writing a labyrinthine novel.
[34] Warren Buckland, 'Introduction: Puzzle Plots,' in *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, ed. Warren Buckland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 6. For further discussion on the notion of the puzzle film, see this and Buckland's other edited collection, *Hollywood Puzzle Films* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).
[35] Elliot Panek, 'The Poet and the Detective: Defining the Psychological Puzzle Film,' in 'Complex Narratives,' ed. Janet Staiger, special issue, *Film Criticism* 31, no. 1-2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 65, EBSCOhost (23005751).

coincidences.[36] In discussing the alternative plot formations typically associated with the puzzle film, Charles Ramírez Berg delineates three general categories of narrative nonconformity: plots based on the number of protagonists, nonlinear plots based on the re-ordering of time, and plots that deviate from classical rules of subjectivity, causality, and self-referential narration.[37]

The periods of dynamic storytelling discussed by Bordwell demonstrate the different ways in which narrative complexity has been accommodated by mainstream cinema. Each of the eras subject to scrutiny incorporates formal devices explicitly designed to disrupt narrative unity by obstructing coherence on the levels of causality, time, and space. Such obstructions have inevitable implications for the viewing experience, as spectators face the challenge of discerning a coherent story in the midst of disruption, discontinuity, and disunity. However, according to Berliner, obstructive devices undoubtedly frustrate the viewer's expectations, but this does not necessarily detract from a satisfactory viewing experience. This is evidenced in the continued popularity of complex narratives in mainstream cinema, with the success of films including *Déjà Vu* (Tony Scott, 2006), *Source Code* (Duncan Jones, 2011), *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), and *Edge of Tomorrow* (Doug Liman, 2014) demonstrating that viewers are not deterred by the prospect of engaging with alternative plot formations. Berliner outlines two general hypotheses suggesting reasons why obstructive devices may result in a viewing experience that is more gratifying than expected:

1. Narrative incongruities stimulate a process of free association and creative thinking that can enable viewers to reconcile incongruous story information.

2. Narrative incongruities, when somehow resolvable – through revisions in story logic or even through specious reasoning – exhilarate our aesthetic response to a classical Hollywood movie: They add variety to our cognitive input; stimulate our imaginations, curiosity, and creative problem-solving capacities; and liberate our thinking from the limitations of precise logic and close scrutiny.[38]

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[36] Buckland, 'Puzzle Plots,' 6.
[37] Charles Ramírez Berg, 'A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots in Recent Films: Classifying the "Tarantino Effect",' in *Film Criticism* 31, no. 1-2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 5-61, EBSCOhost (23005750). A transcription of Berg's structural taxonomy of alternative plots is provided in Appendix One: A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots.
[38] Todd Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling and Aesthetic Pleasure,' in *Psychocinematics*, ed. Arthur P. Shimamura, 200.

For Berliner, narrative disruptions and obstacles may challenge the viewer's mental process of story construction, but they ultimately encourage cognitive experiences that are both liberating and rewarding. By making films more difficult to process, such devices add richness and variety to narratives that may otherwise be relatively straightforward and predictable.[39] This is because incongruous elements provide a way to undermine the cognitive 'expertise' viewers develop as a result of continual exposure to classic narrational strategies:

> As people gain expertise in an art form, they begin to group units of memory (called 'chunks') into patterns of information enabling them to quickly encode, store, and retrieve information and reducing the level of cognitive activity required to process an individual artwork... Hence, the same artwork demands more cognitive activity from novices than from experts in the form.[40]

Drawing on concepts from cognitive studies, Berliner suggests that the mental effort involved in narrative comprehension reduces as viewers gain expertise in Hollywood storytelling.[41] Narrative complications are, therefore, introduced in order to 'intensify our cognitive activity,' ultimately leading to more 'exhilarating aesthetic experiences.'[42] Viewed from this perspective, obstructive narrative devices become opportunities for viewers to engage in creative activities of story construction. Referring to the resistance to unity and coherence within 1970s cinema, Berliner explains that such practices encourage the viewer to make unanticipated connections between elements in order to 'repair' narrative incongruities:

> A mind making such precarious connections is a mind in a state of excitement, a mind gracefully working out the order of a disorderly narrative and using its imagination to correct a story that refuses to settle down and behave.[43]

In this way, Berliner suggests that, far from constraining viewing activities, narrative incongruities initiate a 'playful process of free association' which encourages viewers

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[39] Berliner, *Hollywood Incoherent*, 32.
[40] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 209.
[41] William G. Chase and Herbert A. Simon, 'Perception in Chess,' *Cognitive Psychology* 4, no. 1 (January 1973): 55-81, doi:10.1016/0010-0285(73)90004-2; and Herbert A. Simon and Kevin J. Gilmartin, 'A Simulation of Memory for Chess Positions,' *Cognitive Psychology* 5, no. 1 (July 1973): 29-46, doi:10.1016/0010-0285(73)90024-8.
[42] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 196.
[43] Berliner, *Hollywood Incoherent*, 32.

to '*find the fit* between narrative elements that do not readily coordinate.'[44] By employing cognitive agility, creative problem-solving skills, and imaginative reasoning, viewers can therefore make sense of elements that may not operate in strict accordance with story logic. Reliance on such creative cognitive strategies renders *abductive reasoning* a particularly useful skill in the resolution of narrative incongruities. Abductive reasoning is a type of inference-making that involves providing the most likely hypothesis for incomplete information. It is for this reason that the process is also referred to as *inference to the best explanation*.[45] The nature of abductive reasoning means that the process may result in misapprehension and the creation of false inferences, but it also provides the viewer with a way to resolve challenging narrative devices. In the face of incomplete or incongruous narrative information, abductive reasoning permits viewers to form creative connections and hypotheses based on the contextual information available. This process draws on the viewer's imaginative capabilities to posit explanations which may not be presented by the film. As Berliner explains, the process 'enlists our imaginations most of all: It relies on our ability to form new concepts, uninhibited by practical constraints.'[46]

In discussing his hypotheses regarding viewer engagement, Berliner suggests that the process of resolving incongruous narrative devices proceeds according to three stages:

1. The narration cues the perceiver to form a hypothesis about a story.

2. The narration surprises the perceiver by presenting information incongruous with the hypothesis.

3. Using abductive reasoning the perceiver improvises an impromptu new hypothesis in order to resolve incongruous concepts and restore consistency to a set of beliefs.[47]

This model draws parallels with Bordwell's theory of viewer engagement, as outlined earlier in the chapter. According to Bordwell's theory, when viewers encounter

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[44] Ibid., 31.

[45] For a more detailed discussion of the concept of abductive reasoning, see Charles Sanders Peirce, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, vol. 5 of *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce Vols. 1-6*, ed. Charles Hartshorn and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935), https://colorysemiotica.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/peirce-collectedpapers.pdf. The notion of 'the inference to the best explanation' was introduced by Gilbert H. Harman in 'The Inference to the Best Explanation,' *Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (January 1965): 88-95, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2183532. See also Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004).

[46] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 201.

[47] Ibid.

unexpected narrative elements which pose a challenge to their expectations, they seek justification through interrogating the device's function and motivation; this enables them to adjust their expectations and form new hypotheses accordingly. The models outlined by both Bordwell and Berliner result in a dynamic viewing process that involves an ongoing cycle of mental readjustment as the film progresses. Berliner's proposal that abductive cognitive activities are stimulated by narrative complexity and incongruity reinforces the notion that viewers must be active and adaptive in order to comprehend a film, while also suggesting that they must be *creative* if they are to overcome obstacles that pose a threat to coherent story construction.

However, there is a limit to the viewer's capability for creative comprehension; if incongruity is stretched too far, narrative incoherence may result. Far from enhancing the aesthetic pleasure of mainstream cinema, narrative incoherence risks alienating viewers by making the attainment of coherence an impossible goal. An example of such a situation would be the occurrence of a plot hole within a film. Narrative theorist Marie-Laure Ryan defines a plot hole as an 'inadvertent inconsistency in the logical and motivational texture of a story.'[48] For Ryan, the relatively constrained time scale in which cinematic action takes place goes some way toward explaining the existence of these inadvertent inconsistencies:

> The more action one squeezes into a limited temporal frame, the greater
> the need for logical (i.e. causal or motivational) connections, but also the
> greater the probability that some of these connections will be overlooked
> by the scriptwriter.[49]

If a plot hole is present within a film, it may have the effect of rendering narrative events and character actions illogical. This can prompt the viewer to feel frustrated or mentally deficient; they may wonder whether they have missed salient information, or perceive the narrative as somehow beyond their comprehension.

In order to avoid creating a similarly unsatisfactory viewing experience, mainstream narrative films which *intentionally* employ incongruous, perverse, or complex devices must pay close attention to the fine line between coherence and incoherence. As mainstream productions, these films cannot risk frustrating or alienating the mass audience by providing stories which are unintelligible. The stories they tell – no matter how complex the telling – must ultimately remain coherent. In this

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[48] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Cheap Plot Tricks, Plot Holes, and Narrative Design,' *Narrative* 17, no. 1 (January 2009): 66, doi:10.1353/nar.0.0016.
[49] Ryan, 'Cheap Plot Tricks,' 66.

way, these films are designed to challenge traditional strategies of narrative construction and comprehension without violating the classical objectives of coherence and unity. This is a crucial factor which separates these mainstream films from wider traditions of art cinema. Audiences for art films may routinely expect narrative ambiguity, disunity, and irresolution as part of the viewing experience, but mainstream audiences expect to be supplied with enough cues successfully to comprehend the narrative and construct a coherent story – even if this process involves increased mental effort.

David Bordwell suggests that complex films in mainstream cinema remain comprehensible and coherent by keeping 'one foot in classical tradition.'[50] In his discussion of experimental storytelling in the 1940s and 1950s, he makes a point to stress that inventive narrational devices are typically used *in combination* with classical strategies of storytelling to ensure that narrative integrity is maintained. His perspective on Hollywood cinema of the 1960s and 1970s is similar; although conceding that films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* 'demanded patient deciphering and offered perplexing endings,' he remains quick to assert that most films of the period eventually assimilate their dynamic devices into a coherent structure.[51] Todd Berliner concurs, suggesting that the inventive strategies in 1970s cinema usually consist of *moments* of perversity situated within a more stable framework of accepted practices. As he states, 'Classical filmmaking provides a harmonious form into which seventies filmmakers integrate a faint cacophony of incongruous ideas and narrational devices.'[52] For Bordwell, even the seemingly subversive narratives of the 1990s rely on classical strategies to aid comprehension. Despite exhibiting plot structures which appear to provide alternatives to the classical norms, forking-path, network, and other puzzle films nonetheless operate according to traditional constructive principles; this enables the films to provide viewers with enough coherent information to navigate their way through tangled webs of causality, time, and space.[53]

Bordwell expands on these notions in a detailed examination of forking-path films. Through the course of his analysis, he explores the ways in which classical strategies of cinematic storytelling are employed to render the dynamic narrative devices within these films more 'cognitively manageable.'[54] According to Bordwell, this practice is exemplified by seven key conventions: forking paths remain *linear* –

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[50] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 73.
[51] Ibid., 72.
[52] Berliner, *Hollywood Incoherent*, 9.
[53] See Bordwell, 'Film Futures'; and Bordwell, 'Chapter 3: Subjective Stories and Network Narratives' in *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 72-103.
[54] Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' 104.

once they reach the point of divergence, paths tend to follow strict lines of cause and effect that help make the alternative futures intelligible to the viewer; paths are *clearly signposted*, providing discernible cues to encourage comprehension; paths frequently *intersect*, containing characters and background conditions that recur across the different lines of action to create patterns of repetition; like most classical narratives, forking-path films employ traditional *cohesion devices,* such as appointments and deadlines, to unify sequences plausibly and make the action easier to follow; and paths often *run parallel*, containing parallel situations, characters, or actions that serve to bring to the viewer's attention the most salient elements within each trajectory.

Bordwell identifies a further two conventions: *the last path taken presupposes the others*; and *the last path taken, or completed, is the least hypothetical one*. These conventions suggest that the forks of the path are not weighted equally, and that they have the ability to 'contaminate' one another. To elaborate, paths encountered at an earlier point in a film create a dominant frame of reference against which subsequent repetitions, variations, and developments are measured. Viewers (and characters) treat information ascertained along earlier paths as 'background conditions' for events that subsequently occur on later paths. In this way, the last path 'presupposes' the others.[55] In contrast, the privileged narrative position assumed by the last path presented in a film leads to the perception that this path depicts the final version of events. Preceding paths are consequently reconceptualised as 'draft versions' of the final story: the last path taken becomes the least hypothetical.[56]

These two conventions draw upon the cognitive biases of primacy and recency to guide the viewer's activities of comprehension. Structuring films in order to engage these biases is a classical tradition within Hollywood cinema. To elaborate, the *primacy effect* dictates that information presented at an early stage of a film will serve to establish dominant hypotheses that shape the viewer's perception about what follows. In contrast, the *recency effect* dictates that information presented at a later stage of a film will serve to qualify or negate the viewer's first impression of a character or situation, modifying their perception about what occurred before.[57] Together, the concepts of primacy and recency create a viewing experience that is both *prospective* and *retrospective*. The primacy effect compels viewers to look forward – to form expectations based on primary hypotheses; while the recency effect prompts viewers to

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[55] Ibid., 98.
[56] Ibid., 102.
[57] See Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 165; and 'Film Futures,' 97-102.

look backward – to (re)consider information previously established by the film. Although forking-path narratives expose the operation of these cognitive biases much more explicitly than expected of conventional classical cinema, the act of appealing to these devices to mediate the viewing process is a traditionally classical strategy. Once again, this demonstrates the combination of innovation and tradition used to guide comprehension within these narratives.

Bordwell's analysis of forking-path plots exemplifies the ways in which dynamic narrative devices can function within a framework of classical norms. Even in cases where traditional constructive principles are ostensibly obscured by the overall structure of the plot, these principles operate beneath surface structures to promote the classical objectives of comprehension and coherence. However, this is not the only way in which dynamic narratives achieve these objectives. Complex films intended for mainstream audiences are also capable of *curtailing* the subversive potential of their dynamic devices. This strategy allows coherence to prevail and assists the viewer's comprehension by ensuring they are not overwhelmed by endless narrative possibilities. Forking-path films, for example, open up the possibility that multiple futures can occur, but only a limited number of trajectories are represented: *Run Lola Run* presents three possible variants, and *Sliding Doors* has even fewer, presenting only two parallel worlds. It is important to note that not all forking-path films contain such limitations; Bordwell and Thompson have both discussed this notion with regard to *Groundhog Day*, which depicts a protagonist trapped in a seemingly infinite temporal loop.[58] However *Groundhog Day* compensates for its complex plot in other areas: the number of protagonists is limited and redundancy is increased, demonstrating the general principle that, 'the more complex the devices, the more redundant the storytelling needs to be.'[59]

As may be apparent, David Bordwell is a long-term advocate of dispelling the 'myths' of subversion surrounding complexity in mainstream cinema. As early as 1985, he asserted that Hollywood cinema has 'no subversive films, only subversive moments.'[60] In this way, he suggests that dynamic narratives remain comprehensible to a wide audience because they do not (usually) transgress the boundaries of classical cinema. Instead, they constitute *variations* on the classical mode of narration:

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[58] Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' 103; Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 130-54.
[59] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 78.
[60] Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 84.

Most of the daring storytelling we find in modern American film offers legible variants on well-entrenched strategies for presenting time, space, goal achievement, causal connection, and the like. Nothing comes from nothing. Every new artistic achievement revises existing practices, and often the 'unconventional' strategy simply draws on *other* conventions.[61]

Because complex narratives are variations of more classical constructs, representing 'a skilful intensification of elements already present in classical narration,' their comprehension calls upon an existing set of perceptual-cognitive skills.[62] In other words, viewers make sense of complex narratives using the same mental processes employed in the viewing of more conventional classical films. In each case, the viewing experience involves drawing upon prior knowledge, schemata, inferences, hypotheses, and expectations to construct linear chains of cause and effect that demonstrate spatio-temporal coherence. Although dynamic narratives may appear to require more complex forms of mental processing, this may be due to the viewer's lack of familiarity with the form, rather than a particularly abnormal level of complexity. According to Charles Ramírez Berg, when viewers first encounter a film that unfolds in reverse, such as *Memento*, the progression of the plot may appear to be entirely unpredictable, but it is only perceived this way because the viewer has yet to develop familiarity with the pattern.[63] Once the viewer has gained experience of the mental activities required to comprehend a backwards plot, they can develop a schema that will render the viewing experience much more straightforward in future encounters.

In summary, Bordwell suggests that dynamic films in mainstream cinema preserve coherence and facilitate viewer comprehension by operating within a classical framework: experimentation may occur, but it serves primarily to demonstrate the flexibility of traditional narrative cinema without actually breaching the boundaries of this classical mode of narration.

Bordwell's position has been the subject of some critical debate, particularly in regard to the complex films that emerged in the 1990s. Narrative theorists including Warren Buckland, Thomas Elsaesser, Kay Young, and John Mullarkey criticise Bordwell for adopting an overly-reductive approach that attempts to narrativise and normalise innovative cinematic devices.[64] Many of these critics hold to the belief that

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[61] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 75-6.
[62] Berliner, *Hollywood Incoherent*, 9.
[63] Berg, 'A Taxonomy,' 28.
[64] See Buckland, 'Introduction: Puzzle Plots,' 1-12; Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Mind-Game Film,' in *Puzzle Films*, ed. Buckland, 13-41; Kay Young, 'That Fabric of Times: A Response to David Bordwell's 'Film Futures,' in *SubStance* 31, no. 1 (2002): 115-18, doi:10.1353/sub.2002.0018; and John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

the experimental narratives of the 1990s involve constructive strategies that go far beyond the classical norms, representing a new mode of *post-classical* narration.[65]

Charles Ramírez Berg is one theorist who has suggested a link between this notion and the advent of home-video technologies, which he suggests had lasting implications on processes of narrative construction and comprehension in the 1990s:

> Filmmakers are making denser, more complex, less classical movie narratives. For their part, viewers seem to be discovering the deeper pleasures embedded in these texts, facilitated by technology... that rewards 'return visits' to films. Interestingly, all this newness – a new literacy demanded by new narratives that require new reading tactics enabled by new technologies – returns us to something very old: traditional prose reading strategies. Read. Reflect. Review. Repeat as necessary for full comprehension and enjoyment.[66]

Prior to the arrival of home-video technology, narrative construction was intended to facilitate comprehension within a single viewing. VHS and DVD technology opened up new realms of possibility for filmmakers by introducing the potential for repeat viewings, and by providing viewers with an easily-accessible means by which to indulge in close levels of scrutiny. Directors were free to include details that could only be discerned by pausing or rewinding films; they had the option to provide alternate endings; and they could introduce all manner of additional features that encouraged viewers to continue engaging with a film long after leaving the cinema.

With the rise of home-video technologies, viewers became free to re-watch films at their leisure, enabling them to study plot complexities that were initially elusive, and allowing them to pinpoint subtle cues used in strategies of deception and misdirection. In this way, the activity of story construction could be *prolonged* beyond the duration of the film and *extended* beyond the boundaries of the cinema screen. I will return to these notions later in the chapter, but for the time being it is sufficient to note that filmmakers in the 1990s were free to exploit the possibilities of VHS and DVD technology. They were constructing complex narratives in full awareness that viewers had the ability to return to a film multiple times. It is likely that this factor contributed to the experimental narratives that emerged during this period: as filmmakers became less concerned with facilitating comprehension in a single viewing, they were free to explore the innovative constructive possibilities of the medium.

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[65] See in particular, Buckland, 'Introduction: Puzzle Plots,' 5; and Eleftheria Thanouli, 'Post-Classical Narration: A New Paradigm in Contemporary Cinema,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 4, no. 3 (December 2006): 183-96, doi:10.1080/17400300600981900.

[66] Berg, 'A Taxonomy,' 57.

Despite the constructive innovations and evolving strategies of comprehension surrounding complex narratives in the 1990s, Bordwell remains sceptical of the notion that these films constitute a new mode of narration. He stands firm in his assertion that complex narratives in mainstream cinema are not as transgressive as they appear, remaining classically coherent by stretching and enriching existing narrative norms without 'subverting or demolishing them.'[67] As he summarises:

> these experiments take place within a tradition, one that demands a balance between innovation and adherence to norms. The norms can be recast in a great many ways, but they can't be jettisoned without leaving the tradition behind. Hollywood storytelling fosters creative renewal within flexible but firm limits.[68]

This part of the chapter has drawn on an historical poetics of cinema to outline the processes of narrative construction operating within films of varying degrees of complexity. Examining the form and function of narrative perversity has uncovered innovative constructive strategies that complicate coherence without rendering stories unintelligible; and creative cognitive processes have been shown to enable active and adaptive viewers successfully to engage with threats to narrative unity. Whether such threats assume the guise of subtle complications and delays or present themselves in more explicitly perverse forms, such as intricate formal puzzles, multiple paths of development, intricate character networks, and unconventional spatio-temporal structures, viewers in possession of the appropriate viewing skills appear more than capable of overcoming obstructive narrative devices in the pursuit of unity and coherence. With this in mind, the next part of the chapter will move on to examine how this pursuit is affected when the obstructive device assumes the form of a temporal and spatial break which fragments a narrative system into multiple parts.

Sequel Narratives

As established in Chapter Two, although there is a general lack of research regarding the narrative properties of film sequels, Stuart Henderson has recently made steps toward establishing a poetics of the cinematic sequel, drawing on the work of David Bordwell to examine the formal characteristics which distinguish sequels from

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[67] Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' 91.
[68] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 103.

standalone films. Having outlined the processes involved in constructing a narrative within a single film, this chapter will now draw on Henderson's framework of poetics to explore the implications of extending a narrative over more than one film.

The act of continuing a pre-existing story by producing a sequel effectively fragments the narrative system by imposing a temporal and spatial break. As a result, one of the primary concerns of the sequel narrative is the establishment of a connective relationship with its textual predecessor. At the most basic level, this connective relationship is signified by the use of recurrent characters, locations, and other motifs which featured in the previous film. The inclusion of these recurrent elements establishes that the sequel is situated within the same fictional world as its predecessor. According to Henderson, such processes of repetition establish a 'generic dynamic' between sequels and their precursor texts, the precise nature of which is determined not only by an 'hermetically sealed textual process, but also by extratextual factors.'[69] To elaborate, Henderson suggests that the choice of what to repeat and what to discard, and the question of how to introduce variation into a film sequel, is influenced not only by commercial factors specific to the given production but also by developments in the genre to which the sequel belongs and by developments within the broader context of mainstream cinema, such as technological advancements.[70]

However, although the relationship between the sequel and its predecessor may be understood in terms of a 'generic dynamic' to an extent, the usefulness of the comparison between film sequels and genre films is limited. As Henderson explains,

> While Hollywood sequels are almost invariably generic... their similarities cannot be understood on strictly the same terms as those between films within a genre, because the interaction between standardisation and differentiation from sequel to sequel takes place within a narrower, more particularised sphere.[71]

The 'particularised sphere' to which Henderson refers is the system of narrative continuity which connects a sequel to its predecessor. This system is the defining feature which distinguishes the sequel from similar formats, such as the genre film and the series film proper, which is generally associated with an episodic rather than a serial structure. However, the boundaries between episodic and serial story structures are frequently complicated in the sequel narrative – an issue to which I will imminently

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[69] Stuart Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel: History and Form, 1911-2010* (London: BFI/Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 145.
[70] Ibid., 155-6.
[71] Ibid., 145.

return. Despite the fact that the film sequel is often criticised for over-emphasising recurrent elements, its function as a chronological narrative extension helps ensure that the repetitions within the film are never actual. For example, specific characters may be repeated in multiple sequels and may even attain the status of star characters, bringing to the narrative 'a set of consistent character traits, intertextually established expectations and generic conventions and even a particular look or style.'[72] However, due to the fact that sequels set the need to repeat against the need to move a continuing narrative forward, these characters cannot literally re-enact or re-experience the same events anew.[73]

Serving specifically as an extension of a previously-established narrative, the sequel must also establish narrative continuity with its predecessor; this is achieved by signifying the existence of a chronological relationship between the films. In order to determine the nature of its spatio-temporal and causal relationship with the preceding film, Henderson suggests that the sequel must solve the problem of 'where to start.' Two recurrent solutions to this problem are subsequently identified: recommence immediately after the final moments depicted in the previous film; or insert a gap of weeks, months, years, or even decades.[74] I will term these solutions 'direct' and 'elliptical' continuity. For Henderson, the latter solution presents a challenge to processes of narrative construction, which must subsequently determine 'how and to what extent to inform the audience of events that may have taken place in the interval between the end of one film and the beginning of another.'[75] In addition to establishing the nature of its spatio-temporal connection to its predecessor, the sequel must also determine the nature of its causal relationship with the previous film. When it comes to the question of film-to-film causality, Henderson suggests that most sequels are placed 'somewhere in the middle of a spectrum of causation ranging from those close-knit to their predecessors to those only loosely connected.'[76] Although the degree of causal connectivity between the story events in a sequel and those of the preceding film may be wide-ranging, the motivational forces typically driving the story action tend to be more limited. Noting that the sequel frequently uses a new agent or event to motivate its story, Henderson identifies six forms of 'disruptive force' common to the sequel narrative:

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[72] Ibid., 141.
[73] Ibid., 145, 150.
[74] Ibid., 115.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 118.

1. the arrival of a new character, such as a baby;
2. the departure (or death) of an existing character;
3. the relocation of existing characters to another setting and/or set of circumstances;
4. the emergence of a new case/mission/quest to be solved or undertaken;
5. the return of an old nemesis or problem; or
6. in a variation of the latter form, a repeat encounter between characters who were dramatically at odds in the previous film.[77]

Like most classical films, the narratives of sequels are not usually comprised of only one plotline; instead, multiple strands of action are woven together to construct the overall story. In the case of film sequels, however, Henderson suggests that the presence of multiple plot lines represents a complicating factor in the process of narrative construction. This is because the film sequel has a tendency to 'seek the middle ground between the episodic discontinuities of the series film and the narrative flow of the serial' by interweaving a continuing plot strand and a new line of action.[78] This strategy results in the creation of a 'micro-fabula,' an episodic storyline discrete to a particular sequel and to which the sequel seeks some form of closure, and a 'macro-fabula,' a serial storyline which runs throughout the series as a whole.[79] According to Henderson, this distinction assumes a division between viewers who are cognisant of the macro-fabula, and those who are not. In acknowledgement of the fact that this distinction is based on cognisance of the story of the series as a whole, I will refer to these two types of viewer as the series viewer and the non-series viewer.[80]

Having engaged with the relevant narrative predecessor(s), the series viewer acquires a body of knowledge and experience which enables them to recognise intertextual references. Often imperceptible to the non-series viewer, these references can assume many forms, but an acknowledgement of prior events, a repeated action or motif, or mentioning a previously-featured character are among the more common manifestations. However, whereas intertextual references usually direct viewers to look outside the individual film to make connections beyond the boundaries of the narrative

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[77] Ibid. 116-17.

[78] Ibid., 121.

[79] Ibid., 113.

[80] See Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 115. Naturally, there is a wide range of viewing positions which fall in between these two extremes – those casual viewers, for example, cognisant of some, but not all, of the individual sequels within a series. In addition, this study is mindful of the fact that no two individuals bring the same horizon of expectations or backgrounds of prior knowledge to a particular viewing experience. However, Henderson asserts that, 'whatever multifarious racial, sexual and socioeconomic differences there are in between sequel viewers, one can still assume a more basic distinction between those with access to the macro-fabula and those whose knowledge is limited to the micro-fabula of this individual film,' and that this assumption ultimately informs the narrative construction of film sequels.

89

at hand, the intertextual dialogue associated with the film sequel also encourages viewers to make connections *within* these narrative boundaries.[81] As Henderson explains, the 'highly particularised and narrativised' version of intertextuality present in the film sequel 'encourages the viewer to venture outside the individual film to better appreciate or understand certain moments, *but within prescribed limits, limits which designate a sequel's predecessor(s) as the first stop on the search for transtextual motivation* [emphasis added].'[82] Earlier in the chapter I described how viewers seek to understand the function of formal devices by searching for their motivation. If a device is motivated transtextually, it usually appeals to the *conventions* of other artworks. However, in film sequels, processes of transtextual motivation operate on a more specific level, appealing directly to the narrative of the previous film(s) in the series. Only series viewers in possession of prior knowledge of the relevant narrative context are equipped to discern such motivation; this affords these viewers an advantage over those lacking an appropriately specialised framework of knowledge, allowing them to experience the 'secret pleasures' denied to their non-series counterparts.[83]

To elaborate, despite the fact that film sequels 'attempt to address knowledgeable series viewers without alienating uninitiated non-series viewers,' the distinction between these viewing positions is usually presupposed.[84] Thus, while the ability to understand the connections between the micro-fabula of a sequel and the macro-fabula of the ongoing series are 'more luxury than necessity,' the series viewer is nonetheless rewarded for their 'encyclopedic competence,' gaining access to a more in-depth level of engagement than would otherwise be possible.[85] Attuned to the processes of transtextual motivation at work in the sequel, the series viewer recognises and responds to cues designed to trigger processes of memory and recall. Jason Mittell has observed a number of such cues at work within the narratives of serialised television programmes – a format which draws distinct parallels with the film sequel, particularly

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[81] Umberto Eco uses the phrase 'intertextual dialogue' to describe 'the phenomenon by which a given text echoes previous texts.' See Umberto Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics,' *Daedalus* 114, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 170, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025015.

[82] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 131.

[83] Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition,' 177.

[84] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 132.

[85] See, respectively, Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 132; and Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition,' 171. For further discussion of the differences between the series and non-series viewer, particularly in respect to the notion of 'rewarding' narrative competence, see Wickham Clayton, 'Chapter 5: Viewer Perspective, Serialisation and Nostalgia Aesthetics,' in 'Bearing Witness to a Whole Bunch of Murders: The Aesthetics of Perspective in the *Friday the 13th* Films' (PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2013), 164-207, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17040913.pdf.

in cases where sequels form part of a long-running series.[86] In discussing the processes of construction in long-form narratives, Mittell outlines a 'poetic catalogue of techniques' which 'highlight the importance of underlying cognitive processes in the seemingly simple act of narrative comprehension.'[87] These techniques, which Mittell suggests offer compelling solutions for 'mastering the mechanics of memory,' include embedding minor redundancies, such as the subtle repetition of characters' names and relationships, to remind viewers of key story information. This is often accomplished through *diegetic retelling*, which uses dialogue as a means of reminding the viewer of what they have already seen. This ensures that information archived in long-term memory is activated into working memory, thereby making it part of the viewer's immediate narrative comprehension. According to Mittell, activities of recall and memory can also be triggered by more subtle cues, such as stylistic and naturalistic visual prompts; by non-naturalistic techniques, such as voiceover narration and flashbacks; and by strategies outside the sphere of diegetic narration, such as recaps summarising key events, which both refresh series viewers' memories for upcoming storylines and provide new viewers with sufficient background exposition to comprehend the narrative at hand. By prompting the creation of *retrospective* connections to previous films, these cues and techniques ultimately facilitate *prospective* viewing activities, such as the formation of expectations and hypotheses pertaining to the sequel narrative. This is because triggering processes of memories and recall requires viewers to draw on an existing body of knowledge in order to make sense of the developing narrative. Usually comprising previously-formed schemata surrounding plot scenarios, characters, locations, and other motifs introduced in the original film, and the learned intrinsic 'norms' associated with the previously-established fictional world, this body of knowledge serves as a template helping to guide the series viewer's comprehension of the story. A point worth noting at this juncture is that the series viewer is not the only figure to accumulate a body of information pertaining to the fictional world. Recurrent characters who feature in sequels also acquire a comparable body of knowledge and experience which often

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[86] See Jason Mittell, 'Previously On: Prime Time Serials and the Mechanics of Memory,' *Just TV*, July 3, 2009, http://justtv.wordpress.com/2009/07/03/previously-on-prime-time-serials-and-the-mechanics-of-memory/. In operating according to a micro- and macro-fabula, the sequel narrative can be seen to draw distinct parallels with the processes of narrative construction associated with contemporary television series. According to Jason Mittell, by expanding story arcs across seasons while also incorporating more self-contained episodes, programmes such as *The X-Files* exemplify what may be the hallmark of narrative complexity: 'an interplay between the demands of episodic and serial storytelling.' Jason Mittell, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,' *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 58 (Fall 2006): 33.
[87] Ibid.

91

determines their subsequent actions and patterns of behaviour – an inevitable result of a life lived within the fictional world.[88]

The fact that the series viewer is cognisant of both the micro- and macro-fabula not only enhances the depth of their engagement with the sequel narrative, but also intensifies their overall cognitive experience. Series viewers must look beyond the boundaries of the individual film in order to unify the fragmented pieces of the narrative system into a coherent whole. Earlier in the chapter I established that classical narrative films are riddled with devices designed to complicate and delay the process of constructing a coherent story. If even the most classical films contain such complications and delays as standard, then the potential for such obstructive devices in an expanded narrative system comprised of multiple films is likely to be amplified. As a result, the series viewer may be required to overcome an increased number of obstacles in order to render the narrative system coherent. In exerting increased mental effort to do so, they will ultimately be rewarded with a more exhilarating aesthetic experience, as explained in the previous discussion of Berliner's work on narrative comprehension.[89] Nowhere are the obstacles faced by the series viewer made more apparent than in the – admittedly extreme – case of the *Saw* films, a complex horror series which was previously discussed in Chapter One. Emerging during the most recent move toward dynamic storytelling in mainstream cinema, the *Saw* series (2004-2010) combined standard complicating and delaying devices with the narratological conventions of the puzzle film, employing ellipses, multiple timelines, non-linearity, and disguised temporal reversals to establish a narrative structure which 'arcs and interweaves across the diverse temporalities of seven films.'[90] In order to construct a coherent macro-fabula out of the jumbled temporal information presented over the course of these seven films, the series viewer must be prepared continually to adjust their established understanding of the events depicted on screen. To take one example, the closing scenes of *Saw IV* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2007) reveal that the events of the film were actually concurrent with those of *Saw III* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2006); the viewer remains entirely oblivious to this fact until a character from *Saw IV* walks into a scene which

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[88] See Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 151.
[89] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 196.
[90] Matthew Freeman, 'The Killer Who Never Was: Complex Storytelling, the *Saw* Series, and the Shifting Moral Alignment of Puzzle Film Horror,' in *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*, ed. Wickham Clayton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 119.

unfolded at the climax of *Saw III*.[91] With the overall narrative constructed around a number of such chronological complications, the series viewer is repeatedly prompted to look back over the series and re-examine their existing assumptions in order to stand any chance of rendering the system coherent. In the case of a series defined by such a strong sense of film-to-film causality, the non-series viewer lacking an appropriately specialised framework of knowledge may struggle to win the battle against narrative alienation.

The need to serve both the series and non-series viewer undoubtedly complicates the process of narrative construction, challenging film sequels to deliver 'familiar pleasures in a new guise while telling a story that is at once serial and episodic.'[92] However, this is not the only form of complication associated with the sequel narrative. In continuing a previously-established story, the sequel has an inevitably *transformative* effect on the narrative of its predecessor. As Carolyn Jess-Cooke observes, 'the dialogue that is created between an original and its potential derivatives revises the notion of originality, and, in turn, redefines "originals" as "originaries" – or productions that are geared to spawn narrative offspring.'[93] The act of transforming the narrative status of its predecessor is one of many *hypertextual operations* performed by the film sequel. As established in Chapter Two, Gérard Genette defines hypertextuality as any relationship uniting text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*), 'upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary.'[94] In developing this notion further, Genette specifies that the hypertext is derived from its hypotext through processes of *transformation* such as extension, expansion, elaboration, and modification. For example, by extending the story established in the original production, *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986) has the effect of transforming *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) from an individual film into the first instalment of a larger narrative; in the X-Men and Marvel series, the processes of expansion and elaboration which take place over multiple sequels see the fictional world transform into a vast hyperdiegesis capable of supporting an intricate network of characters and locations; and the prologue at the beginning of *The Karate Kid Part II* (John G. Avildsen, 1986), can be seen to modify *The Karate Kid* (John G. Avildsen, 1984) by transforming the original film from a full-length picture

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[91] For a more comprehensive outline of the temporal complexities in the *Saw* series, see Matthew Belinkie, 'The Shocking Complexity of the *Saw* Movies,' *Overthinking It* (blog), October 26, 2010, https://www.overthinkingit.com/2010/10/26/saw-movies/.
[92] Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, 163.
[93] Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels*, 11.
[94] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

into a short sequence comprised only of those events which are most relevant to the plot of the sequel.

As explained in Chapter Two, the transformative dimension of the film sequel has attracted the attention of writers including Henderson, Jess-Cooke, R. Barton Palmer, and Aylish Wood, who have drawn on Genette's concept of hypertextuality to provide new insights into the form and function of the sequel narrative. In the process of exploring the construction of such narratives, this chapter has also established that an analytical approach informed by historical poetics has the potential to offer similarly fresh insights, particularly with regard to the cognitive activities involved in rendering an expanded narrative system coherent. With both a hypertextual framework of analysis and an approach informed by historical poetics demonstrating the potential to provide new perspectives on the narrative processes at work within the film sequel, I argue that an analytical framework incorporating both approaches may have the potential to provide a new perspective on the processes of narrative construction associated with the slasher sequel.

CHAPTER FOUR
HALLOWEEN: PROSPECTS FOR HYPERTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Following its release in 1978, John Carpenter's *Halloween* experienced widespread critical and popular success. The film depicts the horrific set of events that takes place in the suburban town of Haddonfield, Illinois, one fateful Halloween. Fifteen years after six-year old Michael Myers slaughtered his teenage sister, he escapes from Smith's Grove Sanitarium and returns to his home town to continue his killing spree. Relentlessly pursued by his dedicated psychiatrist, Dr. Sam Loomis, Michael sets his sights upon high-school student Laurie Strode and her group of friends, stalking them as they babysit young Tommy Doyle and Lindsey Wallace. Over the course of the night, the teenagers are slain one-by-one, before Michael is finally shot by Dr. Loomis in the midst of his final assault on Laurie. As Michael falls from the bedroom window, Loomis peers outside to confirm his death, only to be met with the ominous sight of the empty ground below.

Despite this suspenseful ending, there was no intention for the story of Michael Myers to continue beyond a single film; unlike many contemporary horror films, where the prospect of sequelisation is considered at the pre-production stage, *Halloween* was planned as a standalone production, with the filmmakers harbouring no apparent aspirations toward narrative expansion.[1] However, as the commercial popularity of *Halloween* became increasingly apparent, and, as mainstream horror cinema began to gravitate toward stories centred on violent killers and teenage victims, Carpenter's film soon became a prime candidate for sequelisation.[2] As a result, *Halloween* went on to generate seven sequels; a spate of novels and comic books; several computer games and online publications; and eventually a film remake which was itself subject to sequelisation.[3]

As the first entry in a series of films, *Halloween* establishes the general narrative framework from which sequels are subsequently derived. Events, characters, locations,

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[1] John Carpenter expresses his initial reluctance to subject the original film to sequelisation in an interview with *Fangoria*. See Bob Martin, 'John Carpenter,' *Fangoria* 14 (August 1981): 10.

[2] As detailed in chapter one, *Halloween* became one of the most successful independent films of all time, making over $45 million at the box office on a production budget of just $325,000.

[3] See Rob Zombie's *Halloween* (2008) and *Halloween II* (2009). Due to the fact that this case study focuses solely on sequels within the original *Halloween* series, Rob Zombie's remakes do not feature in the discussion. For further insight into these films, see David Greven, 'Chapter 5: Trick-or-Treating Alone: Rob Zombie's *Halloween*,' in *Ghost Faces: Hollywood and Post-Millennial Masculinity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), 169-95; and Joe Tompkins, 'Re-imagining the Canon: Examining the Discourse of Contemporary Horror Film Reboots,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 12, no. 4 (2014): 380-99, doi: 10.1080/17400309.2014.945884.

and motifs introduced in the film comprise the raw materials that determine how the series will go on to develop. However, this hypotextual functionality is only assumed retrospectively, following the production of the first sequel, *Halloween II* (Rick Rosenthal, 1981). It is only at this point that *Halloween* is transformed from a standalone film into the progenitor of an expanded narrative system. The assumption of hypotextual functionality in *Halloween* will, therefore, be discussed in more depth in the next part of the case study, where the narrative relationship between *Halloween* and *Halloween II* will be placed under scrutiny.

With this in mind, a more useful starting point for the current discussion will be to establish how it was possible for the story of *Halloween* to continue beyond the boundaries of a single film. In order to do this, it will be necessary to examine the narrative structure of the film in order to identify any prospective opportunities for hypertextual development.

In Chapter Three, I established that classical narrative films rarely – if ever – present stories in a strictly coherent or complete form. During the process of narrative construction, story material is selected and arranged by the plot in order to elicit particular responses from the viewer. As a result, not all of the story information is presented on screen, and the percentage that *is* presented may be subject to manipulation or complication. In order to discern an intelligible story, viewers are therefore required to extrapolate beyond the information presented in order to 'fill in' gaps and account for elements of incoherence. This is achieved by employing perceptual-cognitive skills, such as drawing on existing knowledge and experience to form inferences and hypotheses relating to the developing action. Viewed from this perspective, incomplete or incoherent information can be said to initiate processes of narrative construction that take place beyond the boundaries of the screen – occurring, as they do, in the mind of the viewer.

This notion is particularly pertinent to a discussion of sequelisation, a process which also involves constructing a narrative by extrapolating beyond the original parameters of a given body of information. If sequelisation represents a form of narrative extrapolation, and processes of narrative extrapolation are usually initiated by areas of incomplete or incoherent information, then it appears likely that sequels develop – in part, at least – as a result of incomplete or incoherent information within an existing narrative.

Aside from the ending of *Halloween*, which – as I will go on to discuss – is explicitly designed to deny narrative closure, areas of such incomplete or incoherent

information may not be immediately apparent. Indeed, judging by the widespread popularity of the film, there appears to be no area in which narrative information is so deficient as to constitute a barrier to comprehension. However, although the construction of the film may be sufficiently robust to communicate the story effectively, under close scrutiny it becomes clear that the narrative is unavoidably rife with lacunae. An examination of the locations featured in the film provides the first opportunity to elaborate further.

Although the viewer is introduced to several different locations over the course of *Halloween*, the demands of the plot place inevitable restrictions on the process of geographic exploration; as a result, the locations established within the fictional world are not usually presented in their entirety. The key locations can be identified as follows:

- Haddonfield, Illinois
- Smith's Grove Sanitarium, Illinois – located 150 miles outside Haddonfield
- Highway lay-by – located 73 miles outside Haddonfield

The majority of the film is set in Haddonfield – the town in which Michael Myers commits his first atrocity at the age of six, and the place to which he returns fifteen years later to terrorise the local teenage population. As a result, Haddonfield is by far the most fully rendered location of those listed above. The viewer encounters several places within the town over the course of the film; these can be loosely categorised as follows:

- Residences: Myers; Doyle; Strode; Wallace
- Institutions: High school; elementary school
- Amenities: Hardware store
- Public places: Suburban streets; cemetery

Of the locations listed above, those represented most comprehensively are the Myers house, the Doyle house, and the Wallace house; these spaces play host to a large proportion of the narrative action, and some of the most significant – and terrifying – events occur within their confines. The significance of these locations is reflected in the amount of detail with which they are rendered on screen; sequences such as Michael's opening assault on Judith at the Myers house, the voyeuristic stalking of Annie as she babysits Lindsey Wallace, and Laurie's fateful expedition from the Doyle to the Wallace house provide opportunities to survey the exterior spaces surrounding the

locations, while a detailed picture of their interior schematics develops as a result of sequences such as Laurie and Annie's carefree meandering around the Doyle and Wallace houses; Lynda and Bob's sprawling rendezvous at the Wallace place; Michael's relentless pursuit of Laurie throughout the rooms of the Doyle house; the point-of-view journey that takes the viewer through the Myers house at the beginning of the film; and the subsequent exploration of this space by Dr. Loomis and Sheriff Brackett.

However, even those locations that are rendered most fully are still not represented in a truly complete form; the viewer may encounter a number of rooms within a particular house, but not *every* room is seen; several houses and streets within a particular neighbourhood may be shown, but not every house or every street in the neighbourhood appears onscreen. Likewise, only the key buildings and streets in around the town of Haddonfield are featured in the film; the viewer does not always see the connecting landscape between two featured locations – such as the omitted 150-mile expanse between Smith's Grove Sanitarium and Haddonfield – and the buildings that are featured often appear only in exterior shots, with their interiors remaining hidden from view. Indeed, of the locations listed above, interior shots are reserved solely for scenes set in the high school and the domestic residences.

Spatial ellipses and omissions of this type represent a common narrative device that usually goes unnoticed by the viewer; by using the spatial cues provided in the film, however incomplete they may be, and by drawing on existing knowledge and experience, it becomes possible to piece together a relatively coherent picture of the fictional world. The presence of a handful of locations is sufficient for the viewer to infer that the town of Haddonfield extends beyond the boundaries of the screen. In this way, both the existence of a larger geographic expanse and the presence of a wider community are implied without the need for further confirmation. In other words, the incomplete information relating to the locations in *Halloween* initiates a process of spatial construction that takes place outside the film, occurring only in the mind of the viewer.

A similar type of narrative extrapolation is associated with the process of characterisation, which represents the second area of the film to be placed under scrutiny. The viewer is introduced to a range of main, secondary, and minor characters throughout the duration of *Halloween*, but an emphasis on plot progression rather than character development places limitations on the extent of biographical elaboration

within the film. As a consequence, the process of characterisation remains unequivocally incomplete.

As may be expected, the degree of biographical elaboration associated with each character depends largely upon their prominence within the plot, as indicated below:

- **Main characters**

Dr. Sam Loomis	Donald Pleasence
Michael Myers – aged 21[4]	Tony Moran / Nick Castle
Michael Myers – aged 6	Will Sandin
Laurie Strode	Jamie Lee Curtis

- **Secondary characters**

Annie Brackett	Nancy Loomis
Sheriff Leigh Brackett	Charles Cyphers
Tommy Doyle	Brian Andrews
Judith Myers	Sandy Johnson
Bob Simms	John Michael Graham
Lynda van der Klok	P. J. Soles
Lindsey Wallace	Kyle Richards

- **Minor characters**

Nurse Marion Chambers	Nancy Stephens
Graveyard Keeper	Arthur Malet
Judith Myers' Boyfriend	David Kyle
Mr. Myers	George O'Hanlon Jr.
Mrs. Myers	Uncredited
Paul	n/a – see discussion below
Mr. Strode	Peter Griffith
Dr. Terence Wynn	Robert Phalen
Ben Tramer	n/a – see discussion below

The minor characters listed above appear onscreen briefly – if at all – and receive only the most basic form of characterisation; biographical elaboration is restricted to the disclosure of one or two salient pieces of information, such as a name, job role, or relationship with other characters. Thus, although Mr. and Mrs. Myers are introduced in the opening sequence of *Halloween,* no discernible biographical details are established beyond the nature of their relationship with Michael; and, although Mr. Strode is introduced as Laurie's father, the only additional piece of information reveals that he is the estate agent responsible for the Myers house. In some cases, minor characters do not appear on screen at all; both Annie's boyfriend, Paul, and Laurie's love interest, Ben Tramer, are the subject of several conversations throughout the film, but both remain

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[4] In the closing credits, Michael Myers is incorrectly identified as aged twenty-three. The events of *Halloween* are set fifteen years after Michael kills Judith as a six-year-old child, placing his age at twenty-one rather than twenty-three; this fact is confirmed by Dr. Loomis in the course of the film.

entirely absent from view, preventing the viewer from discovering any information relating to their appearance.[5]

Primarily defined in terms of their interaction with others, one of the main functions of the minor characters in *Halloween* is to provide assistance with wider processes of characterisation.[6] In order to serve this purpose, some are subject to a limited degree of further elaboration. For instance, the information pertaining to Dr. Terence Wynn and Nurse Marion Chambers not only establishes their position as members of staff who work at Smith's Grove with Dr. Loomis, but also reveals some of their behavioural tendencies. Marion Chambers' apparent sympathy toward Michael emerges during a discussion with Dr. Loomis, and Dr. Wynn's somewhat unprofessional attitude is revealed by his inadequate security precautions and lack of urgency following Michael's escape. Although undeveloped beyond the parameters of isolated sequences, the behaviour demonstrated by Dr. Wynn and Nurse Chambers is sufficient to set the characters in direct contrast with Dr. Loomis, who admonishes both for underestimating the severity of the threat posed by their 'inhuman' escapee.

Instilling minor characters with qualities that create effective points of contrast is a useful means of emphasising the behavioural traits associated with more prominent characters. However, despite the presence of such elaborations, the level of information pertaining to minor characters is generally insufficient for the viewer to form expectations or hypotheses relating to their potential development; as a result, the level of cognitive engagement with such characters is severely limited.

A more involved form of engagement is associated with the secondary characters, who receive a greater degree of biographical and behavioural elaboration. Although still bound by restrictions, the information pertaining to these characters offers increased insight into their personal and professional lives, and, in addition, it serves to reveal a broader range of personality traits, helping to flesh out the characters beyond the minimalistic form of representation associated with the minor roles.

As a result, the viewer not only learns that Judith Myers is the older sister of Michael, but also recognises her character to be a typical teenager, indulging in sexual

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[5] Although Paul does not appear in the film, his voice – incidentally supplied by John Carpenter – is heard during a telephone call with Annie.

[6] It should be noted that the functionality of minor characters is by no means limited to this role, as demonstrated by their deployment as particularly effective causal agents. Michael's escape from Smith's Grove is facilitated by the negligent behaviour of Dr. Wynn; Mr. Strode's request for Laurie to visit the Myers house initially draws the teenager to Michael's attention; Paul's change of plans causes Annie to jeopardise her safety by isolating herself; and Judith's act of prioritising her boyfriend over her babysitting duties may be a catalyst for the deadly events that follow – although this suggestion is the subject of some debate, as I go on to discuss later in the chapter.

exploits with her boyfriend while her parents are away. Bob Simms is depicted in a similar way, his teenage impulses driving him to take advantage of the empty Wallace house for an evening of sex, smoking, and drinking with his girlfriend, Lynda. The two youngest characters, Lindsey Wallace and Tommy Doyle, are represented as keen horror fans, held transfixed by a marathon of scary movies, but they are also subject to further development: Lindsey is revealed to be somewhat precocious, as evidenced by her antagonistic behaviour toward Annie; and Tommy, bullied by his peers and scared of the Boogeyman, is portrayed as relatively shy and submissive, yet also highly observant, taking note of Michael's presence while others remain blissfully unaware.

The information pertaining to Laurie's closest friends, Lynda van der Klok and Annie Brackett, is similarly revealing. Lynda is portrayed as a cheerful, if slightly air-headed, cheerleader ('Who needs books, anyway?') whose immature and somewhat ditzy nature is emphasised by mannerisms such as her propensity for chewing gum and her fixation on exclamatory catchphrases ('Totally!'). She possesses a juvenile sense of mischief, and the sequence in which she requisitions the Wallace place with Bob demonstrates that she enjoys the same mildly hedonistic behaviour as most of the other teenagers in the film, including Annie. Both Lynda and Annie celebrate their indulgence in such behavior, encouraging Laurie to adopt a more assertive and rebellious attitude in order to make the most of her life as a carefree teen.

Although similar in this respect, Annie possesses a sarcastic sense of humour which provides a contrast to Lynda's playful personality. Her dry wit typically manifests as a running commentary on developing events, or as friendly teasing directed toward Laurie. Annie is also shown to be highly assertive, as evidenced by her outburst as a car cruises past ('Speed kills!'),[7] and self-involved, as demonstrated by her determined decision to 'ditch' Lindsey in order to spend the evening with her boyfriend, Paul. Self-involvement is shown to be a factor in the downfall of many of the teenage characters, who have a tendency to remain oblivious to the presence of Michael Myers until it is too late. This becomes apparent when Annie is in the Wallace house on the phone to Laurie: she is too distracted to notice Michael lurking in the background, watching her through a window; and when Lynda and Bob are occupied in the upstairs bedroom, they do not realise that Michael is standing close by, observing their sexual exploits.

Beyond these facts, the viewer also learns that Annie is the daughter of Sheriff Leigh Brackett, a good-natured character ('It's Halloween, everyone's entitled to one

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[7] Unbeknownst to the girls, the driver of the car is actually Michael Myers.

101

good scare!') who is portrayed as possessing a somewhat naive outlook. This is made apparent by his assumption that a break-in at the hardware store was nothing more than a harmless Halloween prank; this conclusion ignores the possibility that there may be a more sinister motivation behind the burglary, and Michael's involvement in the crime is subsequently overlooked. However, despite his naivety, Sheriff Brackett also demonstrates a willingness to co-operate with Dr. Loomis that conveys a clear sense of professionalism and a fiercely protective attitude toward the community of Haddonfield.

The information outlined above is generally sufficient for the viewer to form expectations about the potential narrative trajectory of the secondary characters in the film. This is because previous encounters with similar types of characters – most notably those in other horror films – create schemata that prompt the viewer to associate particular characteristics with the fulfilment of specific narrative roles. Providing, therefore, that the viewer is in possession of an adequate amount of prior knowledge, the roles assumed by the secondary characters in *Halloween* can be recognised on the basis of a few salient pieces of information. This allows the viewer to begin forming hypotheses about the likely course of action the characters will follow, thereby prompting a deeper level of cognitive engagement than that associated with less prominent characters.

However, although the information is sufficient for the viewer to recognise narrative roles and form expectations about the way these roles may be fulfilled, the process of characterisation rarely extends beyond these boundaries. The information revealed to the viewer is generally – although not always – limited to a restricted range of details designed to reinforce narrative roles, contribute to plot progression, or create points of contrast.

Thus, the majority of information pertaining to the teenage characters contributes to the fulfilment of their roles as victims; hence the emphasis on self-involved behaviour that ultimately serves to seal their fates. The characterisation of Sheriff Brackett is similarly restrictive, constrained as it is by the boundaries of his profession. The only additional information disclosed concerns his relationship with Annie, but, beyond the mere existence of their familial bond, further insights are limited to those that assist with disseminating plot information or establishing narrative roles. This is made evident when the characters encounter each other as Annie drives to her babysitting appointment; this scene not only provides an opportunity for the sheriff to discuss the break-in at the hardware store, but also establishes Annie as the rebellious teen, scrambling to extinguish her joint before it catches the eye of her father, and

Sheriff Brackett as the authority figure, responsible for maintaining law and order over both the town and his daughter.

The process of placing emphasis on a restricted range of information is a reductive form of characterisation which runs the risk of creating somewhat one-dimensional stereotypes. Such a criticism is often directed towards slasher films, which are said to employ such vacuous processes as a way of intentionally restricting viewer investment in the outcome of particular characters. By limiting the amount of information disclosed and effectively rendering secondary characters 'disposable' the film makes the viewer more likely to accept their – frequently gruesome – departures as relatively incidental events within the narrative.[8]

The most comprehensive form of characterisation is reserved for Laurie Strode, Dr. Samuel Loomis, and Michael Myers. The viewer discovers more biographical and behavioural information pertaining to these characters than to any others in the film. As a result, although their narrative roles are as clearly defined as those associated with less prominent characters, the level of information revealed during the fulfilment of these roles ensures that they are represented as multifaceted individuals, rather than one-dimensional stereotypes.

One of the first pieces of information the viewer learns about Laurie Strode is that her father is the estate agent responsible for the accursed Myers house. As she stops at the house to drop off a set of keys, her young companion, Tommy Doyle, grows agitated, warning her not to go near the 'spook-house.' Unfazed by Tommy's comments and keen to reassure him that there is nothing to fear, Laurie heads up to the house to complete her errand, unaware that Michael Myers is lurking inside, watching her. This sequence establishes an immediate association between Laurie and Michael, serving to position her as a potential victim from the outset. This role is continually reaffirmed as the film progresses, with Michael relentlessly stalking Laurie at every turn.

The sequence also provides an early insight into the nature of Laurie's character, demonstrating that she is dutiful, practical, and level-headed. Indeed, Laurie is represented as conscientious, intelligent, and responsible throughout much of the film, particularly in comparison to her more overtly hedonistic friends. Unlike Lynda, who has no apparent regard for her education, Laurie expresses concern when she realises she has left her chemistry book at school; and, unlike Annie, Laurie does not shirk her babysitting duties in favour of pursuing her own agenda. In fact, Laurie is shown to

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[8] It is worth noting that many subsequent slasher films faced much stronger allegations of character vacuity.

embrace the task, organising an evening of activities to entertain Tommy; using pragmatic logic to address his fears about the Boogeyman; providing a reassuring guarantee that she will not let him come to any harm; and even taking on the additional responsibility of looking after Lindsey so Annie can spend the evening with Paul. Laurie is also portrayed as less assertive and less self-confident than her friends; she is shown to be worried about the consequences of Annie's outburst in the street ('Annie, some day you're going to get all of us in deep trouble.'), and she becomes deeply embarrassed when she realises her crush on Ben Tramer has been revealed.

Although aware that her behaviour cultivates a somewhat prudish image – as established when she refers to herself as 'the old girl scout' after agreeing to babysit Lindsey – Laurie is not entirely strait-laced. Often expressing a somewhat wistful interest in the activities of her friends, she laments her lack of plans for the weekend and seems keen to indulge in the same behaviour as other teenage characters, smoking marijuana, talking about her interest in Ben Tramer, and helping Annie and Lynda take advantage of the empty Wallace house – even though there is an obvious air of subterfuge surrounding their plans.

Despite this fact, Laurie's more mature qualities nonetheless set her apart, and it is these traits that ultimately enable her to survive the onslaught of Michael Myers. While others remain oblivious to Michael's presence, Laurie notices him waiting outside the school, emerging from hedgerows, and standing motionless amidst the washing in her neighbour's garden; the only other character to exhibit such attentiveness is Tommy Doyle, who also manages to survive the night of terror. Laurie is also the only one of Michael's victims to fight back; even in the face of frenzied attacks, such as those that take place in the living room and bedroom, she takes every available opportunity to defend herself, even using knitting needles and wire coat hangers to ward off her assailant. And, crucially, she remains level-headed throughout this terrifying ordeal, urging Tommy and Lindsey first to hide, and then to run and get help. Such actions not only secure the safety of her two young wards, but ultimately lead to her own survival; as Tommy and Lindsey flee, they encounter Dr. Loomis and direct him toward the Doyle house, just in time to prevent Laurie from being overpowered. It is only after the showdown between Loomis and Myers that the reality of what has happened finally sinks in; as Laurie cowers on the floor, traumatised and distressed, she looks up at Loomis and utters a simple statement through her tears: 'It *was* the Boogeyman.' Laurie's core values of logic and pragmatism have been violently

assaulted; her peaceful, suburban life has been forever changed, and Loomis' final words offer no hope of reassurance: 'As a matter of fact, it was.'

This sequence not only demonstrates the development of Laurie's character, but also serves to reaffirm much of the information the viewer has learned about Dr. Loomis throughout the course of the film. Based at Smith's Grove Sanitarium, Dr. Sam Loomis is revealed to be the psychiatrist responsible for treating Michael Myers; the viewer discovers that he has spent fifteen years trying to reach and rehabilitate his patient, but has been unsuccessful on both counts.

The history between Dr. Loomis and Michael Myers leads to Loomis assuming the role of Michael's main adversary; whereas Laurie undoubtedly represents an opposing moral force, it is Loomis who takes on the responsibility of pursuing and apprehending the deadly escapee. Loomis embraces this responsibility with an obsessive drive, demonstrating a single-minded sense of determination that becomes one of his most defining characteristics. As such a highly motivated character, Dr. Loomis is almost entirely defined in terms of his goals; every action he takes is a direct response to an ongoing chain of events set in motion by his adversary.

The obsessive sense of urgency with which Loomis pursues these goals is shown to be the result of his previous experience at Smith's Grove; over the course of the preceding fifteen years he has become a unique authority on the subject of Michael Myers, amassing a specialised body of knowledge that is inaccessible to anyone else in the film. This allows Loomis to function as a vital expositional conduit – both for other characters in the film and for the viewer. In the process of recounting his own experiences, he delivers background information and behavioural insights that facilitate a greater understanding of the character of Michael Myers. This is particularly useful in light of Michael's propensity for silence, as discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The implication of Loomis' expertise is the development of a dreadful understanding of Michael's true nature; this is made apparent in the doctor's response to Sheriff Brackett's suggestion that he seems 'plain scared' by the unfolding events: 'I spent eight years trying to reach him, and then another seven trying to keep him locked up, because I realised that what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply evil.' Because Loomis is aware of Michael's capacity for evil, he recognises the dangerous nature of the situation and consistently warns others not to underestimate the capabilities of his quarry. Earlier in the chapter I described how both Nurse Chambers and Dr. Wynn are admonished by Dr. Loomis for making precisely this mistake. Dr. Wynn comes under particular fire for neglecting to heed Loomis' advice that the

precautions taken at Smith's Grove were not adequate to confine Michael. Remaining sceptical even in the face of this admonition, Dr. Wynn expresses doubt that Michael would be capable of driving 150 miles to Haddonfield; a typically acerbic response from Loomis soon silences Wynn: 'Well he was doing a very good job last night!'[9] For Loomis, it is simply impossible to be too cautious when dealing with Michael Myers – a philosophy he demonstrates at the end of the film, when he continues to pull the trigger of his gun long after all of the bullets have been emptied into Michael's chest. By stressing these capabilities, Loomis shapes the way that Michael Myers is perceived by both the viewer and other characters in the film. Repeatedly insisting that Michael's capacity for evil cannot be underestimated leads to the creation of a deep sense of fear that emphasises the atmosphere of suspense surrounding the character. This point will be subject to further elaboration later in the chapter.

The expertise possessed by Loomis means that he is always ready to demonstrate the courage of his convictions; he is shown to act impatiently and insistently, both asserting his own authority and challenging the authority of others in order to convey the gravity of Michael's escape. When he discovers a matchbook from Nurse Chambers' car discarded in a lay-by on the way to Haddonfield, he immediately finds a payphone to alert the local police, emphasising his position as Michael's doctor in order to convince them to take action; and when Sheriff Brackett questions whether Loomis' theories are correct after Michael fails to return to the Myers house, Loomis is quick to accept the challenge of restoring Brackett's faith, imploring him not to leave the town vulnerable to Michael's reign of terror.

The specialised body of knowledge amassed by Loomis allows him to become a highly perceptive adversary capable of discerning Michael's potential course of action: the moment he sees patients wandering around the grounds of Smith's Grove, a look of urgent concern descends upon his face as he suspects what may have happened; when his fears are realised, he is quick to assert that Michael will be heading for Haddonfield, and he knows that the cemetery and the Myers house are likely to be destinations of choice. Loomis is also portrayed as perceptive in other ways, as demonstrated by his insistence that the media should not be informed about Michael's escape in case the news causes widespread panic and confusion.

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[9] This exchange not only helps establish Dr. Loomis' character, but also serves to address a potential gap in plot logic by highlighting the fact that Michael should not know how to drive after residing in the sanitarium since the age of six.

Such observations demonstrate the logical, realistic, matter-of-fact attitude that can result in Loomis being seen as somewhat cold and unfeeling. I have already alluded to this side of the character in discussing the final sequence where Loomis refuses to alleviate Laurie's fears about Michael, but these traits are also evident in other scenes, most notably at the beginning of the film where Marion Chambers berates Loomis for his dehumanising lack of compassion toward Michael ('Couldn't we refer to *it* as *him*?'); and in an exchange with Sheriff Brackett that serves to drive home the grim reality of Michael's arrival:

> Dr. Loomis: Death has come to your little town, Sheriff. You can either ignore it, or you can help me to stop him.
>
> Sheriff Brackett: Doctor, do you know what Haddonfield is? Families. Children. All lined up in rows, up and down these streets. You're telling me they're lined up for the slaughterhouse?
>
> Dr. Loomis: They could be.

Dr. Loomis' fears are well-founded; at the precise moment he utters this foreboding warning, Michael Myers is already wreaking havoc throughout the suburbs of Haddonfield. These are the same suburbs that played host to Michael's childhood, during which he appears to have shared a traditional family home with his older sister, Judith, and their parents.

Just as Loomis pursues his adversary throughout the film, Michael is simultaneously engaged in a pursuit of his own – an iniquitous pursuit compelled by a drive to hunt and kill. This drive is the defining characteristic associated with Michael Myers, who assumes the role of villain with the same sense of single-minded purpose that consumes Dr. Loomis. Whether escaping from Smith's Grove, stalking potential victims, or engaged in the act of attack, almost every scene in which Michael appears serves to reinforce his function as predatory villain in pursuit of vulnerable prey.

However, although Michael is shown to be resolutely determined to achieve his deadly objectives, his methodology is neither reckless nor hasty. In fact, it is the measured and deliberate approach adopted by Michael that renders his character particularly menacing. Portrayed as perennially still, silent, and watchful, Michael demonstrates a seemingly endless capacity for patience. This allows him to bide his time until presented with the perfect opportunity to strike; and, when he does, the attack can be both fast and frenzied, often serving as a violent demonstration of his brute

strength. Michael exhibits this pattern of behaviour recurrently throughout the film: he stalks Laurie from a distance, watching silently throughout the day before subjecting her to a prolonged and frantic attack; he takes part in a series of motionless vigils outside the Wallace house as he waits for the chance to carry out his violent assault on Annie; and he observes Lynda and Bob for several minutes before disappearing into the depths of the house, only to spring out of the darkness with lethal rapidity when Bob makes the fatal error of venturing downstairs alone.

Michael's attack on Bob provides one example of the brute strength associated with the character; during the assault, Michael throttles Bob with such power that he succeeds in lifting the helpless victim entirely off the ground. This show of force is by no means an isolated incident: Michael uproots Judith's gravestone from the cemetery; kills Lindsey's pet Alsatian, Lester, with his bare hands; and also exhibits a proclivity for arranging the corpses of his victims into ghoulish tableaux – a feat that undoubtedly requires a considerable amount of physical strength.

The threat posed by Michael is enhanced by his representation as utterly relentless and virtually unstoppable. Despite being stabbed by Laurie on three separate occasions, Michael requires only the briefest moment of respite before his onslaught continues unabated; and, even when his fate seems assured after being shot six times by Dr. Loomis, the mysterious disappearance of his body suggests that he has survived against the odds. Persistent and seemingly impervious to pain or injury, Michael Myers is portrayed as a villain who cannot be escaped and cannot be defeated.

The atmosphere of suspense and menace surrounding Michael is significantly enhanced by elements of cinematography, sound, and music. Subjective point-of-view camerawork rendered via Steadicam technology provides the opportunity to witness the action from Michael's perspective; the amplified noise of heavy breathing signifies his presence when he cannot be seen; and an array of tense musical themes, staccato notes, and discordant blasts of sound provide suspenseful warnings of the character's imminent appearance.

In addition to his association with such motifs, Michael is frequently depicted in silhouette or swathed by darkness; although this is not always the case, as attested to by his daylight appearances in the streets of Haddonfield, his habitual tendency to conceal himself in darkness and shadow ensures that the viewer remains perpetually unsettled by the presence of such areas on screen. This renders certain sequences particularly tense: both Annie's trip to the washroom and Laurie's exploration of the Wallace house

are exercises in suspense, with the viewer continually compelled to scan the darkness for any signs of Michael's presence.

When Michael finally decides to reveal himself, it is usually done in one of two ways: by emerging slowly from the shadows in the background of a shot, as he does at the beginning of his assault on Laurie, or by rapidly darting into the frame from the edge of the screen, as seen when he attacks both Annie and Bob. In these last examples, Michael's sudden movement from offscreen to onscreen space takes advantage of the widescreen format to shock the viewer in the most effective way possible. John Carpenter frequently exploits this format to add an air of ambiguity to the character; situating Michael at the edge of the widescreen shot often results in the character being partially obscured by the limitations of the frame.[10] This has the effect of rendering his figure somewhat indistinct, particularly in scenes where he is silhouetted against the darkness. Removing any detail, definition, or distinction intentionally dehumanises Michael, transforming him into an evil and ambiguous presence looming large over the residents of Haddonfield. Carpenter's intention is reflected at the end of the film, where Michael is credited simply as 'The Shape.'

This process of dehumanisation is reinforced by Michael's costume, which consists of a simple grey boiler suit – taken from the Phelps Garage employee he kills en-route to Haddonfield – and a ghostly white mask with a shock of wild brown hair, which Sheriff Brackett suggests was among the items stolen from the hardware store.[11] By entirely obscuring Michael's face, the mask effectively obliterates any hint of expression; as a result, the character appears devoid of emotion, remaining eerily unaffected in even the most violent and distressing scenes. This effect is intensified by Michael's perpetual silence, which prevents any meaningful insight into his thoughts and feelings.

Due to the limitations placed on Michael's ability – or willingness – to communicate, information pertaining to the character is often relayed via second-hand sources. The portentous monologues delivered by Dr. Loomis are particularly useful in this respect, providing a way to ensure that the viewer recognises the truly inhuman nature of Michael's character:

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[10] For an in-depth discussion on Carpenter's use of the widescreen format, see Sheldon Hall, 'Carpenter's Widescreen Style,' in *The Cinema of John Carpenter: The Technique of Terror*, ed. Ian Conrich and David Woods (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 66-77.

[11] In the documentary *Halloween Unmasked 2000* (Mark Cerulli, 1999), *Halloween* producer and co-writer Debra Hill discusses the origins of the mask featured in the film. According to Hill, the object began life as a Captain Kirk mask, originally shaped to the face of William Shatner, before the eye holes were expanded, the hair was changed, and the flesh tone was whitened in order to make the face as featureless as possible.

> I met him fifteen years ago. I was told there was nothing left; no reason,
> no conscience, no understanding; and even the most rudimentary sense
> of life or death, of good or evil, right or wrong. I met this six-year-old
> child with this blank, pale, expressionless face and the blackest eyes –
> the devil's eyes.

Dr. Loomis invariably describes Michael as 'inhuman,' 'evil,' and 'it' rather than 'he,' ensuring that the character's lack of humanity is emphasised at every available opportunity. Nowhere is this made more apparent than in an unsettling scene where Dr. Loomis implies that a dead dog is the result of Michael's unnaturally monstrous appetite:

Dr. Loomis: He got hungry.

Sheriff Brackett: Could have been a skunk.

Dr. Loomis: Could have...

Sheriff Brackett: A man wouldn't do that.

Dr. Loomis: This isn't a man.

Loomis is by no means the only character to reinforce the portrayal of Michael as an inhuman monster: Tommy frequently draws associations between Michael and 'the Boogeyman,' insisting that the figure he sees outside the Wallace house is the ghoulish creature in question; and, by the end of the film, even the pragmatic Laurie becomes convinced that Michael Myers and the Boogeyman are one and the same being.

Coupled with his single-minded sense of purpose, the emphasis on Michael's inhuman nature risks creating a somewhat one-dimensional villain – a mindless Boogeyman defined only by an insatiable desire to hunt and kill. At first glance, the deadly trail of devastation left in Michael's wake may appear to support this perception, but a closer study of the character's behaviour appears to hint at the existence of a more complex, multi-dimensional personality.

Michael may be portrayed as a menacing predator above all else, but he is also represented as an intelligent, resourceful, and opportunistic character in possession of sufficient foresight to orchestrate plans and manipulate situations to his own advantage. He not only succeeds in escaping from Smith's Grove, but in requisitioning a vehicle and demonstrating the skills necessary to drive and navigate the 150-mile journey back

to Haddonfield; once he arrives, he manages to equip himself with all of the supplies required to meet his deadly objectives; and he endeavours to ensure his success, even predicting the need for contingency plans, as evidenced by his pre-emptive decision to secure the Wallace house by jamming the back door using a rake.

Michael is also portrayed as possessing a keen sense of self-awareness. His tendency to wear costumes suggests that he understands the need to conceal his appearance in order to avoid detection. This becomes particularly apparent when he disguises himself as Bob in an attempt to get close to Lynda. By fashioning a ghost costume out of a bed sheet and Bob's glasses, Michael successfully deceives Lynda, who presumes that the figure standing in front of her is, in fact, her boyfriend. Lynda coyly teases 'Bob,' even exposing her breasts as a way to tempt him out of his costume ('See anything you like...?'). By the time she realises her terrible mistake, it is far too late, as Michael is already close enough to launch into his deadly attack.

Although he is both intelligent and self-aware, the film also provides a glimpse of another dimension to the character. This is revealed in the moments following Bob's death, when Michael steps back from the body he has impaled against the wall and tilts his head to one side, appearing to gaze at his handiwork with a childlike sense of curiosity. However, although such a gesture may indicate some degree of naivety, this should not undermine the capacity for evil at the heart of the character.

The elaborated form of characterisation – and the narrative prominence – associated with Michael, Dr. Loomis, and Laurie renders these characters much less 'disposable' than those occupying minor and secondary roles. This is because the disclosure of additional biographical and behavioural information fleshes out the main characters into multifaceted, multidimensional individuals, and, as a result, the viewer invests greater significance in their potential narrative trajectories. However, a more developed process of characterisation does not preclude the omission of significant areas of information.

The details of Laurie's social life may be laid bare, and the viewer may discover a great deal of information about her personality, but very little is revealed about her childhood, her upbringing, or her family life; the motivation driving Dr. Loomis may be consistently placed under the microscope, but next to nothing is disclosed about his personal life or his professional life outside his relationship with Michael Myers; and the modus operandi associated with Michael may be subject to intense scrutiny, but the motive behind his actions is never confirmed.

Even in the case of the most developed characters, the information disclosed is generally limited to *key* details; the viewer does not receive insights into *every* aspect of their lives. The prioritisation of information with direct causal significance over primarily elaborative details results in the formation of 'biographical snapshots,' the content of which is largely determined by the parameters of the plot; anything falling outside these parameters is likely to be curtailed as extraneous to requirements.

In the face of such missing information, the viewer can draw on cues available within the film to fill in the gaps and piece together a more coherent life for the characters – a life that extends beyond the restrictive limitations of the plot. The cues supplied by the film may be overt, where explicit references to events outside the plot encourage the viewer to picture specific moments in – or aspects of – a character's life; or they may be more subtle, where events outside the plot are implied by information present in the film, but no specific details are provided.

Explicit cues usually point to past or future events as a means of prompting cognitive character expansion. Descriptions of Dr. Loomis' previous encounters with Michael at Smith's Grove, and references to prior occasions on which he raised concerns about security at the facility, cue the viewer to picture an earlier period of the character's life; whereas expressions of future intent, such as Lynda's plans to learn new cheerleading routines and the girls' conversations about attending the forthcoming school dance, encourage the viewer to envisage the extension of the characters' existence beyond the finite scope of the plot. References to 'missing' characters can also function in a similar way: although neither Paul nor Ben Tramer is seen in the film, references to their relationships with Annie and Laurie explicitly point towards the continuation of characters' lives outside the boundaries of the screen.

Implicit cues operate on a more subtle level; often, just a limited amount of character information is sufficient for the viewer to infer a more expansive existence. The job titles associated with Dr. Loomis and Sheriff Brackett, for example, imply that the younger years of both men were spent studying, training, and gradually gaining the experience necessary to assume their positions of authority; Tommy Doyle's distressed reaction to the Myers place is indicative of a pre-existing familiarity with the 'spook house,' suggesting that he has learned about its fearsome reputation on previous occasions; Laurie's willingness to carry out errands for her father not only implies a healthy familial bond, but also suggests that his request is not unusual, implying that she has carried out many such tasks in the past; and the personal insights that pass between

Laurie and her friends lead the viewer to infer that their relationship is well-established – a likely result of many years spent growing up in each other's company.

The character information missing from *Halloween* does not generally impede the construction of a coherent story. This is because it usually assumes a non-causal form that does not directly pertain to the progression of the plot. As a consequence, the incorporation of non-causal character information can be perceived as an ostensibly optional activity: the viewer can essentially choose the extent to which they engage in the activity of constructing more coherent lives for the characters in the film.

However, missing character information which *does* have direct causal significance can pose a more difficult challenge for the viewer; this is because gaps in causality can prove problematic for the construction of a coherent story. Such a gap arises in *Halloween* in the form of Michael's missing motive. At no point does the film offer any explanation or justification for the killing of Judith Myers, or the subsequent massacre that takes place in 1978. The only insight the viewer receives is provided by Dr. Loomis, who suggests that Michael has spent the last fifteen years, 'waiting for some secret, silent alarm to trigger him off.' Aside from this vague description, the motivation driving Michael to kill is never directly addressed. Faced with such causal ambiguity, the viewer strives to fill in the missing information, engaging imaginative processes of conjecture in an attempt to render Michael's actions more coherent. This process is evidenced by the varied theories which emerged in the wake of the film. Some perceived Michael as a moral crusader, intent on punishing the 'hedonistic' teenagers of Haddonfield for straying from the path of social decency; others interpreted his acts of violence as the result of an unhealthy obsession with his sister – an obsession that drove him to kill Judith herself, and then to target similar victims; and some were content to accept that his insatiable desire to kill was the result of an extreme form of psychosis.[12] The motivational ambiguity in *Halloween* not only inspired debate and discussion, but also attracted some critical praise, particularly from those who believed

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[12] Gene Siskel was among those to suggest that Michael's actions were the result of a misguided sense of morality triggered by his sister's engagement in sexual activity; the notion that the character was a motiveless maniac was put forward by critics including Tom Allen and Ron Pennington. See, respectively, '*Halloween*: Some Tricks, a Lot of Treats,' *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1978, S3, 7, http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1978/11/22/page/29/article/tempo-movies/; Tom Allen, '*Halloween*,' *Village Voice*, November 6, 1978, https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/898-halloween [date incorrectly cited as November 1979]; and Ron Pennington, '*Halloween*,' *Hollywood Reporter*, October 27, 1978, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/halloween-1978-film-review-745577.

113

that the purpose of the film was not to engage in 'purposeless characterisation and explanation,' but to cause the viewer 'as much distress as possible.'[13]

Whether the character information missing from *Halloween* assumes a causal or non-causal form, there is little doubt that the absence of biographical or behavioural details initiates processes of characterisation that take place outside the film. By engaging in cognitive extrapolation, it becomes possible for the viewer to look beyond the parameters of the plot and construct more coherent lives for the characters presented on screen.

Having examined the causal agents *within* the plot, the final area of the film to be scrutinised in this chapter is the plot itself. As previously discussed, the plot of most classical narrative films represents a *selection* of story events arranged to elicit specific responses from the viewer. The plot of *Halloween* is no different, offering the viewer an inevitably selective depiction of the overall story. But this does not mean that the film is incoherent: the amount of story information presented by the plot is sufficient for the viewer to construct a logical chain of cause and effect, and the arrangement of this information according to classical norms helps facilitate the process of comprehension. In part, this is due to the fact that the plot of *Halloween* maintains linear sequentiality, presenting story events in strict chronological order without the addition of complicating devices such as flashbacks or flashforwards. The progression of the timeline is also clearly signposted, with intertitles serving to orient the viewer where necessary; and the action generally develops in line with the canonical story structure identified in the previous chapter – with the exception of the post-title sequence, which begins *in media res*, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

Thus, it is possible for the viewer to discern an intelligible chain of events with relative ease, as summarised below:

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[13] Vincent Canby, 'Chilling Truths About Scaring,' *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, D13, ProQuest (121017260).

- **Halloween Night, 1963 – Haddonfield, Illinois**

  - Six-year-old Michael Myers kills his older sister, Judith

- **Smith's Grove, Illinois – October 30, 1978**

  - Michael Myers escapes from Smith's Grove Sanitarium

- **Haddonfield – Halloween, 1978**

  - Dr. Sam Loomis pursues Michael
  - Michael stalks Laurie Strode and her friends, Annie and Lynda
  - Dr. Loomis arrives in Haddonfield and asks Sheriff Brackett for assistance in locating and apprehending Michael
  - Michael follows Laurie and Annie to their babysitting appointments
  - Michael kills Laurie's friends
  - Michael attacks Laurie
  - Dr. Loomis intervenes and shoots Michael
  - Michael falls from a balcony and disappears into the night

Although the plot information in *Halloween* proves more than adequate for the viewer to piece together a coherent narrative, this does not mean that the story is rendered in its entirety. One of the reasons is that the story is woven out of multiple strands of action, none of which is presented in a complete form.

To elaborate, *Halloween* features three principal strands of story action; these develop concurrently and centre on Michael Myers, Dr. Loomis, and Laurie Strode. The plot alternates among these strands, presenting the events that are most relevant to the causal chain uniting all three. When the plot deviates from one strand to another, the progression of events in the first strand is not suspended; the storyline continues to unfold despite the fact that it no longer holds the focus of the plot. As a result, when the plot returns to the first strand, the action does not resume at the original point of deviation, but continues at a new point further along the timeline. Events occurring between these two points are not presented to the viewer, leaving a gap in the strand of action where story information is missing.

The focus of the plot shifts continually as the film progresses, which creates many examples of this type of omission. One such instance occurs in the strand of action pertaining to Dr. Loomis, which involves a journey from Smith's Grove to Haddonfield. Although the beginning of this journey is presented to the viewer, the plot does not remain focused on Loomis for the duration; at several points, attention shifts to the alternative strands of action associated with Laurie and Michael. Loomis' story is not held in a state of suspension during these periods: his journey toward Haddonfield

continues to progress while the plot concentrates on concurrent events unfolding elsewhere. As a consequence, the viewer is presented with several intermittent stages of the journey, rather than a complete strand of action. The diagram below serves as a rudimentary illustration of this process, incorporating blacked-out 'gaps' to signify the periods in which story information is missing from the plot:
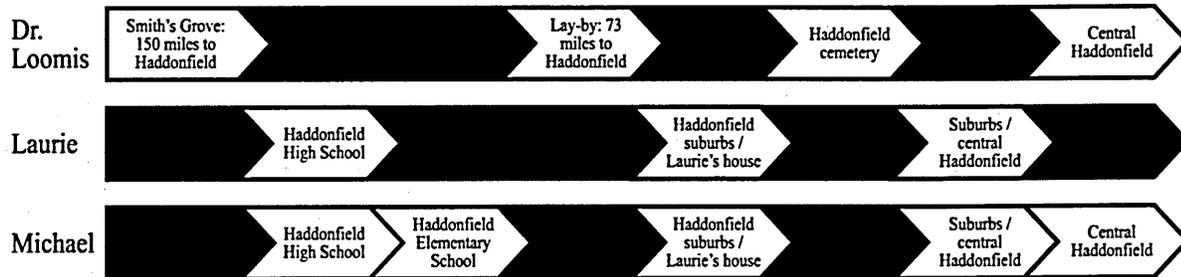
Figure 1. Strands of action in Halloween.

This diagram also demonstrates the replication of the process of omission across the other strands of action. For instance, when the plot is focused on Loomis' stop at the lay-by, the viewer does not see the events unfolding simultaneously for Laurie and Michael; and when Michael is stalking Tommy outside the elementary school, the concurrent actions undertaken by Laurie and Dr. Loomis are omitted from the plot.

However, the process of omission is not always so clear-cut; there are several points during this section of the film where separate strands of action intersect with one another. The first instance occurs at Haddonfield high school, when Laurie looks out of the window and notices Michael watching her; after leaving school, she notices him again – first, in the suburban streets, and, subsequently, outside her house. Unbeknownst to Laurie, the intersection continues later in the day, when Michael follows her journey to central Haddonfield with Annie. Laurie and Annie stop to greet Sheriff Brackett before they drive away from the scene, at which point the focus of the plot shifts to Dr. Loomis, who just misses the girls as he arrives to speak to the sheriff. This moment signals the beginning of a new intersection, this time between the strands of action pertaining to Loomis and Michael. As Loomis introduces himself to Brackett, Michael can be seen slowly manoeuvring his car in the background of the shot. The close proximity of the adversaries in this scene renders this moment particularly suspenseful, with Loomis entirely unaware of the events unfolding behind him.

Such intersections represent points at which multiple strands of action are united within a single scene. This is significant because the simultaneous presentation of multiple strands reduces the overall amount of story information omitted from the plot at that moment. However, despite such instances serving to mediate the process of plot omission, the practice of continual alternation employed to highlight events which play a part in the overall causal coherence inevitably renders the individual strands of action incomplete.

The act of privileging causally significant information also results in the creation of temporal ellipses, where particular passages of story time are intentionally excluded from the plot. There are many such ellipses in *Halloween*, the majority of which are barely perceptible to the viewer. In these cases, the amount of missing time comprises mere moments, such as the transition between Laurie entering the ground floor of her house at the end of one shot and appearing in her upstairs bedroom at the start of the next; or the cut in which one shot shows Annie stepping out of the Doyle house and the next shows her entering the Wallace's garden on the opposite side of the street. The film also includes more extensive ellipses, in which longer durations of story time are more noticeably absent from the screen. Michael's night-time escape from Smith's Grove, for example, is followed by a scene that takes place in Haddonfield the next morning; and after Laurie arrives home from school in the afternoon, the next scene shows her leaving to meet Annie later in the evening. In both cases, there are not only brief moments but several hours of story time missing from the plot.[14]

However, the most significant temporal ellipsis is the fifteen-year time lapse between the first two sequences of the film. The opening sequence takes place in Haddonfield on Halloween night, 1963: six-year-old Michael Myers enters the bedroom of his older sister and kills her; he then makes his way outside the house, where his parents discover him standing in a catatonic state. At this point, the film cuts to the next sequence, which takes place at Smith's Grove Sanitarium on the night of October 30, 1978. During this scene – in which the now-adult Michael escapes from the facility – the duration of the ellipsis is confirmed by Dr. Loomis, who mentions that his patient 'hasn't spoken a word in fifteen years.' Although this is the most extensive temporal

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[14] It is worth noting that there is a potential temporal anomaly in the scene where Annie and Laurie are shown driving to their babysitting jobs. Despite the fact that this journey takes place in daylight, their arrival at the Doyle and Wallace households is bathed in darkness. This sudden shift, perhaps necessary to establish a suitably atmospheric environment for the upcoming night of terror, appears to involve a somewhat flexible approach to temporality.

117

ellipsis in the film, every such gap – whether major or minor – represents a definable period of story time missing from the film.

Not all forms of temporal exclusion in *Halloween* are so easy to quantify; this is because the timeline of the story has the potential to continue *ad infinitum*, whereas the scope of the plot is restricted to a finite period bound by a beginning and an ending. Unrestricted by such boundaries, the story extends both backwards and forwards, into the past and the future, originating long before the earliest event presented by the plot and continuing long after the latest has passed. These pre- and post-plot time periods are not included in the film, resulting in an inevitably incomplete rendering of the overall story.

The plot of *Halloween* focuses on a fifteen-year period that begins when Michael kills Judith on the October 31, 1963, and ends with his disappearance on the October 31, 1978. These dates represent the earliest and latest points of story time presented in the film, as illustrated on the diagram, below:
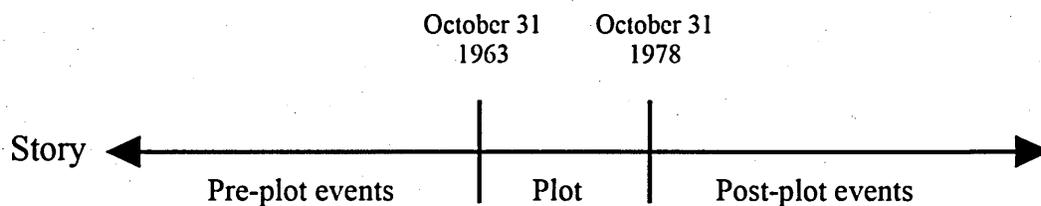
Figure 2. Narrative timeline in Halloween.

The film does not provide any information about the events preceding Michael's violent attack on his sister: the opening sequence simply begins *in media res*, offering no introduction or exposition to contextualise the brutal assault unfolding on screen. The contributing factors are unknown; the victim is unfamiliar; and even the identity of the assailant is concealed until the end of the sequence.

The ending of the film is just as enigmatic, with the mysterious disappearance of Michael resulting in a lack of narrative closure that denies the viewer any clear sense of resolution. No further information is provided about the subsequent development of events, and any consequences or implications are left wholly unexplored. Michael's whereabouts remain unknown; Laurie is left lingering in a state of trauma; and Dr. Loomis is abandoned to confounded defeat, having failed to apprehend his quarry.

The temporal scope of the plot clearly restricts the viewer's knowledge of events that fall beyond its extremities, but – as the preceding discussion has shown – even

those events occurring within this scope are subject to rigorous processes of selection. *Key* events may be selected for inclusion in the film, but the plot does not present *every* event occurring in *every* strand of action at *every* point in time. Instead, it presents a fragmented version of the story that the viewer must render coherent by using their cognitive initiative to fill in the missing information.

Where events are missing from a strand of action, the viewer can use the remaining scenes as cues to piece together a continuous sequence. This is because existing knowledge of linear sequentiality allows the missing steps to be inferred with relative ease. To elaborate, when presented with an incomplete set of events – for example, Event 1 ... Event 3 ... Event 5 – it is logical to infer that events 2 and 4 are necessary to complete the sequence. By combining the presented and inferred information, it becomes possible to create a continuous sequence of events: 1 2 3 4 5. This process is illustrated on the diagram below:

Presented events   1   3   5

Inferred events   2   4
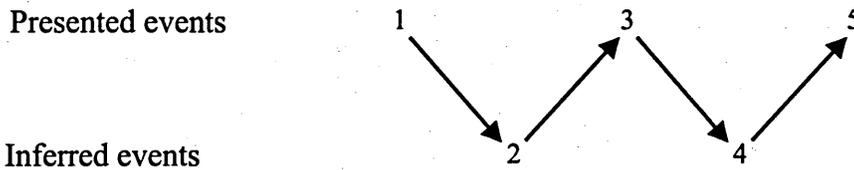
Figure 3. The construction of sequential continuity.

Thus, although the plot of *Halloween* omits certain stages of Dr. Loomis' journey to Haddonfield, the intermittent scenes provided are sufficient for the viewer to infer the occurrence of connective action, thereby enabling the cognitive construction of a continuous sequence of events:
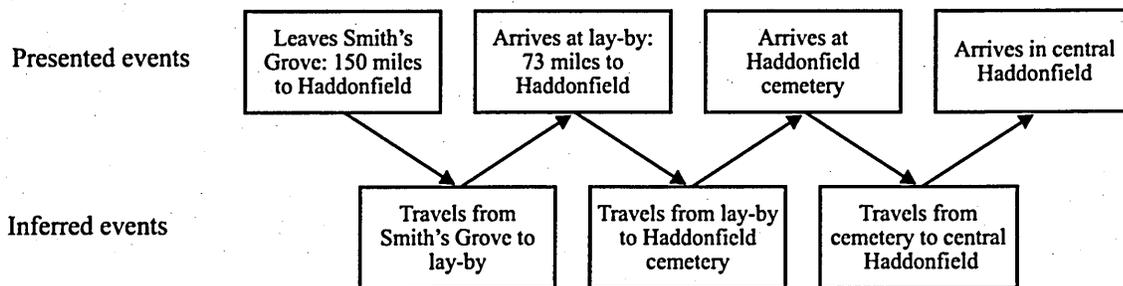

Figure 4. Sequential continuity in Halloween.

This process is replicated throughout the film, with incomplete strands of action continually rendered more coherent as a result of cognitive viewing activities. For instance, when Laurie's strand of action skips from her school classroom to her subsequent walk home, the viewer infers that these scenes are connected via interim events, such as the end of the lesson or Laurie's attendance at any remaining classes. In a similar way, when Michael's strand of action progresses through an intermittent series of appearances – first at the high school, then the elementary school, then various sites in and around the suburbs – the viewer infers the occurrence of connective movement between these locations. Even though this section of the film does not show Michael travelling from one destination to another, the viewer uses logical deduction to transform the character's succession of separate appearances into a relentless pilgrimage around the streets of Haddonfield.

Similar cognitive processes are employed to increase narrative coherence in the face of temporal ellipses. In such instances, the viewer uses cues provided by the film to construct a picture of the missing periods of story time. These cues – like those pertaining to missing character information – assume either an explicit form, where they make a direct contribution to the expansion of knowledge; or an implicit form, where they indirectly prompt the viewer to make assumptions about developments during the missing period of time.

Explicit cues include the intertitles used to indicate the fifteen-year time lapse between Michael's violent outburst in the opening sequence and his subsequent escape from Smith's Grove; and Dr. Loomis' expositional speeches, which ostensibly function to inform other characters about the events that took place during Michael's incarceration, but also serve as an effective way to arm the viewer with pertinent information relating to the missing part of the story.

Implicit cues often encourage the comparison of a particular element of the story before and after an ellipsis; any differences are likely to provide an indication of the events that took place during the interim. For example, when the viewer returns to Smith's Grove the morning after Michael's escape, the facility appears to be operating as normal; this is in direct contrast to the state of affairs the previous night, when the patients were wandering freely and Dr. Loomis raised the alarm in a state of panic. The air of normality the next morning suggests that the patients were rounded up, the security breach was addressed, and order was successfully restored, but none of these events was presented in the film – the viewer is left to infer their occurrence during the temporal ellipsis between the night of October 30 and the morning of October 31.

A further example is provided by the changing representation of the Myers house. In the opening sequence, the building is presented as a traditional family home – an unremarkable and unmistakably middle-class residence filled with the conventional trappings of idyllic domesticity. However, the next time the viewer encounters the house, everything has changed. Fifteen years have passed, and the warm family abode has transformed into a dilapidated, decrepit, nightmarish vision that has acquired a fearful legacy as a haunted house, fit only for dead dogs and 'spooks.' In this instance, the viewer can use the state of the house as a cue to construct a picture of developments over the last fifteen years. The run-down condition of the house – coupled with Mr. Strode's ongoing mission to lease the property – suggests that Michael's parents moved out following the events of Halloween 1963; it also suggests that subsequent buyers were difficult to find, perhaps due to the gruesome nature of the events that took place within its walls. The property is likely to have increased in notoriety as it remained unoccupied and its association with the horrific story of Michael Myers took root; and, as the years progressed and the neglect persisted, the building finally assumed the mantel of fully-fledged legend among the children of Haddonfield.

Whether the viewer is prompted to fill in temporal ellipses using explicit or implicit cues, the process always involves the creation of events that take place in a purely cognitive arena. The same creative activity can also be used to construct a picture of events that lie beyond the temporal extremities of the plot, thereby enabling the viewer to extend the finite timeline presented by the film.

The timeline can be extended backwards, to the period of time before the start of the plot, and forwards, to the period of time after it ends. The opening sequence contains several cues that prompt the viewer to extend the timeline backwards, but the most apparent is the choice to begin the action *in media res*. The first image that the viewer sees is a subjective point-of-view shot that is already in motion. As the shot approaches a large house and peers in through the windows, it becomes clear that another scene is in unfolding inside, where a young couple appear to be in the midst of a passionate embrace, kissing and giggling as they prepare to move upstairs to the bedroom. Opening the film with such scenes implies that the viewer is witnessing part of an ongoing story in which the action is already in progress; the events presented by the plot essentially appear to have been set in motion at some point prior to the beginning of the film.

As the sequence progresses, additional cues serve to consolidate the notion of a pre-existing timeline: the exclamation of recognition uttered by Judith at the start of the

121

attack ('Michael!') indicates the existence of a relationship that pre-dates this encounter; the arrival of Michael's parents suggests that their absence began before the start of the film; and the clown costume worn by Michael suggests that he spent the evening trick-or-treating before events took a deadly turn.

All of these cues prompt the viewer to infer that they are joining an ongoing timeline; and, although they may not be required to extend the story too far backwards, the potential exists to stretch the timeline much further into the past. The existence of the Myers family unit, for example, suggests a whole branch of unexplored history pertaining to the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Myers. By engaging in conjecture it would be possible for the viewer to trace this branch of the story – and many others – back far before the beginning of the plot. However, this activity is largely optional, as the film generally provides sufficient background information for the viewer to comprehend the plot at hand.

In contrast to the opening sequence, the final sequence of the film cues the viewer to extend the timeline forward, beyond the end of the plot. This is largely accomplished by a lack of narrative closure. Just as Dr. Loomis appears to have successfully slain his adversary, the body of Michael Myers disappears. At this point, the film comes to an end, leaving the story in an explicitly unresolved state. Although employed primarily as a device to promote terror, this ending also represents one of the few occasions on which *Halloween* actively appears to invite narrative continuation. By insinuating that the whereabouts of Michael are unknown, the film overtly suggests that the story is not over, providing a clear indication of potential opportunities for further development.

The unresolved state in which the story is abandoned leaves unanswered questions pertaining to the development of the main strands of action. Is Laurie safe from Michael? Will she ever be the same again? Will Dr. Loomis resume his pursuit? If so, how will he pick up Michael's trail? What happened to Michael? Did he survive and escape, or did he disappear by more supernatural means? Such unanswered questions prompt the viewer to engage in conjecture in an attempt to gain an adequate sense of closure. However, because the film is not in a position to confirm or deny the validity of these conjectural scenarios, they have the potential to develop exponentially, continuing to extend the story in any number of possible directions.

All of the forms of plot omission discussed above – alternation among multiple strands of action, temporal ellipses, and timeline restrictions – represent ways that the story of *Halloween* is subject to fragmentation and degradation. In all cases, it is

122

necessary for the viewer to augment the plot information by extending the constructive process into the cognitive realm.

At the end of this chapter it is possible to assert that ellipses and omissions are an inescapable part of *Halloween*. Locations are not explored in their entirety; the process of characterisation is incomplete; and the plot presents only a limited selection of the story events. In order to render these components more coherent, the viewer must extrapolate beyond the film itself, engaging processes of inference, deduction, imagination, and conjecture in order to piece together a picture of the whole story. Every act of extrapolation shifts the process of narrative construction away from the film and into the mind of the viewer. This suggests that only *part* of the story is presented by the film itself; the rest exists in a purely cognitive capacity, assuming a highly subjective form that varies according to the individual viewer. This notion is essential for understanding how it became possible for *Halloween* to generate a hypertextual narrative, because it establishes that the story presented by the original film was fundamentally incomplete. This notion will be subject to further expansion in the next chapter, where I will draw on Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality to examine how the story of *Halloween* was both continued in and transformed by the sequel that followed.

CHAPTER FIVE
HALLOWEEN II: PROCESSES OF HYPERTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Following the success of *Halloween* and the wave of popular slashers that emerged in its wake, the prospect of a sequel to John Carpenter's film seemed almost inevitable; and with so many questions left unanswered and so much of the narrative world left unexplored, there appeared to be no shortage of potential avenues for further development. However, not everyone felt the same way, and for Carpenter in particular, the concept of a *Halloween* sequel was both unnecessary and unappealing. As the director reflects in a recent interview, 'I didn't think there was any more story, and I didn't want to do it again. All of my ideas were for the first *Halloween* – there shouldn't have been any more!'[1]

Although Carpenter had no wish to direct a second *Halloween* film, he opted to remain on board as both writer and producer, sharing these responsibilities with *Halloween* collaborator Debra Hill. However, the writing process proved problematic from the beginning, with Carpenter struggling to overcome his reservations about the production of a sequel. As he describes, 'I had to write the second movie, and every night I sat there and wrote with a six pack of beer trying to get through this thing.'[2]

While the writers were grappling with the challenges of developing a convincing narrative continuation, the directorial duties were assumed by Rick Rosenthal – a young filmmaker who had impressed Carpenter with his work on *The Toyer* (Rick Rosenthal, 1980), a short psychological thriller based on a one-act play by Gardner McKay.[3] Rosenthal was keen to create a seamless sense of continuation between *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, and the fact that many of the original crew remained in place for the sequel made it possible closely to emulate the visual style established in the first film. Rosenthal was also keen to emphasise the suspenseful atmosphere which had been so successful in setting *Halloween* apart from the highly visceral slashers that followed, but Carpenter was concerned that this approach would prove unpopular with

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[1] See Jen Yamato, 'John Carpenter Q&A: Why *Halloween* Didn't Need Sequels and What Scares the Master Of Horror,' *Deadline Hollywood*, October 31, 2014, http://deadline.com/2014/10/john-carpenter-qa-halloween-sequels-michael-myers-861942/.
[2] Ibid. It is worth noting that, despite expressing reservations about participating in the production of *Halloween II*, John Carpenter subsequently went on to produce *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* and has recently announced his intention to assume the role of executive producer for a forthcoming addition to the franchise. See 'John Carpenter Returns to *Halloween!*' *Halloweenmovies.com*, May 25, 2016, http://halloweenmovies.com/john-carpenter-returns-to-halloween/.
[3] Rosenthal discusses Carpenter's reaction to *The Toyer* in an interview with Sebastian Twardosz. See Lip.TV, '*Transparent to Halloween II with Rick Rosenthal,*' episode of *The Insiders*, YouTube video, posted December 29, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jvn-xQlMLow.

contemporary audiences. Recognising that horror cinema had moved on since the release of *Halloween* in 1978, Carpenter was aware that audiences were developing a taste for fast-paced, blood-soaked 'splatter' films steeped in violence and gore – factors he felt were notably absent from Rosenthal's 'predictable' and 'pedestrian' cut of *Halloween II*.[4]

Much to Rosenthal's dissatisfaction, Carpenter reluctantly stepped in to make several amendments designed to bring the film in line with the gruesome slashers that had become so popular with contemporary audiences. By cutting the film shorter to increase the pacing, and shooting additional scenes to heighten the scare factor, Carpenter's amendments helped satisfy the demands of the financiers by bringing the film 'at least up to par with the competition.'[5]

Ultimately serving as a direct narrative continuation, *Halloween II* picks up the story of Michael Myers immediately after the events depicted in *Halloween*. As Dr. Loomis resumes his obsessive search for Michael, a severely traumatised Laurie is taken to Haddonfield Memorial Hospital for treatment. In the meantime, having survived six gunshot wounds and a fall from the balcony of the Doyle house, Michael continues to terrorise the neighbourhood. As he prowls the back streets of the town, the situation escalates into a media circus, with radio and television reports broadcasting every detail of the night's events. Refusing to give up his pursuit of Laurie, Michael steadily makes his way to the hospital, his eventual arrival signalling a bloodbath in which a slew of security guards, doctors, and nurses are brutally slain. While Michael grows closer to locating Laurie, Dr. Loomis and the Haddonfield police extend their search across the town. Hopes of a quick resolution are raised when Michael appears to have been killed in an explosive car crash, but the trail of pursuit grows cold when the charred victim is identified as Ben Tramer. The only additional evidence of Michael's movements is found at the elementary school, where the Celtic word 'Samhain' – a reference to the pagan 'Feast of the Dead' held to mark the end of summer – is discovered scrawled in blood in one of the classrooms. As Loomis considers the significance of this reference, Nurse Marion Chambers arrives to escort the doctor back to Smith's Grove Sanitarium. While doing so, she reveals the existence of a closed file on the Myers case – a file that details the shocking revelation that Laurie Strode is, in fact, Michael's younger sister. Realising that Michael must be attempting to reach

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[4] See Gilles Boulenger, *John Carpenter: The Prince of Darkness – An Exclusive Interview with the Director of Halloween and The Thing* (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 2001), 108.
[5] See James Verniere, 'John Carpenter: Doing His Own *Thing*,' *Twilight Zone Magazine* 2, no. 8 (November, 1982): 24-30.

Laurie, Loomis and Chambers drive to the hospital, arriving just in time to save the traumatised teen. But Loomis' bullets once again prove ineffective, and it is only by igniting a huge explosion that envelops both himself and Michael that the doctor succeeds in stopping the deadly Boogeyman.

Released in 1981, *Halloween II* was a hit at the box office, bringing in a total domestic gross of over $25.5 million.[6] However, although the commercial popularity of the film provided a clear indication that audiences were keen to find out more about the story of Michael Myers, the critics were less convinced about the merits of this 'doggedly inevitable sequel.'[7] One of the main factors contributing to the widespread sense of critical disappointment was the aforementioned shift away from suspense toward a more graphic approach. Many critics echoed Rosenthal's concerns that the addition of seemingly gratuitous scenes of violence represented an unwelcome departure from the suspenseful atmosphere that had been so successfully established in *Halloween*.[8]

By Carpenter's own admission, *Halloween II* was an exploitative production primarily designed to capitalise on the success of *Halloween* and the popular slashers that followed by supplying more of the same thing to an existing audience base.[9] The marketing surrounding the sequel did little to disguise this purpose; with a tagline that promised to deliver 'More of the night he came home,' it was difficult to ignore the economic factors driving the production. Such motives were initially responsible for discouraging Carpenter from embarking on the project, and some commentators felt that the filmmaker's cynicism was evident in the final film, resulting in a 'dispassionately executed' sequel in which the story was 'as haphazardly stitched together as one might expect from a script requiring a stew of hops and barley to muster up a conclusion.'[10] Dissatisfied with the film's undeveloped subplots and lack of characterisation, and sceptical of the motives for introducing the 'gimmick' of the familial relationship

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[6] '*Halloween II*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween2.htm.

[7] Tom Shales, 'The Blood Puddles of *Halloween II*,' *Washington Post*, October 30, 1981, C11. Nexis. For similarly negative reviews, see Roger Ebert, '*Halloween II*,' in *Roger Ebert's Home Movie Companion: 400 Films on Cassette, 1980-85* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews, McMeel, and Parker, 1985), 158; David Ansen, 'Eyeball to Eyeball,' *Newsweek*, November 16, 1981, 117; and Berg, '*Halloween II*,' *Variety*, November 4, 1981, 22, ProQuest (1438369312).

[8] See, for example, Ken Hanke, *A Critical Guide to Horror Film Series* (London: Garland, 1991), 283; Jay Scott, 'Too Much Tired Spilled Blood from *Halloween II*'s Bogeyman,' *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 31, 1981; and Gene Siskel, '*Halloween* Sequel not Equal to Original,' *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1981, S3, 1, 2.

[9] Verniere, 'John Carpenter: Doing His Own *Thing*.'

[10] See, respectively, Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies: Horror on Screen Since The 1960s*, rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 382, 400; John Pym, '*Halloween II*,' *Monthly Film Bulletin* 49, no. 578 (March 1982): 43; and *Culture Crypt*, '*Halloween II*,' n. d., http://culturecrypt.com/movie-reviews/halloween-ii-1981.

between Michael and Laurie, several critics accused *Halloween II* of both 'diminishing' and 'diluting' the earlier picture.[11] In this way, it can be said that the act of narrative extension was seen to have a negative impact on the original film, thereby demonstrating the notion that hypertexts can have a retrospective bearing on the way hypotexts are perceived by the viewer.

However, despite such negative perceptions, not all critics were so dismissive. For some, the commercial success achieved by the production was a reflection of success at a narrative level, suggesting that the sequel represented a credible extension of the original story. As Marjorie Bilbow described at the time:

> With fine panache, new director Rick Rosenthal carries off the difficult
> feat of making a sequel which follows directly on form the original and
> could pass as part of the same whole. Even with John Carpenter as
> producer, co-writer and composer, to help maintain the status quo, it is
> quite a feat to weld the two stories together and keep the action going
> without slackening the tension.[12]

Viewed from this perspective, it becomes apparent that *Halloween II* does not merely repeat, but continues the story of *Halloween*, ultimately transforming the original production from a standalone adventure into the first component of an expanded narrative system – a *hypertextual* system. By analysing both the construction of this system and the wider implications of the hypertextual relationship connecting the first two *Halloween* films, it will be possible to develop a greater understanding of *Halloween II* as a *transformative continuation* of the original film. In the process of doing so, I aim to reveal evidence to challenge the notion that the first *Halloween* sequel represents little more than a gory, gimmick-laden exploitation of its predecessor.

The first step toward accomplishing this task will be to embark upon a formal analysis of the opening scenes of *Halloween II*; this will make it possible to identify ways in which the film initially establishes a hypertextual relationship with its predecessor. Following this, I will bring the notion of transformative continuity into sharper focus by analysing two of the most hypertextually-significant developments to occur within the film: the survival of Michael Myers, and the revelation of the motive driving him to kill.

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[11] See, respectively, James Berardinelli, '*Halloween II*,' *ReelViews*, n. d.,
http://www.reelviews.net/reelviews/halloween-ii; and J. A. Kerswell, *Teenage Wasteland: The Slasher Movie Uncut* (London: New Holland, 2010), 114.
[12] Marjorie Bilbow, '*Halloween II*,' *Screen International*, February 6, 1982, 82, ProQuest (1040543495).

Halloween II immediately establishes hypertextual connectivity with its predecessor by using its opening moments to repeat the final sequence of *Halloween*. This acts as a form of textual validation by signifying that the sequel belongs to the same diegetic world as the original film. For the series viewer in possession of prior knowledge of the first film, the repeated footage provides a reminder of the point at which they departed the story of Michael Myers, thus serving as a general re-introduction to familiar characters, locations, and events. Whereas, for the new viewer who has no prior experience of the diegetic world established in *Halloween*, the repeated footage functions in a slightly different way, serving as an expositional outline designed to provide sufficient narrative information to aid comprehension of the upcoming events. Although the primary function of including the final sequence from *Halloween* may be to establish narrative connectivity, the process also has inevitably transformative implications. Excising the majority of *Halloween* in favour of a brief recap of the closing scenes constitutes an act of hypertextual distortion in which the original film is effectively reduced from a full-length feature into a short abridgement consisting only of those events which are most pertinent to the impending process of narrative development. Recognising that the abridged sequence features only key information from the original film, both series and non-series viewers are free to infer that Laurie's traumatisation at the hands of Michael Myers and Dr. Loomis' mission to stop the terrifying Boogeyman are particularly relevant events that are likely to be subjected to further development as the plot of the sequel unfolds.

The repeated sequence includes two elements that are particularly significant when viewed from a hypertextual perspective. The first is the addition of a new shot that was not included in the sequence as it originally appeared at the end of *Halloween*. After Dr. Loomis shoots Michael, the footage cuts to a long exterior shot of Tommy's house showing Michael falling backward over the balcony toward the ground. This shot was not originally present in the sequence, which showed the fall from a closer, low-angle perspective that prevented the full scale of the drop from being seen. Although it may be easy to overlook the significance of such a slight modification, in hypertextual terms, the addition of this extra shot amounts to a process of *formal expansion*, whereby the hypotext is augmented not through massive addition – as in the case of hypertextual extension – but through a more subtle form of 'stylistic dilation.'[13] Ultimately unnoticeable to non-series viewers, this modification can be perceived only by viewers

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[13] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 260.

with prior experience of the sequence in its original state. For such viewers, the additional shot provides an opportunity to witness Michael Myers' demise from a new perspective. This process hints at the elaborative potential of *Halloween II* from the outset, helping to prime the viewer for the imminent expansion of the diegetic world, while further validating the sequel as part of this world by, quite literally, assimilating it into the narrative system established by the original film.

The second significant element associated with the repeated footage is the musical score which accompanies the sequence. Whereas the final scenes of *Halloween* originally played out to John Carpenter's slow and suspenseful theme music, when these scenes recur at the beginning of *Halloween II* they are accompanied by a revamped version of the signature tune. Written by Carpenter and Alan Howarth, the new theme is faster and more frenetic than the ominous original, resulting in a change in tone that establishes the intention for the sequel to differentiate itself by presenting familiar elements in unfamiliar ways. This process not only helps to retain the interest of the series viewer in the face of repeated information, but also provides a useful demonstration of the palimpsestuous nature of the sequel, as the new film superimposes itself onto the old, not for the purpose of concealment, but to create a new version in which parts of the original still show through.[14]

The sequence following the repeated footage represents the first instance at which *Halloween II* is revealed to be a proleptic continuation of the previous film. Resuming the action the moment after Michael Myers' mysterious disappearance, the film shows Dr. Loomis dashing out into the garden of the Doyle house. With no sign of Michael except an indentation and a pool of blood where the Boogeyman hit the ground, Dr. Loomis immediately resumes his frantic trail of pursuit. In this way, the plot of the film effectively begins *in media res*, moving forward without any form of temporal ellipsis to mark a separation between the sequel and its predecessor. This serves as a particularly efficient means of establishing hypertextual continuity, creating a seamless narrative transition between the two films while overtly signifying the intention for the productions to be perceived as part of the same whole.

The connection between the films is further reinforced when the next door neighbour appears to ask what is going on, complaining that he has been 'trick-or-treated to death tonight.' By acknowledging that the current set of events is taking place on the same night as the original film – albeit at a much later hour when the Halloween festivities have largely drawn to a close – this comment serves to establish a general

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[14] On the palimpsestuous nature of texts, see ibid., 398-9.

sense of temporal progression, thus helping to consolidate the viewer's comprehension of the narrative relationship connecting the films.

As *Halloween II* progresses, the importance of understanding the nature of this relationship becomes increasingly clear. This is because the plot depicts a town dealing with the *aftermath* of events that have previously occurred. Without sufficient knowledge of these events, there is a risk that the coherence of the film may be compromised – as evidenced in the critical commentary discussed earlier in the chapter. Produced not as a standalone story, but specifically to continue existing strands of action, *Halloween II* is rendered most coherent to series viewers with the ability to perceive the wider narrative context governing the film. It is these viewers who recognise the moment Dr. Loomis races away from the Doyle house to resume the pursuit of his elusive adversary as the moment that the plot is effectively 'reset' to imitate the situation presented at the beginning of *Halloween*.

Whereas non-series viewers may form general expectations about plot development based on their prior knowledge and experience of other films, the series viewer has access to a more specialised level of knowledge which permits the formation of more detailed hypotheses about the process of narrative progression. For these viewers, the re-initiation of existing storylines represents an opportunity to discover additional information about areas left unexplored by the first film – a subject to which I will return later in the chapter.

Hypertextually speaking, the process of continuation that takes place in *Halloween II* represents a form of *narrative extension* – an augmentative alteration proceeding by means of massive addition.[15] The hypertextual extension of a story that was originally contained within a single film has significant transformative implications. Many of these operate retrospectively, either by altering the narrative status of the previous film or by affecting the way the film is perceived by the viewer.

To elaborate, the production of *Halloween II* fundamentally alters *Halloween* by transforming it from a standalone production into a *hypotext* – an anterior production serving as the progenitor of a subsequent *hypertext*. As the end of the original film is transformed into the beginning of the sequel, *Halloween* becomes redefined as the first instalment of an ongoing story, thereby becoming the point of genesis for a more extensive narrative system. One result is that *Halloween* assumes the critically-significant status of an 'original' production, while the sequel is inevitably positioned as derivative. The designation of this status not only helps consolidate the critical

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[15] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 254.

valorisation of *Halloween*, but also imbues the earlier film with a new sense of narrative authority.

When positioned as the 'original' film in the series, *Halloween* retrospectively assumes an influential role in shaping the viewer's expectations about the future direction of the series; in addition, the film also becomes the default point of comparison for any ensuing hypertexts, setting the standard against which any subsequent processes of differentiation will ultimately be measured. This is due, in part at least, to the cognitive bias known as the *primacy effect*. As discussed earlier in the study, this bias dictates that information presented at an early stage of a film will establish the dominant hypotheses that influence the viewer's perception about what follows. When transposed into the hypertextual context in question, this means that the events, characters, locations, and other motifs presented in the first *Halloween* film become canonised as the narrative foundations which will affect the way the viewer perceives any prospective hypertextual developments.

Following the opening scene, the film subsequently cuts to the credit sequence, which not only employs the same font and colour scheme as *Halloween* but also features a strikingly similar image alongside the credits: a carved pumpkin towards which the camera moves progressively closer. Serving primarily as a means of evoking memories of the original film, the similarities between this sequence and the opening credits of *Halloween* encourage the series viewer to perceive the connections between *Halloween II* and its predecessor, while also providing an early indication that – on some level, at least – the film intends to satisfy the commercial principle of delivering 'more of the same thing.' This principle is not only underlined by the style of this sequence, but by the credits themselves. As a series of familiar names appear on the screen, it becomes clear that key members of the cast and crew involved in the sequel also participated in the production of the original film. Not only do the credits show the names of several returning cast members, including Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Charles Cyphers, and Nancy Stephens, but they also confirm the involvement of other *Halloween* veterans, such as John Carpenter, Debra Hill, Dean Cundey, Tommy Wallace, and executive producer Irwin Yablans. For series viewers who recognise the cinematic lineage of the personnel involved with the production, the presence of familiar names within the opening credits paves the way for the formation of specific expectations about the narrative structure and stylistic qualities of the upcoming film.

Throughout the post-credit sequence, which shows Michael avoiding Dr. Loomis by prowling around the back streets of the neighbourhood, news reports can be seen and

heard on the televisions and radios in the houses. Summarising the terrifying events unfolding in the suburbs of Haddonfield, these reports represent a particularly effective means of establishing hypertextual connectivity, both reminding viewers that the events of the previous film took place in the same diegetic world as the sequel and providing an efficient way to ensure that new viewers receive an appropriate level of narrative exposition. The news reports indicate that the sense of panic surrounding Michael Myers is rapidly escalating. In *Halloween* – at least until the final showdown – feelings of alarm were generally restricted to Dr. Loomis and Sheriff Brackett, the characters who had the greatest degree of insight into the dreadful danger looming over the town. In *Halloween II*, however, Michael's notoriety begins to gain momentum, and, as news of his exploits spread across the neighbourhood, the general public soon become engulfed by a wave of terror. Depicting the aftermath of the events that occurred in the previous film not only reinforces the sense of hypertextual coherence, but charting the escalating levels of panic also demonstrates one of the key principles of sequelisation: increasing the scale of events to heighten the sense of spectacle.

In expressing his own feelings of panic ('I shot him six times! I shot him six times! I shot him in the heart!... This man is... he's not human!'), Dr. Loomis immediately resumes one of his primary narrative roles: shaping the viewer's perception of Michael Myers by reinforcing the character's representation as a supernatural monster. The resumption of familiar narrative roles continues as the sequence progresses, with Michael's bloody execution of Alice serving violently to reassert his defining function as a predatory villain.

The appearance of recurrent characters, and their assumption of recurrent narrative roles, provides an efficient way of establishing a sense of hypertextual continuity. For series viewers, such familiar points of reference serve to trigger memories of the original film, thereby easing the cognitive assimilation of the separate narrative instalments.

Within the post-credit sequence, it is not only the presence of recurrent characters and their assumption of familiar roles which evokes memories of *Halloween*, but the narrative action itself – and the way in which it is presented. Particularly strong parallels are drawn with the memorable opening sequence of *Halloween*, which depicts Michael Myers committing his first atrocity at the age of six. Both sequences represent Michael using subjective point-of-view camerawork; from this perspective, the viewer bears witness to two similar sets of events. In both films, Michael approaches a house, peers into the windows, enters unobserved, and acquires a large kitchen knife. In

Halloween, the subsequent scene shows the slaughter of Judith Myers at Michael's hands; in the sequel, Michael proceeds to enter a second house where teenager Alice soon meets a similar fate.

    Halloween II employs several motifs throughout this sequence to reinforce the hypertextual relationship with the original film. As in *Halloween*, the sequel not only signifies Michael's presence using the aforementioned point-of-view perspective, but also by the sound of heavy breathing and by dogs barking whenever he draws too close; his representation as an indefinable shape swathed in darkness and shadow remains intact, as do his tendencies to loiter in the background of shots, or to loom on the outskirts of the frame until violently erupting into the screen to claim his prey. As such familiar motifs appear throughout the post-credit sequence, and, as other characters, locations, and plot scenarios drawn from the original film are similarly employed in the generation of hypertextual connectivity, they begin to assume greater narrative significance, gradually transforming into a tentative body of *series conventions*.

    Sharing similarities with other cinematic conventions, series conventions are identifiable only to viewers in possession of a specialised level of knowledge and experience; in this case, to those series viewers with prior experience of the original *Halloween* film. In the case of the sequence described above, whereas non-series viewers may draw on their existing knowledge of genre conventions to infer that the use of a subjective point-of-view shot or the sound of heavy breathing is likely to indicate some kind of villainous presence, series viewers use their knowledge of the wider hypertextual framework to situate the same formal elements within a much more specific set of narrative parameters. This enables such viewers to recognise that the point-of-view perspective, the heavy breathing, and other cues such as the barking dogs signify something much more significant: the survival of Michael Myers.

    Up to this point, the viewer is unaware of Michael's fate following his disappearance from the grounds of the Doyle house. It is only with the deployment of this collection of motifs that his survival is ultimately confirmed. This manner of confirmation is somewhat apt, providing a reflection of the enigmatic formal techniques used to depict the mysterious 'shape' throughout the first *Halloween* film.

    The realisation that Michael has survived prompts the viewer to re-evaluate their existing set of schemata pertaining to the character. Whereas Michael's superhuman nature was largely restricted to the realms of suspicion in the first film – by the viewer, if not by Dr. Loomis – the character's ability to survive the injuries he incurred at the end of *Halloween* renders his unnatural constitution beyond question. This instils

Michael with a greater sense of power and, having added this information to their existing body of knowledge, the viewer is likely to react to any future 'injuries' with a more sceptical attitude.

It is not only viewers who incorporate new information and readjust their schemata accordingly; recurrent characters also accumulate a specialised body of knowledge based on their previous experience within the diegetic world. This becomes clear in a scene toward the end of the film, when Michael once again appears to meet his fate at the hands of Dr. Loomis. As Loomis unleashes yet another round of bullets into his adversary, Michael falls to the ground and a marshal tentatively approaches the body. Ignoring Loomis' warnings that the Boogeyman may still be alive, the marshal inches toward the body, at which point Michael suddenly sits up and grabs the unsuspecting law enforcer before promptly slitting his throat. The previous experience amassed by veteran viewers and recurrent characters alike facilitates the assumption of a privileged position of knowledge which prepares them for the possibility that Michael might behave in this way. The marshal, however, has not acquired any specialised schemata pertaining to Michael's character and, as a result, such a deceptive pattern of behaviour falls beyond his existing horizon of expectations, leaving him particularly vulnerable to attack.

Aligning series viewers with recurrent characters and encouraging their assumption of a privileged position of knowledge helps cultivate a feeling of involvement in the diegetic world – or, more accurately, the *hyperdiegetic* world. Every addition to the existing set of schemata amounts to an increase in narrative expertise – a process which progressively widens the gap between series and non-series viewers. In this way, the acquisition of specialist knowledge plays a vital role in the development of fan culture surrounding the series; a point to which I will return later in the study.

The revelation that Michael has survived signifies that the character is free to continue his reign of terror; this immediately cues the series viewer to resume the process of hypothesis-making which was initiated in the previous film. This process takes place at both a prospective level, as the viewer considers Michael's potential course of action, and a retrospective level, as the viewer begins to posit theories about precisely *how* the character managed to survive. However, although Michael's survival opens up new avenues of potential narrative development and initiates a new set of related cognitive processes, there are additional implications to consider. To elaborate, by showing what happened to Michael following his disappearance, *Halloween II* effectively concretises one version of events, thereby closing off any alternative paths of

134

narrative development. This not only curtails the process of conjecture-forming prompted by the lack of closure at the end of *Halloween* but also presents the viewer with a course of action that may run contrary to their own opinion about how the story should continue – or, indeed, whether it should continue at all. It is at this point that the adaptive nature of the series viewer comes into play, as they decide whether to accept the version of events presented by the sequel and continue following the story, or whether to reject the proposed path of narrative development and discontinue their series viewership. Later in the study, I will return to explore the tension between acceptance and rejection in more depth; at this point, however, it is sufficient to note that the act of filling in missing information is not always met with approval from the series viewer. In the case of *Halloween II*, the negative critical reaction prompted by the elaboration of existing narrative information appears to indicate that developments constituting acts of *hypertextual demystification* can prove to be particularly contentious.

For example, Michael's survival provides a definitive answer to one of *Halloween*'s most significant enigmas. Whereas the end of the original film instilled the viewer with a sense of foreboding terror, both by refusing to confirm Michael's fate and by hinting at the character's disturbing omnipotence, the continuance of his story in the sequel signifies that the character is safely contained within the boundaries of the diegetic world, thereby neutralising the universal sense of threat that was generated by his disappearance in the previous film. This example demonstrates one of the ways in which *Halloween II* was seen to 'diminish' its predecessor, lessening the impact of *Halloween* by diluting the sense of terror that was established in the original film. Much to the dissatisfaction of some critics, the process of hypertextual demystification continues throughout *Halloween II*, eventually culminating in the revelation of the motive driving Michael to kill.[16] The first *Halloween* film revealed little information about Michael's motive, resulting in a significant causal ellipsis many believed was an indication of a chilling psychosis fuelled by the character's instinctively violent nature. Beyond the cursory explanation offered by Dr. Loomis, who somewhat ambiguously suggested that the fifteen-year anniversary of Judith Myers' death had somehow triggered Michael's murderous rampage, the film provided no real insight into the motivation behind the Boogeyman's terrifying killing spree, or into his choice of victims – apparently marked for death following a chance encounter between Michael and Laurie at the Myers house. Taking full advantage of the causal ambiguity

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[16] See, for example, Berardinelli, '*Halloween II*.'

established by its predecessor, *Halloween II* seizes the opportunity to develop this area of information, which it does by revealing two particularly significant pieces of the causal puzzle.

The first of these is discovered at Haddonfield Elementary School, where the Haddonfield police officers discover evidence of Michael's presence, including the blood-scrawled word 'Samhain,' as established earlier in the chapter. The use of this Celtic term in such a context appears to suggest – albeit in somewhat vague terms – that there is a connection between Michael's actions and ancient Druidic mythology. Although this is the first point at which any such notion appears within the *Halloween* films, it is not technically the first occasion on which Michael's actions have been associated with Druidism. In 1979 author Curtis Richards penned a novelisation of *Halloween* which significantly embellished the background information pertaining to Michael Myers. Not only does the novel provide previously unknown details about Michael's trial, sentencing, and incarceration, but it also suggests that the origins of the character's psychosis lie in an ancient Celtic curse – a curse which was responsible for inflicting a similarly violent disposition upon his grandfather.

The development of this area of information indicates that the desire to expand the story of *Halloween* predated the production of the first cinematic sequel. However, despite the fact that the hyperdiegetic world associated with *Halloween* clearly extends beyond cinematic boundaries, a detailed analysis of the resulting implications lies beyond the scope of this study. In part, this is due to the fact that Richards' novelisation is not a sequel, but an *adaptation* which alters the original mode of narrative presentation; an act known in hypertextual terms as *transmodalisation*.[17] Although a discussion of the wider implications of this transmodal development falls outside the boundaries of this thesis, the fact that background information revealed in Richards' novelisation was subsequently integrated into the first film sequel nonetheless provides a useful demonstration of hypertextual connectivity in action.

To return to the scene in Haddonfield Elementary School, following Dr. Loomis' brief explanation of the festival of Samhain, neither the exact nature nor the implications of Michael's relationship with Celtic Druidism is subject to further exploration. However, although this connection remains undeveloped within the boundaries of *Halloween II*, the notion of an ancient mythological influence nevertheless represents an interesting conceptual seed which has the potential to grow as the series continues. After all, just as *Halloween II* operates retrospectively to develop

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[17] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 277.

areas of the story that were not explored in *Halloween*, so, too, does the sequel generate its own prospective avenues for narrative development.

From a hypertextual perspective, the incident at the elementary school not only represents an initial attempt to instil some sense of meaning into Michael's behaviour, it also provides an opportunity to fill in part of the information that was omitted from the character's strand of action in the original film. To explain further, when discussing the plot of *Halloween* in the previous chapter, I drew attention to the way in which lateral ellipses – or paralipses – and temporal ellipses prevented the presentation of complete timelines pertaining to the movements of individual characters. *Halloween II* takes advantage of this situation by mining the incomplete hypotextual timelines for potential material to use in the construction of its own plot. An example of this occurs in the scene that takes place in Haddonfield Elementary School, which purports to show evidence that Michael desecrated the classroom earlier in the day. This event was not included in the original film, suggesting that it must have taken place during a paralipsis when the plot was focused on an alternative strand of action, or during a period of time that was entirely omitted from the film. By retrospectively filling in this part of Michael's timeline, *Halloween II* reduces the number of hypotextual ellipses – an act which ultimately enhances the coherence of the overall story. However, this enhanced sense of narrative coherence is only accessible to series viewers capable of recognising the hypertextual significance of specific events.

When the hypertext presents a 'missing piece' of the hypotextual timeline, viewers must possess the ability to reach back into their memory of the original film in order to identify correctly the corresponding 'gap;' it is only at this point that the new information may be assimilated coherently into the overall story, thereby resulting in a more complete picture of events. In the case discussed above, for example, the revelation of Michael's activity at the school prompts series viewers to recall their existing knowledge of the character's timeline, which reveals significant periods during which the Boogeyman's movements were unobserved, and, therefore, unknown. Viewers may reasonably assume that the damage in the classroom did not occur until the school day had finished, making it likely that Michael's visit took place sometime after he stalked Laurie and her friends on their way home, but before he followed the girls to their babysitting appointments later in the evening – perhaps during the temporal gap that occurred in between these events. Having identified an appropriate gap in Michael's timeline, the viewer is subsequently free to incorporate the new information revealed by the sequel, therefore resulting in a more complete strand of action. This

suggests that the story of *Halloween* is in a continual state of transformation, with the hypertextual revelation of additional details prompting an ongoing constructive process that requires the proactive participation of series viewers not only willing to expand their existing knowledge of the hyperdiegetic world, but to adjust their understanding of this world as necessary. Such adaptive viewing skills are certainly an advantage when the second piece of the causal puzzle is revealed.

Toward the end of the sequence in the elementary school, the sequel re-introduces Nurse Marion Chambers, a character the viewer first encountered in the opening scene of *Halloween*, where she was accosted by Michael as he made his escape from Smith's Grove. Nurse Chambers, it transpires, has been sent to retrieve Loomis before the doctor's enthusiastic manhunt draws any negative attention toward the sanitarium. Loomis is escorted away from the school by Marion and the colleagues begin to drive away from Haddonfield under the escort of a state marshal. However, during the journey Marion reveals that Michael is Laurie's brother, sending the doctor into a frenzied state as he realises that the Boogeyman must be heading to the hospital and demands that the marshal drives there straight away.

Up to this point, neither Dr. Loomis nor the viewer has been aware of any specific motivation driving Michael's relentless pursuit of Laurie Strode. However, the hypertextual addition of a motive where there was previously none constitutes a significant act of narrative transformation which has inevitable implications for the series viewer. The disclosure of the relationship between Michael and Laurie immediately initiates a process of retrospective re-reading, during which all of the events that took place in the preceding film – and in the earlier scenes of the sequel – are subject to re-consideration and re-interpretation. This is due to the fact that the new information engages the *recency effect* – a cognitive bias that serves as a counterpoint to the primacy effect previously discussed. The recency effect dictates that information presented at a later stage of a film may serve to qualify or negate the viewer's first impression of a character or situation, thereby prompting the viewer to modify their existing perception of the plot so far. In this case, Michael Myers is no longer perceived as a motiveless psychopath randomly targeting the unsuspecting teenagers of Haddonfield: he is transformed into a motivated killer driven by the sorocidal desire to seek out and slaughter his younger sister. And no longer is Laurie Strode perceived as an unfortunate victim who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time: she is now re-envisioned as a specific target destined to realise a fate predetermined by her accursed genealogy.

138

The act of looking backward to reconsider previously-established information initiates a process of cognitive adjustment, during which the viewer must decide whether the new information is compatible with their existing perception of the hyperdiegetic world – and its inhabitants. If the compatibility of the new information is accepted, it is likely to be successfully assimilated into the existing narrative system. This appears to have occurred in the case in question, with the familial relationship between Michael and Laurie now widely accepted as a core component of the *Halloween* mythology; to such an extent, in fact, that the hypertextual origins of this development are often obscured by the common misconception that the information was disclosed as part of the original film.

However, although series viewers – like all viewers – may be compelled to assimilate new information in order to construct a coherent story, this does not mean that hypertextual additions and modifications are bound to be greeted with universal acceptance. As established earlier in the chapter, some perceived the revelation of Michael and Laurie's relationship as little more than a crass gimmick designed only to enhance box-office figures rather than narrative coherence; others reacted with dismay at the provision of a motive to explain Michael's actions, claiming that the new information both demystified the character and lessened the general sense of terror – primarily by implying that the only ones in any real danger were those standing in between Michael and Laurie, and Laurie herself. For many, the ambiguity surrounding Michael Myers had been part of the appeal of the original *Halloween* film. As discussed earlier in the study, although ambiguity may be an impediment to straightforward narrative coherence, such an obstructive device can also stimulate processes of creative thinking and problem-solving, ultimately resulting in a more intensive – and more rewarding – cognitive experience.[18] By instilling Michael with a clear motivation, *Halloween II* provides an answer to one of the most mysterious enigmas of the original film, putting an end to the creative process of conjecture-forming and effectively curtailing the intensity of the viewer's cognitive experience.

However, it is not only the addition of motivation in *Halloween II* that retrospectively reduces the ambiguity of the original film. This is also achieved through the elaboration of Michael and Laurie's backstory – both through the information disclosed by Marion Chambers, and through the use of a flashback sequence that provides an (admittedly brief) insight into the childhood shared by these characters. By

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[18] See Todd Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling and Aesthetic Pleasure,' in *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*, ed. Arthur P. Shimamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 200.

showing Laurie visiting Michael in Smith's Grove when both were young children, this temporal anachronism not only fills in a missing piece of the backstory pertaining to Michael and Laurie but also acts as a complicating plot device which presents a cognitive challenge for the viewer. Overcoming complicating devices is a standard process when viewing classical narrative films – indeed, for analysts situated within the realm of historical poetics, the act of resolving tensions between complicating and progressive devices is an essential part of a pleasurable viewing experience. However, when complicating devices are situated within a hypertextual context, overcoming even the most standard can become a more complex process.

Unlike standard flashbacks which prompt viewers to construct a coherent story by recalling and rearranging information provided earlier in the film, the flashback sequence in *Halloween II* requires viewers to cast their minds back to another film entirely; for it is only by accurately recalling their memory of the previous *Halloween* film that they will succeed in rearranging the story events into the correct chronological order, thereby preserving the narrative coherence of the overall hypertextual system. By inducing viewers to exert the mental effort required to unify story information fragmented by time and space, *Halloween II* effectively heightens the intensity of the cognitive viewing activities, thereby resulting in what Todd Berliner refers to as 'a more exhilarating aesthetic experience'[19] – albeit only for series viewers who possess the capability to participate in the process.

As this chapter draws to a close, it is worth noting that the additional story information revealed in *Halloween II* not only provides answers to existing hypotextual enigmas; it also raises new questions that risk foregrounding elements of incoherence which might otherwise have escaped unnoticed. For example, although *Halloween II* explains the reason behind Michael's pursuit of Laurie, it does not provide any concrete insight into the root cause of his desire to kill his sister; even the speculative connection to an historic Druidic curse is abandoned with no further elaboration. The viewer may also ask why the body count of the films is so high if Michael is driven only by the motive of sororicide; after all, while it may be inferred that the circle of victims is restricted to those who stand in between the Boogeyman and Laurie, the film provides no confirmation, leaving the viewer to engage their skills of imaginative conjecture in order to continue their pursuit of coherence.

In this way, the introduction of new information in *Halloween II* can be said simultaneously to enhance *and* to threaten the coherence of the narrative system. On the

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[19] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 196.

one hand, new information serves to address gaps left unexplored by the hypotext, resulting in the creation of a more comprehensive hyperdiegetic world; but on the other, it raises questions and risks rejection if it fails to satisfy the expectations of the series viewer. As explained earlier in the chapter, the unproblematic assimilation of the familial relationship between Laurie and Michael suggests that the first *Halloween* sequel successfully satisfied these expectations and avoided rejection by fans of the original film. However, as the release of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* would soon demonstrate, it would not be so easy for all of the instalments in the series so deftly to avoid this fate.

CHAPTER SIX

HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH: HYPERTEXTUALITY AND VIEWER EXPECTATION

The commercial success of *Halloween II* virtually ensured the production of a further sequel, so it came as little surprise when *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* was released in 1982. However, as mixed critical reviews and an underwhelming performance at the box office soon indicated, the film was not quite the follow-up audiences were expecting.

Focusing specifically on the relative critical and commercial failure of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*, this section of the study seeks to examine the role of expectation within the hypertextual viewing experience. By identifying the key factors which influenced the formation of expectations surrounding the film, and by analysing the implications of defying these expectations, I aim to demonstrate that – for series viewers – *Halloween III* represents a challenging cognitive experience that poses a threat to the wider process of hypertextual engagement. Understanding the film from this perspective will provide evidence to reinforce the argument that the *Halloween* series functions as a more complex formal system than has previously been acknowledged.

For John Carpenter and Debra Hill, the demise of Michael Myers at the end of *Halloween II* was both definitive and irreversible. Having previously expressed their reluctance to continue the adventures of the mysterious Boogeyman beyond the boundaries of a single film, they refused to participate in another direct sequel, seizing *Halloween III* as an opportunity to develop the series in an entirely new direction.[1] Having succeeded in establishing Halloween as 'a whole new season to show films,'[2] Carpenter envisioned the third film as a starting point for a new annual tradition which would see the release of a series of narratively-independent productions connected only by the concept of Halloween.[3] Thus, the filmmaker approached British screenwriter Nigel Kneale – known primarily for his work on the *Quatermass* series – and asked him to write a story that did not involve any of the characters from *Halloween* or *Halloween*

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[1] See Ellen Carlomagno, '*Halloween III: Season of the Witch*: An On-the-Set Report on the Ambitious Sequel to Carpenter's Classic,' *Fangoria* 22 (October 1982): 8; and James Verniere, 'John Carpenter: Doing His Own *Thing*,' *Twilight Zone Magazine* 2, no. 8 (November, 1982): 29.

[2] John Carpenter, quoted in Verniere, 'John Carpenter: Doing His Own *Thing*,' 29.

[3] Although Carpenter's vision was never realised, the concept of a Halloween-inspired anthology subsequently formed the basis for the film *Trick 'r Treat* (Michael Dougherty, 2007), in which five short horror stories are woven together using the seasonal festival as a connecting device.

II.[4] Kneale agreed and went on to produce an initial draft, but subsequent changes by director Tommy Lee Wallace resulted in the screenwriter asking for his name to be removed from the credits entirely.

Duly dispensing with any narrative connection to the previous *Halloween* films, *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* instead recounts the story of Dr. Daniel Challis (Tom Atkins) and his attempts to prevent maniacal Celtic toymaker Conal Cochran (Dan O'Herlihy) and his band of humanoid robots from murdering the children of America using Halloween masks instilled with deadly Druidic powers derived from the rocks of Stonehenge.

The film drew some positive reaction: several critics perceived the choice to diverge from the story of Michael Myers as an innovative success; others drew attention to the film's subversive tendencies, citing its nihilistic outlook and use of social satire as evidence that it was a cut above mere trash cinema; while Vincent Canby praised the film for using humour to treat familiar genre clichés with a sense of stylish parody.[5] However, such positive reviews were far from universal, with the majority of critics regarding the decision to abandon the story of Michael Myers as a convoluted and confusing step in the wrong direction.[6]

Negative responses to the film were not restricted to critical circles. As Ian Conrich observes, prior to the release of *Halloween III*, the popularity of Michael Myers had already generated a loyal fan following which perceived the character as synonymous with the *Halloween* series; thus, when the enigmatic Boogeyman failed to materialise in the new film, audiences reacted with both anger and disappointment.[7] Letters published in the horror magazine *Fangoria* provide evidence of such hostility, with one particularly irate cinemagoer demanding an apology from the filmmakers for delivering a 'deplorable' film which incited nothing but 'moans and groans' from the

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[4] Carpenter discusses the pre-production process of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* in Giles Boulenger, *John Carpenter: The Prince of Darkness – An Exclusive Interview with the Director of* Halloween *and* The Thing (Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 2001), 109.

[5] Vincent Canby, 'Halloween III Plotting a Joke,' *New York Times*, October 22, 1982, C28, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/10/22/movies/haloween-iii-plotting-a-joke.html. For positive reaction to the film's choice to diverge from the established continuity, see Carrie Rickey, 'Halloween III: Season of the Witch,' *Newsday*, October 22, 1982, S2, 3; and Adam Sweeting, 'Changing the Formula: *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*,' *Melody Maker*, June 18, 1983, 32; for comments pertaining to the film's subversive tendencies, see Cynthia Rose, 'Third Cut is the Deepest: *Halloween III*,' *New Musical Express*, June 18, 1983, 22, 32.

[6] See, for example, Michael Mayo, 'Hack Rewrite Turns Kneale's Treat into Dreary Chaos. Some Trick,' *Cinefantastique* 13, no. 4 (April/May 1983): 57; David Linck, '*Halloween III: Season of the Witch*,' *Boxoffice*, January 1, 1983, 58, ProQuest (963211162); and John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 245.

[7] Ian Conrich, 'Killing Time... and Time Again: The Popular Appeal of Carpenter's Horrors and the Impact of *The Thing* and *Halloween*,' in *The Cinema of John Carpenter: The Technique of Terror*, ed. Ian Conrich and David Woods (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 98.

audience; the writer's sense of disappointment is underlined by his final statement, in which he laments, 'The Shape must be rolling in his grave.'[8] A second letter reinforces the notion that fans felt let down by the developments in the new film: 'Carpenter – You choked on *Halloween III* – Robots?? Try staying in Haddonfield next time, and have Jamie Lee turn psycho, huh? – *Halloween I* and *II* fans.'[9]

Despite such public hostility, box-office takings of $14.4 million[10] suggest that *Halloween III* was far from a 'complete bomb.'[11] However, the fact that this revenue was significantly lower than the figures generated by either of the previous entries in the series reflects the general sense of public dissatisfaction surrounding the film. Both director Wallace and producer Carpenter were aware of dissatisfied reactions from viewers who had been expecting a continuation of the previously-established story, with Wallace acknowledging that the film 'pissed off a lot of *Halloween* fans,'[12] and Carpenter recognising that audiences 'hated' it,[13] pointing specifically to the defiance of narrative expectations as the reason for the film's failure. As he succinctly states, 'It didn't have Michael Myers in it. Which is the reason it wasn't a hit.'[14]

Several key factors contributed to creating the gap between the course of narrative development audiences expected and the reality that came to pass in *Halloween III*. Not least among these were the widespread commercial success of the previous films in the series and the continued popularity of *Halloween* in theatres and on television, both of which demonstrated the ongoing public fascination with the story of Michael Myers.[15] With the filmmakers having succeeded in creating an immensely popular cinematic monster, many observers presumed that such a lucrative property

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[8] Dave Berry, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: To John Carpenter,' *Fangoria* 24 (December, 1982): 7. Quoted in Conrich, 'Killing Time... and Time Again,' 98.

[9] *Halloween I* and *II* Fans, 'Free Subscriber Ads,' *Fangoria* 25 (February, 1983), 64. Quoted in Conrich, ibid.

[10] '*Halloween III: Season of the Witch,*' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween3.htm.

[11] Tommy Lee Wallace, speaking in the documentary *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* (Stefan Hutchinson, 2006).

[12] Ibid.

[13] John Carpenter, quoted in Boulenger, *John Carpenter: The Prince of Darkness*, 109.

[14] Simon Abrams, 'John Carpenter Talks about His Storied Filmmaking Career, Creative Differences, and the Term "Slasher",' *Vulture*, September 26, 2014, http://www.vulture.com/2014/09/john-carpenter-halloween-directing-storied-career-transcript.html. For further discussion surrounding the relative commercial failure of *Halloween III*, see Quint, 'Quint Chats with John Carpenter about Halloween, *The Thing, Big Trouble in Little China, Escape from New York* and More,' *Ain't It Cool News*, June 10, 2011, http://www.aintitcool.com/node/49982.

[15] By the time *Halloween III* was released in 1982, screenings of *Halloween* had become something of a seasonal tradition; the original film was re-released in theatres in October 1979 and October 1980, and it premiered on the NBC television network in October 1981 – a screening which was intentionally designed to coincide with the theatrical release of *Halloween II*. For further discussion, see Martin Harris, 'You Can't Kill the Boogeyman: *Halloween III* and the Modern Horror Franchise,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 106. doi: 10.3200/JPFT.32.3.98-120.

would not be subject to premature abandonment. The strength of this presumption is evident in several reviews of *Halloween II*, which – although published twelve months before the release of *Halloween III* – refer to the prospect of Michael's adventures continuing in another sequel as a foregone conclusion.[16]

Such presumptions appeared particularly reasonable in light of the contemporary climate of 'slasher fever.' As discussed earlier in the study, the first cycle of the slasher sub-genre was well underway by 1982, with cinemas in the midst of an influx of titles based on the tried-and-tested formula of a villain gruesomely picking off a steady stream of teenage victims. Amongst such titles were the first three films in the *Friday the 13th* series, all of which shared the same system of narrative continuity which focused on the story of the Voorhees family.[17] With a successful precedent for an ongoing slasher series based around a model of narrative continuity, and with slasher films still continuing to fill cinema seats, neither a departure from the conventional slasher formula nor the desertion of an established narrative system appeared a likely route of development for the third *Halloween* film.

It was not only the model of sequelisation adopted by the *Friday the 13th* series that led audiences to expect narrative continuity in the *Halloween* films. Direct continuity had been so integral to the relationship between *Halloween* and *Halloween II* that viewers had little reason to assume that the third film would deviate from this paradigm. In addition, the historical tradition for continuity within long-running horror series had consistently reinforced the convention for popular characters to feature in multiple sequels – no matter how unlikely the circumstances of their return.[18] As previously discussed, time and time again, monsters and monstrous characters whose demise might have appeared beyond question somehow found a way to claw their way back to life in subsequent sequels – providing their financial viability was still intact. Thus, fans of horror cinema may well have expected the *Halloween* series to continue along the same lines by somehow finding a way to 'resurrect' Michael Myers in *Halloween III*. After all, the previous films had already established the character's

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[16] See, for example, Berg, '*Halloween II*,' *Variety*, November 4, 1981, 22, ProQuest (1438369312); Janet Maslin, '*Halloween II* for Fright Fans,' *New York Times*, October 30, 1981, C8, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/30/movies/haloween-ii-for-fright-fans.html; and Tom Shales, 'The Blood Puddles of *Halloween II*,' *Washington Post*, October 30, 1981, C11, Nexis.

[17] *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, May 1980); *Friday the 13th: Part 2* (Steve Miner, May 1981); and *Friday the 13th Part III* (Steve Miner, August 1982).

[18] As discussed earlier in the study, both Universal and Hammer participated in the practice of releasing multiple horror sequels featuring the same characters. See, for example, the Universal Frankenstein and Wolf Man series, and the Hammer Frankenstein and Dracula films.

inhuman tolerance for injury, rendering a return from his apparent demise at the end of *Halloween II* far from beyond the realm of hypertextual possibility.

However, it was not only hypertextual but paratextual factors that played a role in shaping the audience's expectations surrounding *Halloween III*. As Martin Harris discusses in his article on *Halloween III* and the modern horror franchise, the pre-publicity relating to the film was riddled with conflicting messages that did little to clarify the narrative distinction between *Halloween III* and the previous two films.[19] On one hand, the filmmakers themselves were keen to emphasise the new developments in *Halloween III*: Debra Hill highlighted the overall shift in genre by describing the film as a '"pod" movie, not a "knife" movie';[20] and John Carpenter drew specific attention to the lack of narrative continuity by confirming that both Michael Myers and Dr. Loomis died at the end of *Halloween II*.[21] However, any such attempts to publicise the differences between the new film and its predecessors were seriously undermined by Universal's marketing campaign, which deftly avoided severing any connections between *Halloween III* and the rest of the series. The distributors achieved this by refusing to clarify whether the new film represented a continuation of the existing narrative. Instead, Universal made the somewhat confusing – and entirely misleading – choice to market the film in a way that emphasised its connection to *Halloween* and *Halloween II*. The title deceptively suggested a level of connectivity the film failed to deliver; the tagline, 'The night no one comes home' explicitly evoked the lines used to promote the previous productions ('The night *HE* came home' and 'More of the night *HE* came home'); and the theatrical trailer was full of similarly evocative imagery, featuring a villainous figure who could easily be mistaken for Michael Myers thanks to his depiction as a shadowy shape lurking by the edges of the frame and containing a brief shot of a lab assistant sifting through a pile of burnt ashes, uttering the words, 'I've got nothing here to indicate there was ever a body at all...' – dialogue that could easily be misconstrued as pertaining to the final scenes of *Halloween II*. In fact, the marketing campaign was so successful in blurring the distinction between *Halloween III* and the previous films that some viewers were left entirely confused. This is evident in a review by critic Roger Ebert, who erroneously discusses the third instalment as a narrative continuation of the previous film:

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[19] Harris, 'You Can't Kill the Boogeyman.'
[20] Carlomagno, '*Halloween III: Season of the Witch*,' 8.
[21] Verniere, 'John Carpenter: Doing His Own *Thing.*'

It begins at the end of "Halloween II," when the monster was burned up in the hospital parking lot, but it's not still another retread of the invincible monster. In fact, the monster is forgotten, except for a lab technician who spends the whole movie sifting through his ashes.[22]

Here, Ebert has inaccurately conflated two distinct narratives into a single system – a mistake that Martin Harris suggests, 'demonstrates the extent to which expectation can influence experience in the movie theatre.'[23]

Such confusion was, perhaps, understandable: not only had commercial, generic, hypertextual, and paratextual factors combined to reinforce the expectation for *Halloween III* to continue the story of Michael Myers, but elements contained within the film itself also served to blur the distinction between the new narrative system and the pre-existing hyperdiegetic world. The opening credits of the film, for example, draw potentially misleading parallels with those featured at the beginning of both *Halloween* and *Halloween II*: familiar names including Moustapha Akkad, Irwin Yablans, John Carpenter, Debra Hill, Alan Howarth, and Dean Cundey; a black-and-orange colour scheme; an image of a jack-o-lantern slowly revealed as the sequence progresses; and a subtly ominous musical theme. All of these elements suggest an affinity between *Halloween III* and the previous films in the series, thereby strengthening the expectation for narrative continuity. Other notable similarities include the hospital setting featured in the film – an element which is clearly evocative of *Halloween II*, and which is likely to have contributed to Ebert's confusion regarding the plot; the formal representation of Cochran's villainous agents, which involves techniques highly reminiscent of those previously employed to depict Michael Myers (mobile camerawork; edge-of-the-frame positioning; silhouetted shots; shots showing only the feet or the back of the head); and a storyline centred on Celtic Druidism – a concept which recalls the association between Michael and the festival of Samhain in the preceding film. All of these factors served to reinforce the sense of hypertextual connectivity between *Halloween III* and the previous films, perhaps helping to explain some of the difficulty in distinguishing the third instalment from the rest of the series.

In the midst of the general confusion and somewhat manipulative lack of clarity surrounding *Halloween III*, it is easy to understand how expectations for a conventional sequel left many viewers unprepared for the total narrative divergence that followed. The first clues that the film does not follow the established system of continuity are

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[22] Roger Ebert, '*Halloween III*,' *Chicago-Sun Times*, October 31, 1982, http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/halloween-iii-season-of-the-witch-1982.
[23] Harris, 'You Can't Kill the Boogeyman,' 102.

provided in the opening credits, where the absence of Carpenter's familiar *Halloween* theme music and the lack of veteran *Halloween* actors indicate some form of hyperdiegetic deviation. Although several returning members of the *Halloween* production crew are present among the names on screen, there is no mention of Donald Pleasence or Jamie Lee Curtis, indicating that the core characters, Dr. Loomis and Laurie Strode, do not feature in the film. Following this sequence, the film opens on a shot of a man running away from an unknown source of terror. From a hypertextual perspective, the most interesting aspect of this scene is the accompanying intertitle, which states that the action is taking place in Northern California. This represents the first occasion on which a *Halloween* film has deviated from the location of Haddonfield, Illinois, providing another early indication of the lack of hypertextual continuity. As the opening scenes progress, the lack of recurrent characters and other familiar imagery associated with the previous *Halloween* films becomes increasingly apparent. However, it is not until twenty minutes later that the viewer is provided with explicit confirmation of the film's complete narrative segregation.

Sitting in a bar at the end of the day, Dr. Dan Challis watches a television commercial advertising an upcoming broadcast of *Halloween*. The original theme music and images from the film are accompanied by a voiceover announcing that the screening of the 'immortal classic' will be followed by a 'big give-away' by Cochran's Silver Shamrock toy company. At this point, the clearly exasperated doctor tells the barman to change the channel, thereby prompting the question, 'What's the matter? Don't you have any Halloween spirit?' to which Challis curtly responds, 'No.' Although this brief reference to the original film may appear to be relatively inconsequential, when analysed from a hypertextual perspective the scene takes on a higher degree of significance. Transforming *Halloween* into a work of 'fiction' within the 'real world' of *Halloween III* provides an effective way for the filmmakers explicitly to sever any narrative connection between the third film and the rest of the series. Without such a definitive act of separation, expectant viewers might remain in a state of narrative limbo, wondering when – or, indeed, if – familiar characters, locations, or other motifs will appear to establish hypertextual continuity, only to be frustrated when such elements fail to materialise. However, drawing a clear distinction between the two diegetic worlds puts an immediate stop to such processes of conjecture, thereby enabling viewers to abandon their hypertextual expectations – however reluctantly – and begin the process of engaging with the new film as a distinct narrative system.

Although relegating the established hyperdiegetic world to a meta-fictional state may be an effective way to distinguish narrative boundaries, the act also constitutes a form of hypertextual transformation which has the potential to prove challenging for the series viewer. This is because presenting *Halloween* as a work of fiction immediately undermines the legitimacy of the viewing position adopted by series viewers, who have – until this point – been encouraged to suspend their disbelief in order to engage with the story of Michael Myers. When the status of this story is unexpectedly subject to hypertextual devaluation in *Halloween III*, the viewers' prior investment in the 'reality' of the hyperdiegetic world is called into question by a new viewing position that explicitly acknowledges the fallacy of the existing narrative. Such a sudden shift in perspective may be difficult for series viewers to accept, particularly bearing in mind the loyal fan following cultivated by the *Halloween* films prior to the release of *Halloween III*.

A second sequence toward the end of the film appears to underline the hypertextual devaluation of the original narrative even more forcefully. After Dr. Challis is captured by Cochran's robotic agents, he is restrained and made to wear a Halloween mask identical to those acquired by thousands of children across America. Unknown to these willing consumers, the masks have been programmed to undergo a lethal transformation upon receiving a signal due to be transmitted during the Silver Shamrock television give-away. The deadly broadcast is preceded by the aforementioned screening of *Halloween*, which Challis is forced to watch as he waits to meet his gruesome fate. However, seizing an opportunity to escape, the doctor violently destroys the television set playing the film. For Martin Harris, this scene not only provides evidence of the filmmakers' cynical attitude toward both the original film and the series viewers who expected a 'replay of the first two films;' it also functions as an indicator of the film's attempts metaphorically to 'kill' the *Halloween* franchise:

> When one couples *Halloween III*'s censorious attitude toward
> consumerist values with its difficult, even antagonistic relationship to
> the first two *Halloween* films, a third connotation emerges wherein the
> filmmakers appear to be purposely communicating a desire to end the
> series altogether.[24]

Although some have disputed this reading of the film, suggesting that the intent was to transform the series rather than kill it altogether, Harris' interpretation nevertheless

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[24] Ibid., 105-6.

invokes the notion of the 'murderous hypertext' – an interesting concept to which I will return later in the study.[25] However, to continue the current point of discussion, whether or not *Halloween III* was, indeed, intended to 'kill' the franchise – and I suspect not, considering Carpenter's plans for an ongoing anthology – by diverging from the established system of narrative continuity, the film unavoidably transformed *Halloween II* into the concluding chapter of the story of Michael Myers – an unexpected course of hypertextual development for which fans of the series were largely unprepared.

Redefining *Halloween II* as the end of the story challenged series viewers to accept that the hyperdiegetic world with which they had become so familiar would be subject to no further elaboration or modification. Having already developed adaptive schemata to allow new information to be successfully assimilated into the original story, *Halloween* fans were well-prepared to accept the ongoing expansion of the narrative system in a second sequel; the notion of accepting its wholesale abandonment in favour of a new story, however, was much more problematic. As Kenneth Muir describes,

> *Halloween III* is an honest attempt to take the *Halloween* franchise in a
> new direction, but that direction is purely and simply ridiculous, which
> is the reason that so many fans of the series disowned it.[26]

According to Henry Jenkins, consistency, continuity, and completeness are three of the most important considerations within fan culture.[27] These factors enable viewers to establish an ongoing relationship with a specific cultural property, thereby contributing to a general sense of attachment and ownership. By disregarding these factors, *Halloween III* effectively compromised the security of the relationship between fans and the series as a whole, thereby inciting the hostile public reaction previously discussed. Such hostility is indicative of an ongoing tension that sees series fans – who feel they have a stake of ownership in the story – pitted against producers, who retain ultimate control over its course of development. However, although series fans may generally have 'little say about what happens to their characters or their programs,' they nonetheless 'claim the right to protest and protest loudly decisions contradicting their perception of what is desirable or appropriate.'[28] There is no question that the release of *Halloween III* prompted such a response, with fans left dismayed by what they

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[25] See, for example, Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s*, 245-6.
[26] Ibid., 245.
[27] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 104.
[28] Ibid., 121.

perceived as a treacherous attempt to 'destroy their franchise.'[29] The legacy of this 'betrayal' was a widespread tendency to 'disown' the film by refusing to acknowledge its hypertextual status as an official part of the *Halloween* series.[30] Indeed, it is not only fans who have sought to dissociate *Halloween III* from the rest of the *Halloween* films, but academics, too, who have frequently omitted the film from wider discussions pertaining to the series.[31]

Had *Halloween III* been marketed as a standalone production devoid of any connection to the rest of the series, it may well have experienced a greater degree of critical and commercial success. The steady revaluation of the film in recent years appears to support this notion, suggesting that a more positive response is generated when it is analysed without the hindrance of erroneous expectations, such as those that so evidently influenced the experience of contemporary viewers.[32] However, although *Halloween III* may have found some success on its own terms, as part of the *Halloween* series it undoubtedly fails to deliver. Although attempts to cultivate connections to the previous films appeared to make sense from a commercial perspective, the tactic was a mistake, for it also invoked the attention of an existing series viewership and their associated hypertextual expectations, all of which were bound to be frustrated by the lack of narrative continuity. However, despite such frustrations, the hostile reaction to the film nonetheless provides a useful insight into the role of expectation within the hypertextual viewing experience, while also demonstrating how unexpected narrative developments within the *Halloween* series can threaten viewers' engagement by challenging their comprehension of the hypertextual system as a whole.

In the aftermath of *Halloween III*, critics were left bewildered and fans felt angry, disappointed, and betrayed. In light of such circumstances, the survival of the series appeared to depend upon a single solution: it was time for viewers to witness the return of Michael Myers.

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[29] John Carpenter quoted in Boulenger, *John Carpenter: The Prince of Darkness*, 109.

[30] The extent of fan rejection is evident on *The Official Halloween Message Board* [*OHMB*] where moderators were compelled to issue a message in order to curtail negative discussion threads pertaining to the film. See Franchise, 'Look Here Before Posting in this Forum,' *OHMB*, September 26, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?548-Look-here-before-posting-in-this-forum.

[31] Harris draws attention to the omission of *Halloween III* from academic analyses, explaining that the film is often 'silently elided' from discussions of late-twentieth-century horror series, such as those by Carol Clover and Vera Dika. See 'You Can't Kill the Boogeyman,' n. 4, 108.

[32] For examples of contemporary re-evaluation, see Giaco Furino, 'Bold Statement: *Halloween 3* is the Best in the Series,' *Bloody Disgusting*, October 31, 2014, http://bloody-disgusting.com/news/3319924/bold-statement-halloween-3-best-series/; and Jennifer Wood, 'In Defense of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*,' *Complex*, October 30, 2013, http://uk.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/10/halloween-3-season-of-the-witch-defense.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS: HYPERTEXTUALITY AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

As a result of the disappointing reaction to *Season of the Witch*, the *Halloween* series was effectively placed on an indefinite hiatus. However, as the 1980s progressed and other slasher franchises continued to do well at the box office, it soon became clear that the popularity of the slasher sequel was far from exhausted. By 1988, with the fourth *Nightmare on Elm Street* film and the seventh entry in the *Friday the 13th* series still successfully capitalising on the generic legacy established a decade earlier,[1] it was finally time to resurrect the story that had been so unexpectedly consigned to hypertextual oblivion.

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers* sought to re-establish narrative continuity with the first two films in the series. Focusing predominantly on the role of character development within this process, I will examine the representation in the film of recurrent and new characters, while additionally addressing the absence of characters previously associated with the original storyline. By situating this examination within a wider hypertextual framework, I aim to continue the discussion surrounding processes of narrative construction within the *Halloween* series, while also developing a specific understanding of the cognitive implications of re-engaging with a previously-abandoned narrative system.

Prior to the start of production on *The Return of Michael Myers*, there had been earlier attempts to get a fourth instalment of the series off the ground. Most notably, John Carpenter and Debra Hill had expressed an interest in working on a story with writer Dennis Etchison, who, under the pseudonyms 'Curtis Richards' and 'Jack Martin' had been responsible for writing three *Halloween* novelisations.[2] However, when Carpenter and Hill decided to sell their stakes in the series to producer Moustapha Akkad, Etchison's story ultimately fell by the wayside.[3] With the withdrawal of Carpenter and Hill, Akkad wasted little time in recruiting a team who shared his vision

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[1] Released in May 1988, *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (John Carl Buechler) took over $19 million at the box office, while the hugely successful *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master* (Renny Harlin), released in August 1988, went on to make almost $50 million. Both films debuted at the top of the box-office charts. See, respectively, '*Friday the 13th Part VII*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=friday13th7.htm and '*A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=elmst4.htm.

[2] See Steve Swires, 'John Carpenter's Terror Tales from Tinseltown,' *Starlog* 115 (February 1987): 55, https://archive.org/stream/starlog_magazine-115/.

[3] Dennis Etchison confirms this series of events in the documentary *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* (Stefan Hutchinson, 2006).

of taking the series back to the basics to undo the damage done by *Halloween III*.[4] The directorial duties were consequently assumed by long-term *Halloween* fan Dwight H. Little, who went on to recommend writer Alan B. McElroy for the task of reconnecting with the original narrative. Faced with an impending strike by the Writers' Guild, McElroy completed the new screenplay in just eleven days, thereby ensuring that the long-delayed production suffered no further setbacks.[5] In addition to the new faces brought on board, Akkad also secured a handful of *Halloween* veterans, including composer Alan Howarth, who previously worked with Carpenter on *Halloween II* and *Halloween III*, and – perhaps most importantly – Donald Pleasence, who was more than happy to return to the role of Dr. Sam Loomis. As he explains in an interview with *Fangoria*'s Marc Shapiro, 'I was asked, I was free, the money was good, and it would be kind of hard to do this movie without me.'[6] However, despite Pleasence's willingness to return to the series, not all members of the original cast were so enthusiastic. Following her last performance as Laurie Strode in *Halloween II*, Jamie Lee Curtis had moved away from horror cinema, making a name for herself in hit productions such as *Trading Places* (John Landis, 1983) and *A Fish Called Wanda* (Charles Crichton, 1988). As a result, although Curtis was approached to resume her role, she ultimately refused, thereby opening up an opportunity for new characters to reinvigorate the story of Michael Myers.

Set ten years after the events depicted in the first two *Halloween* films, and choosing to ignore the divergent narrative path followed by *Halloween III*, *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers* opens with the revelation that both Michael and Dr. Loomis managed to survive the explosion which engulfed the hospital at the end of *Halloween II*. On October 30, 1988, after spending the last decade in a near-comatose state at Ridgemont Federal Sanitarium, Michael awakens while being transferred back to Smith's Grove and escapes, intent on returning to Haddonfield to kill his seven-year-old niece, Jamie Lloyd. On Halloween night, with Dr. Loomis in pursuit, Michael succeeds in tracking down Jamie, but she is seemingly saved by a barrage of bullets that sends her uncle falling into a disused mine shaft. However, Jamie's salvation is far from complete; in a shocking twist at the end of the film, the young girl brutally attacks her foster mother, suggesting that she is fated to continue Michael's deadly legacy.

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[4] Moustapha Akkad discusses this approach in the documentary *Halloween 4: Final Cut* (Mark Cerulli, 2001).

[5] Alan B. McElroy recounts this story in *Halloween 4: Final Cut*.

[6] Marc Shapiro, '*Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*,' *Fangoria* 79 (December 1988): 23, 68.

Released in October 1988, *Halloween 4* drew commendations for an effective performance by Danielle Harris as young Jamie Lloyd, and for the inclusion of an unexpectedly chilling ending which promised to take the series in a bold new direction.[7] However, not all sat in favourable judgement. Many were cynical about the financial motivations driving the production – a position concisely summarised by Mark Kermode, who criticised the decision to bring Michael back for a further instalment: 'It's a shame that the lure of the cash registers resurrected the beleaguered bore. The shocks are infinitesimal, the script diabolical.'[8]

For such cynics, *Halloween 4* represented little more than a 'cheap knockoff of its prototype,' guilty of committing the crime most commonly associated with sequelisation – prioritising profit over originality by regurgitating more of the same material in order to exploit an existing audience base.[9] Fortunately for Akkad and the rest of the production team, the public reaction was somewhat different: *Halloween 4* went on to make almost $18 million from a budget of less than $5 million, and the film spent its first two weekends at the top of the box-office charts.[10]

Such a positive commercial response provided a clear indication that the strategy of returning to the original narrative was a step in the right direction. However, it is vital to note that – despite critical opinion – *Halloween 4* did not merely regurgitate existing narrative material. In order to recapture the attention of disillusioned series viewers while also appealing to contemporary audiences, director Little was all too aware of the need to strike a balance between old and new elements. As a result, the filmmaker set out to 'capture the mood of the original *Halloween* and yet take a lot of new chances' by choosing a blend of recurrent and new characters to continue the story of Michael Myers.[11]

Thanks to the title of the film and an unambiguous marketing campaign, audiences were well aware that *Halloween 4* intended to continue the original narrative

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[7] On Harris' performance, see Janis Froelich, 'Buckle Up for Bloody Horror,' *St. Petersburg Times* (Tampa Bay, FL), October 28, 1998, 7, Nexis; and John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s* (London: McFarland, 2007), 658-9; for examples of positive critical to the film's unexpected ending, see Caryn James, 'A Slasher Goes Back to Work,' *New York Times*, October 22, 1988, 12, http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=940DE0D7173FF931A15753C1A96E948260; and Ben Yagoda, 'A Cut Above Slasher Films/*Halloween IV* Has Its Good Points,' *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 24, 1988, 53. Quoted in Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s*, 654.
[8] Mark Kermode, '*Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers.*' *Time Out*, n. d., http://www.timeout.com/london/film/halloween-4-the-return-of-michael-myers.
[9] Richard Harrington, '*Halloween 4*: Same Old Stalk Show,' *Washington Post*, October 22, 1988, C9, Nexis. See also Michael Wilmington, 'No Treats in *Halloween 4*,' *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 1988, 4, ProQuest (280579661).
[10] '*Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween4.htm.
[11] Dwight H. Little in Shapiro, '*Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*,' 23.

by reintroducing some familiar faces. The theatrical trailer not only showed clips of an incensed Dr. Loomis recommencing his obsessive pursuit, but also included a solemn voiceover asserting that, in the decade since Michael's deadly Halloween rampage, 'no-one has forgotten his name.' This carefully considered choice of words represents an early attempt to still the furore surrounding *Halloween III* by providing series viewers with an assurance that the temporary divergence from Michael's story in no way served to diminish the memory – or the potency – of his legacy.

Halloween 4 wastes no time in establishing its status as a proleptic continuation of the first two *Halloween* films, employing the ever-efficient strategy of hypertextual condensation to signify narrative connectivity at the earliest possible opportunity. As the opening sequence unfolds at Ridgemont Federal Sanitarium, an ambulance crew arrives to transport Michael Myers back to Smith's Grove, thus providing the perfect opportunity for a security guard to summarise the story so far:

> The one you're picking up... just thinking about him gives me the willies. A decade ago – Halloween night – he murdered sixteen people, maybe more, trying to get to his sister. Nearly got to her, too, but his doctor of all people shot him six times, then he set him on fire; both of them nearly burned to death.

References to events and characters featured in *Halloween* and *Halloween II* immediately prompt series viewers to integrate *Halloween 4* into the original system of narrative continuity, thereby leaving no doubt that the hypertextual intentions of the film are far more honourable than those of its predecessor. In this way, the choice to return to the original storyline and ignore the deviant narrative path followed by *Halloween III* not only compounds the perception of *Season of the Witch* as an anomalous mistake, but also indicates that the filmmakers are attempting to restore confidence in the series by reassuring the viewer that there will be no repeat of the contentious narrative developments associated with the previous film.

In addition to establishing the film's status as a proleptic continuation, the summary of information provided in the opening sequence also delivers vital exposition to new and series viewers alike. While new viewers receive salient pieces of background information necessary to understand the general premise of the film, series viewers are made aware that the film is an elliptical continuation set a decade after previous events, and, more significantly, they also receive the first official confirmation that Michael Myers and Dr. Loomis managed to survive the explosion that engulfed

Haddonfield Memorial Hospital at the end of *Halloween II*. Although this revelation lacks detail and undoubtedly stretches narrative credence, it is nonetheless likely to be accepted by series viewers willing to suspend their disbelief in order to facilitate the hypertextual extension of a story they believed had been prematurely abandoned. As Ken Hanke observes, fans of slasher series are notoriously tolerant of questionable narrative logic when it comes to the resurrection of their favourite characters – no matter how incredible the means of their survival.[12] In the case of *Halloween 4*, it is probable that series viewers were even more prepared than usual to overlook such lapses in narrative logic. Having previously experienced the disappointing reality of a *Halloween* sequel without Michael Myers or Dr. Loomis, any hypertext prepared to continue the original story by reintroducing these characters was likely to be greeted with a comparatively warm welcome.

As a means of consolidating the sense of reassurance provided by reinstating narrative continuity, both Michael and Dr. Loomis – having miraculously survived their fiery encounter a decade earlier – are quick to resume the distinguishing roles and patterns of behaviour previously associated with their characters. A heightened emphasis on security at Ridgemont Federal Sanitarium re-establishes Michael's status as a highly dangerous villain from the outset, while his violent reaction to the revelation of Jamie's existence sends a clear message that neither the power of his brutality nor the strength of his predatory drive to obliterate the members of his family has diminished. Dr. Loomis' distinguishing characteristics are re-established just as efficiently, with the doctor resuming his long-standing role as the obsessive and indisputable authority on Michael even before he makes his first appearance on screen. This is accomplished by means of a conversation involving Dr. Hoffman, the medical administrator responsible for overseeing Michael's care at Ridgemont. As a member of the ambulance crew questions why Dr. Loomis is not present at the transfer, Dr. Hoffman responds with an exasperated sigh: 'If Loomis read memos he'd be here. Fortunately his position is more ceremonial than medical, and with Myers gone, my hope is that he'll either transfer, retire, or die.' This comment not only reconfirms that Loomis remains a somewhat antagonistic figure within the hyperdiegetic world, but also indicates that the doctor has maintained a constant watch over his patient for the last decade, thereby suggesting that he remains consumed by the same obsessive tendencies that drove his single-minded pursuit of Michael throughout the first two *Halloween* films. The endurance of Loomis' obsession is confirmed by his reaction to the news that the ambulance transporting

[12] Ken Hanke, *A Critical Guide to Horror Film Series* (London: Garland, 1991), 286.

156

Michael has crashed at Mill Creek. Instantly suspecting that the accident bears all the hallmarks of an escape attempt by Michael, Loomis immediately steps back into his role as the fanatical pursuer, intent on warning others about the perilous nature of the situation ('We're not talking about any ordinary prisoner... we are talking about evil on two legs.') while attempting to hunt down and recapture his old adversary.

The resumption of these roles leads Michael and Dr. Loomis to progress along familiar paths of narrative development, resulting in the recurrence of plot scenarios originally featured earlier in the series. For example, Michael's escape from Ridgemont Sanitarium, the corpse-littered journey to Haddonfield in which he procures a grey boiler suit from an unfortunate garage employee, and his trip to a local store to steal a Halloween mask are among the events that occur in both *Halloween 4* and the original film. In a similar way, the scene in which Loomis berates the sanitarium staff for underestimating Michael's capabilities, the ensuing pursuit in which he retraces Michael's journey to Haddonfield via a trail of bloody devastation, and his arrival in town and subsequent attempts to garner support from the local police force are all evocative of events depicted in the first film. One of the most spectacular scenes in the film also draws parallels with *Halloween II*. When Loomis and Michael encounter each other at a gas station on the way to Haddonfield, the meeting ends in a fiery conclusion as Michael sets light to the pumps, igniting a huge explosion. By recalling the conclusion of their previous encounter at Haddonfield Memorial Hospital, this scene – along with other recurrent scenarios, roles, and patterns of behaviour – consolidates the sense of hypertextual connectivity that was so conspicuously absent from *Halloween III*, thereby helping to facilitate the film's assimilation into the wider hyperdiegetic world.

Despite the hypertextual significance of the recurrent narrative elements in *Halloween 4*, the inclusion of such components undoubtedly contributes to critical perceptions of the film as little more than an imitative reproduction of its predecessors. However, although the film may rely on a certain degree of repetition in order successfully to establish continuity, it is vital to note that the practice of hypertextual modification also introduces differences in the ways recurrent characters and plot scenarios are represented, thereby ensuring that the process of development does not stagnate as the story continues to unfold. This is made clear once the representation of Dr. Loomis and Michael Myers is subject to closer analysis. Although both exhibit behavioural traits, inhabit narrative roles, and undertake courses of action which are

already familiar to series viewers, *Halloween 4* also shows the characters developing in ways that reflect the totality of their hyperdiegetic experience.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the physical transformation of Michael and Dr. Loomis. The explosion that almost killed these characters at the end of *Halloween II* not only left Michael comatose for the best part of a decade, but also resulted in extensive injuries to his face – now permanently covered by bandages – and to his hands – now little more than a mangled mass of gnarled scar tissue. Presented in this state, Michael appears unfamiliar to series viewers, who have become accustomed to the character's signature boiler suit and featureless white mask. Over the course of the previous films, these elements have become synonymous with Michael and their absence is consequently significant, suggesting that the character has lost a vital part of his identity. As the film progresses, Michael embarks on a Mummy-like process of personal 'reconstruction,' acquiring a boiler suit from a garage mechanic and stealing a replica mask from a local drugstore. Significantly, it is not until he is in possession of these elements that Michael begins to terrorise Jamie, suggesting that the character has not truly 'returned' until his iconic appearance has been restored.

The explosion in *Halloween II* has clearly had a similar physical impact on Dr. Loomis. Now noticeably disfigured, the doctor's face and hands are riddled with scars and he requires a cane to compensate for a heavily pronounced limp. The physical changes to both Dr. Loomis and Michael prompt series viewers to cast their minds back to the end of *Halloween II* in order to recall the events which caused such devastating injuries. Prompting viewers to engage in such retrospective activities strengthens the connection between *Halloween 4* and its hypotexts by providing a reminder that the modifications within the film are a direct – and logical – consequence of prior events. In other words, the physical modification of recurrent characters provides a shorthand means of signifying that the hypertext is a competent narrative successor which has taken into account all of the relevant hypotextual information.

Behavioural changes also provide assurance of the hypertextual competence of *Halloween 4* by acknowledging the relevance of prior knowledge and experience amassed by recurrent characters. Michael, for example, draws on his previous experience to gain a strategic advantage over the authorities responsible for maintaining law and order in Haddonfield. Not only does he incapacitate the town by disabling the main power supply, but he also slays almost every member of the police force. During his previous reign of terror, Michael took no such precautions, paying little attention to anything other than his potential victims. Ten years later, however, he adopts a more

sophisticated approach by implementing plans to minimise his chance of failure. Unlike Michael, who demonstrates an adaptive sense of intelligence by developing new skills in *Halloween 4*, Dr. Loomis appears to languish in the same obsessive state he has occupied throughout the series. As Donald Pleasence observes, 'There is no difference. Loomis is Loomis. He's 10 years older and 10 years madder.'[13] In fact, whereas Michael's behaviour clearly develops in a progressive pattern, the most perceptible changes in Loomis are resolutely regressive. To elaborate, although the all-encompassing nature of Loomis' fixation with Michael is established in the previous *Halloween* films, the intensity of his obsession is enhanced to such a point in *Halloween 4* that it appears to be affecting the stability of the character's mental health. This is first brought to the viewer's attention by Dr. Hoffman, who suggests that Loomis' incessant speeches about Michael constitute evidence of his deteriorating mental state ('I've said this before. I think you're the one that needs mental help.'). This notion is given further credence when Dr. Loomis encounters the eccentric Reverend Jackson P. Sayer on the road to Haddonfield. The Reverend's zealous religious ramblings draw obvious parallels with Loomis' impassioned speeches about Michael, clearly implying that the doctor is beginning to cross the line from concerned medical professional to unbalanced fanatic – a journey which he completes at the end of the film, when Jamie's shocking act of violence pushes him over the edge of sanity into unadulterated hysteria.

The intensification of Loomis' obsession soon begins to affect his sense of judgment, leading to uncharacteristic mistakes which leave the lives of others in danger. The first example of this occurs when Jamie, Rachel, and a host of other characters retreat to the perceived safety of Sheriff Meeker's house. Under the mistaken belief that the group is under no immediate threat, Dr. Loomis leaves and goes to the Carruthers house, where he is convinced he will discover Michael attempting to hunt down Jamie. However, Dr. Loomis has fatally underestimated the strategic capabilities of his adversary, who has already infiltrated the Sheriff's house, placing everyone inside in grave danger. Later in the film, Loomis makes a similar error in judgment by refusing Jamie's request to return home, asserting that he knows her house is the first place Michael will look. Deciding instead to seek sanctuary elsewhere, Loomis rushes Jamie to the schoolhouse, but it soon becomes clear that this is a terrible mistake. Having pre-empted Loomis' plans, Michael is already lying in wait at the school, ready to launch an attack on the doctor and his young ward. In both instances, Loomis' sense of judgment is severely impaired by the intensity of his obsession. Entirely consumed by his desire

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[13] Donald Pleasence in Shapiro, '*Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*,' 68.

to pursue Michael and prevent another bloodbath, he acts purely on instinct, blindly placing all of his faith in his existing expertise, rather than stopping to consider the possibility that Michael has gained the strategic advantage. By underestimating Michael in this way, Loomis is effectively guilty of committing the very crime he so ardently insists others should avoid at all costs.

The heightened emphasis on Loomis' fanaticism is likely to be perceived in different ways by series viewers and new viewers. New viewers, who lack extensive background knowledge and possess only a limited understanding of relevant mediating factors, must base their impression of Dr. Loomis solely on his representation in *Halloween 4*. As a result, they are liable to perceive the character as somewhat one-dimensional. In contrast, series viewers, who have witnessed the evolution of Dr. Loomis across several films, recognise the intensification of his fanatical behaviour as the logical consequence of prior events and therefore understand that the character is not one-dimensional by nature but has merely regressed to his current state as a result of his increasingly dysfunctional relationship with Michael. This suggests that the *Halloween* series involves an *expanded* process of character development which is perceptible only to series viewers with the appropriate level of specialised knowledge. Whereas the representation of recurrent characters may appear one-dimensional in individual films, when their representation across the whole series is subject to analysis, processes of development become much more apparent. No matter how incremental the changes to recurrent characters, in order for new developments to be accepted and assimilated into the hypertextual system, series viewers must be willing to expand their existing schemata to accommodate the additional information. In the case of newly-introduced patterns of behaviour which are logically derived from previous events, this process is usually unproblematic. However, as I will go on to discuss later in the study, if the development of recurrent characters proves too radical to be accounted for by narrative logic, the process of cognitive assimilation can become much more challenging.

Physical and behavioural modifications are not the only hypertextual operations employed to alter the viewer's existing perception of recurrent characters. Such an effect is also achieved through *hypertextual defocalisation* – a transformative operation in which the narrative point of view is modified to reveal previously-hidden pieces of hypotextual information.[14] Michael's acquisition of costume elements in *Halloween 4* provides an example of this process in action. To elaborate, in the first *Halloween* film

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[14] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 287.

the viewer does not bear witness to any of the scenes during which Michael acquires his costume elements. This is because a lateral ellipsis in the plot creates a temporal gap in Michael's strand of action which effectively conceals the events that take place between his escape from Smith's Grove – during which he is wearing a hospital gown – and his subsequent appearance at the Myers house, where he is dressed in a boiler suit and mask. Cues within the film are sufficient for the viewer to piece together the most likely chain of events: a discarded hospital gown implies that the boiler suit is taken from a murdered garage employee and a comment made by Sheriff Brackett suggests that the mask is stolen from a hardware store. However, despite the existence of such cues, neither the murder nor the break-in is actually presented on screen, ultimately leaving Michael's acquisition process hidden from view.

In contrast, although *Halloween 4* does not reveal the *specific* events which are missing from Michael's strand of action in *Halloween*, it does present a *comparable* chain of events in a much more comprehensive manner. This time around, there is no doubt regarding the details of the acquisition process, with Michael shown both murdering a garage mechanic before appearing in his boiler suit and stealing a mask from a display of Halloween costumes in a drugstore. In this way, the decision to remain focused on Michael's strand of action in the hours following his escape provides a narrative perspective which was not offered to viewers in the original *Halloween* film. As a result, previously-hidden information pertaining to the character is revealed to the viewer which reinforces the existing supposition about how his costume was originally acquired. This allows the viewer to fill in a section of missing information from *Halloween*, ultimately enhancing the coherence of the hypertextual system as a whole. The decision to show these events also has the effect of eroding the sense of enigma surrounding Michael. However, whereas such a process might have diminished his terrifying potency at the beginning of the series – when ambiguity still formed a fundamental part of the character's appeal – by the time he returns in *Halloween 4* his biographical details have already been subject to elaboration and the absence of Laurie Strode has essentially confirmed his position as the main focus of the series, resulting in less need for the maintenance of mystery.

The development of Michael and Dr. Loomis may play a vital role in reinstating narrative continuity and recapturing the attention of series viewers but these are not the only recurrent characters who help establish continuity in *Halloween 4*. The now-teenage Lindsey Wallace and Tommy Doyle make fleeting appearances and Sheriff Brackett receives a mention – although he does not appear on screen, having seemingly

161

retired to Florida. Brackett's absence may be relatively insignificant in terms of the overall story but the absence of Laurie Strode represents a much more significant development.

Rather than recast the role of Laurie following Jamie Lee Curtis' refusal to return, the filmmakers decided to write the character out of the series – although not entirely, as I will discuss later in the study. This was achieved by concocting a storyline which unfolded entirely during the ellipsis in between *Halloween II* and *Halloween 4*, during which time Laurie seemingly got married and had a daughter named Jamie before being killed in an accident along with her husband. The occurrence of such major developments during the ellipsis has the effect of implying that the hyperdiegetic world keeps turning even when no-one is watching. This reinforces the overall coherence of the hyperdiegesis by suggesting that the characters continue to live their lives beyond the boundaries of the screen. This, however, is not the only function of the ellipsis. As discussed earlier in the study, temporal ellipses represent opportunities to engage in processes of narrative conjecture. The omission of a specific period of time from a plot opens up the possibility to fill in the gap with *any* chain of events which can be coherently assimilated into the overall story. *Halloween 4* employs this strategy to combat the continuity problems presented by the absence of Curtis. Introducing an extensive gap between the events of *Halloween II* and those of *Halloween 4* allows the film to fill in the missing period of time with a chain of events designed to account for Laurie's absence without compromising the coherence of the overall story. Despite the fact that such significant developments take place entirely offscreen, viewers must be prepared to accept this version of events in order to continue engaging with the series. In order to do so, they must be willing to adjust any preconceived narrative expectations pertaining to the character of Laurie, and must remain open-minded about the prospect of the story continuing without its established protagonist. The fact that these developments are revealed in the sequel following *Halloween III* may make the acceptance process somewhat easier, with Laurie's death representing a worthwhile sacrifice in return for the overall reinstatement of narrative continuity. Nonetheless, her death still remains a gut-wrenching blow for dedicated series fans. Having built up a relationship with Laurie and witnessed her extraordinary battle to survive against the odds, the provision of a fragmented and somewhat vague account of an unceremonious

offscreen death is likely to prove unsatisfactory – particularly for those who have developed a sense of 'ownership' over the character.[15]

Having dealt with their casting problem by killing off Laurie Strode, the filmmakers were faced with the prospect of finding a replacement to fill the void created by her absence. Drawing on the long-standing tradition for sequels to exploit familial connections in the name of narrative continuity, *Halloween 4* duly introduced the character of Jamie Lloyd – the daughter born to Laurie during the aforementioned ellipsis. Following the death of her mother and father, seven-year old Jamie is shown to reside with the Carruthers – a foster family which includes her fiercely protective older 'sister,' Rachel. Rachel and Jamie each represent one of two distinct narrative roles previously associated with Laurie. Rachel steps into the position of the dependable and resourceful 'final girl,' assuming responsibility for protecting Jamie as both her sister and babysitter; for using any means necessary to evade capture, including using a television cable to lower Jamie down from the roof of Sheriff Meeker's house; and for retaliating against Michael when necessary – such as in the schoolhouse, where she attempts to vanquish him using a fire extinguisher.

The second role previously occupied by Laurie saw the character positioned as Michael's primary target. In *Halloween 4*, this role is assumed by Jamie. Similarities between Jamie and Laurie are made apparent throughout the film – not only in terms of comparable plot scenarios relating to their common narrative role, but also in terms of more general biographical and behavioural characteristics. For example, neither character is raised by their biological family; both experience some form of social alienation from their peers – Laurie as a result of her introverted behaviour and Jamie as a result of her family background, which draws hurtful comments from her schoolmates ('Jamie's uncle's the Boogeyman!' 'Jamie's mummy's a mummy!' 'Jamie's an orphan!'); and both exhibit a level of maturity beyond their years – as exhibited by Laurie's sense of responsibility and by Jamie's attempts to manage her anxiety using personal mantras ('You're okay, you're okay.'). Jamie's anxiety – a manifestation of the trauma inflicted by the loss of her parents – represents one of several symptoms of psychological distress which are emphasised throughout the film. Grief, insomnia, guilt, and other insecurities continually threaten to overwhelm the young girl, creating an

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[15] The lack of detail pertaining to the ellipsis in which Laurie died has led some fans to develop theories surrounding this part of the story. The identity of Jamie's father is a particularly popular subject of discussion, with many fans suggesting the most likely candidate to be Jimmy from *Halloween II*. See the discussion thread, complete, 'Jamie Lloyd: Daughter of Jimmy from *Halloween 2*?,' *OHMB*, October 3, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?905-Jamie-Lloyd-Daughter-of-Jimmy-from-Halloween-2/.

emotionally-vulnerable characterisation which draws obvious comparisons to the portrayal of Laurie in *Halloween II*. The similarities between Jamie and Laurie ensure that their biological relationship remains at the forefront of the viewer's mind. This is important because Jamie's biological heritage is the unique factor which distinguishes her from any other character. She is not simply a randomly-introduced newcomer; she is the only part of Laurie which still survives. By providing recurrent reminders of this fact, the film encourages viewers to emulate their previous relationship with Laurie by forming a similar connection to Jamie – a process ultimately intended to facilitate Jamie's successful integration into the hyperdiegetic world.

Laurie is not the only character with whom Jamie shares a genetic bond; as Michael's niece, she is also connected to a much more unpleasant branch of the family tree. However, the bond between Jamie and Michael goes beyond the realm of the natural and into the realm of the supernatural, as indicated by the disturbing nightmares and visions which result from Jamie's psychic connection to her uncle.[16] At seven years old, Jamie is a similar age to Michael when he was introduced at the beginning of *Halloween*. This fact, coupled with the aforementioned familial connection, has the effect of establishing fundamental parallels between the characters. Such parallels are reinforced throughout the film, as evidenced by the drugstore sequence, where Jamie chooses a clown costume eerily similar to the one worn by Michael in *Halloween*. During this sequence, Jamie's reflection is momentarily replaced by an apparition of Michael as a child – an occurrence which explicitly prompts the viewer to draw comparisons between the two characters. However, it is not until the end of the film that the parallels between Jamie and Michael assume a truly dark form. In a point-of-view sequence which strongly evokes the beginning of *Halloween*, Jamie dons her clown mask and violently stabs her foster mother – an act which leaves the young girl catatonic and covered in blood. Standing motionless and wearing a blank expression on her face, Jamie bears a chilling resemblance to Michael, whose deadly mantle of terror she appears to have assumed.

From a hypertextual perspective, these representational parallels are significant because they enable viewers to infer the occurrence of additional hypotextual events. For example, when Jamie is shown participating in activities such as buying a Halloween costume or trick-or-treating, the general sense of parallelism between her

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[16] *Halloween 4* is not the only slasher sequel to feature a female character with some form of psychic ability. In *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood*, Tina possesses a particularly powerful form of telekinesis which helps her to defeat the villainous Jason Voorhees.

and Michael makes it easy for viewers to imagine Michael participating in similar activities when he was a child. By inferring that such events took place, viewers can effectively fill in some of the missing background information relating to Michael's childhood. To recap, the story of *Halloween* provides no information about Michael's life prior to his attack on Judith; as a result, the character is presented as a psychotic murderer from the first moment he appears on screen. This has the effect of dehumanising Michael by entirely depriving the viewer of any information which might offer an alternative perspective. Through the character of Jamie, however, it is possible for series viewers to perceive young Michael from a new perspective, with the inference of a more elaborate backstory serving to 'rehumanise' the character by providing an insight into his life before he descended into psychosis. However, whereas the parallels between Jamie and Michael may serve to rehumanise Michael, the same cannot be said for Jamie. As the dehumanising effects of Michael's evil legacy take hold of the young girl at the end of the film, it becomes clear that her childhood innocence has been utterly destroyed.

As established at the beginning of the chapter, critics generally perceived the unexpected developments at the end of *Halloween 4* as a daring step in a bold new direction. However, they were not the only ones to welcome the prospect of the *Halloween* series continuing with Jamie at the helm. Series viewers reacted positively to the introduction of both Jamie and Rachel, warmly accepting the new characters and readily assimilating them into the existing hyperdiegesis. Indeed, fans were so impressed by the developments in *Halloween 4* that the film has gone on to be regarded as one of the best entries in the series.[17] In light of the damage done by *Halloween III*, the fact that *Halloween 4* inspired such optimism about the future of the series was a significant achievement. *The Return of Michael Myers* not only succeeded in re-establishing narrative continuity, but it did so in such a convincing and progressive manner that the faith of disenchanted viewers was restored, and the survival of the series was guaranteed. Now that the reparation work was complete, the burden of maintenance would fall to *Halloween 5*.

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[17] Fan enthusiasm for *Halloween 4* is evident online; see, for example, AquiredTasteMan, 'Rank the Franchise,' *OHMB*, July 18, 2013, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?20445-Rank-the-franchise; Gerry f'n D, 'Apart from Michael, Laurie, and Loomis, What *Halloween* Movie Had the Best Characters?' *OHMB*, January 15, 2005, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?3352-Apart-from-Michael-Laurie-amp-Loomis-what-Halloween-movie-had-the-best-characters; and MyersFan927, 'Favourite Sequel in the Original Series?' *OHMB*, October 29, 2012, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?19841-Favorite-Sequel-in-Original-Series.

CHAPTER EIGHT
HALLOWEEN 5: THE HYPERDIEGETIC WORLD

Having succeeded in reviving the *Halloween* series so convincingly, *Halloween 4* was always going to be a tough act to follow. However, the legacy of well-developed characters and relationships bequeathed by the film and the provision of a cliffhanger ending with ample potential for further elaboration should have maximised the chance for any subsequent sequel to achieve a similar level of success. Unfortunately, when *Halloween 5* was released, it soon became clear that the challenge laid down by *Halloween 4* could not be picked up quite so easily. Unofficially subtitled *The Revenge of Michael Myers*,[1] *Halloween 5* received a largely negative response, with critics and fans accusing the film of systematically unravelling all of the achievements of its predecessor. In this chapter, I will outline some of the factors which prompted this reaction before shifting the discussion away from such issues in order to re-examine *Halloween 5* from an alternative perspective. By focusing not on the film as a failed attempt to continue the success of its predecessor but as a source of narrative material designed to contribute to the overall development of the hyperdiegetic world, I aim to demonstrate that *Halloween 5* functions as a valuable component of the hypertextual system in spite of any perceived shortcomings.

Following the success of *Halloween 4*, Moustapha Akkad immediately began working on *Halloween 5*, hoping that an efficient production schedule would provide an opportunity to capitalise on the reinvigorated sense of enthusiasm surrounding the series.[2] Acting on the recommendation of *Halloween* veteran Debra Hill, Akkad overcame some initial reticence to hire Dominique Othenin-Girard, a Swiss-French filmmaker who was determined to introduce a much darker tone to the series.[3] Thus, despite the return of Donald Pleasence, Danielle Harris, Ellie Cornell, and Beau Starr, the introduction of Othenin-Girard signalled a change in direction for the series. This change resulted in some tensions on set, with Pleasence fearing that the unsympathetic representation of Dr. Loomis was somewhat at odds with the depiction of the character

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[1] Although the opening credits bear the title *Halloween 5* with no additional subtitle, the promotional material associated with the film invariably included the tagline 'The Revenge of Michael Myers,' leading to the widespread adoption of the unofficial title, *Halloween 5: The Revenge of Michael Myers*.
[2] Moustapha Akkad, speaking in the documentary *Inside Halloween 5* (Mark Cerulli, 2004).
[3] Dominique Othenin-Girard recounts this story in an interview for *Halloweenmovies.com*. See 'Interview with Dominique Othenin-Girard,' *Halloweenmovies.com*, n. d., http://halloweenmovies.com/features/halloween-various-interview-dominique-othenin-girard/.

in previous films, and Cornell demanding changes to the script in order to avoid an unnecessarily brutal end for the amiable Rachel.[4]

Serving as a direct proleptic continuation of its predecessor, *Halloween 5* opens with a hypertextually defocalised sequence offering an alternative perspective on the supposed death of Michael Myers in *Halloween 4*. It soon transpires that Michael was not buried in the mineshaft as presumed, but escaped through an underground tunnel leading to the shack of an old hermit, who cared for the injured Boogeyman while he lay comatose for the next year. Twelve months on from the events of *Halloween 4*, Jamie Carruthers – who, it seems, merely injured her foster mother in the stabbing spree at the end of the previous film – is revealed to be a mute living at a children's clinic in Haddonfield. Jamie is again positioned as Michael's primary target, as indicated when he awakens from his coma and immediately sets his sights on tracking down his young niece. With Jamie's psychic connection to her uncle stronger than ever, Dr. Loomis demands the young girl's help in laying a trap for his elusive adversary, who is eventually captured and jailed, but not before he has succeeded in killing a slew of innocent victims, including Jamie's foster sister, Rachel.[5] As *Halloween 5* draws to a close, a mysterious man in black – who has been shadowing Michael throughout the film – breaks into the police station, slaughters the officers, and sets The Shape free once more. The only clue as to the connection between Michael and the stranger is a runic symbol present on the wrists of both characters.

Rushed into production, *Halloween 5* was released just one year after its predecessor, leaving many feeling that the film arrived at the box office too soon.[6] Widely perceived as an inferior production representing a 'particularly egregious example of everything not to do' in an ongoing series, *Halloween 5* was greeted with an overwhelming sense of critical negativity.[7] Not only was a raft of hypertextual inconsistencies and narrative ambiguities seen to result in a film which was 'disjointed,

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[4] See Marc Shapiro, 'A Farewell to *Halloween*,' *Fangoria* 89 (December 1989): 31. In the original script, Rachel was due to die as a result of Michael Myers forcing a pair of scissors down her throat; after Cornell complained about the graphic nature of the character's demise, the script was re-written and a less brutal death scene was incorporated. Cornell recounts this story in the documentary, *Inside Halloween 5*.

[5] John Kenneth Muir is among those to suggest that the increased emphasis on Jamie's psychic ability is indicative of the 'rubber reality' trend which spread throughout the slasher sub-genre in the 1980s. Not only did the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series introduce an explicitly supernatural figure in the shape of Freddy Krueger, but the *Friday the 13th* series also veered increasingly in this direction, representing Jason Voorhees as progressively supernatural and featuring a telekinetic character called Tina Shepard, who uses her powers to defeat Jason in *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (John Carl Buechler, 1988). See John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s* (London: McFarland, 2011), 34.

[6] Paul Freeman, producer of several *Halloween* films, speaking in *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*.

[7] David Nusair, 'The *Halloween* Series: *Halloween 5*,' *Reel Film Reviews*, July 16, 2006, http://reelfilm.com/hallween.htm#5.

derivative, and ill-conceived,' but an apparent disregard for the meaningful development of characters and relationships also left viewers disappointed, frustrated, and confused.[8] In addition to these issues, viewers were both surprised and disappointed by Othenin-Girard's decision to abandon the concept of Jamie continuing Michael's legacy. The end of *Halloween 4* had paved the way for the future of the series to continue in a different direction with Jamie at the helm, so when *Halloween 5* revealed that the young girl did not kill her foster-mother after all and swiftly proceeded to reinstate Michael as the central villain, viewers were left bewildered by the choice not to cultivate a potentially-intriguing new storyline.[9] This was not the only narrative development which left viewers dissatisfied. The death of Rachel came as a particularly harsh blow, especially as it severed one of the most meaningful relationships in the series to date, leaving young Jamie – and the audience – to form a new attachment to Rachel's replacement, the perennially hyperactive Tina Williams.[10] By infusing the story with such moments of violent injustice, Othenin-Girard had hoped to create a 'rollercoaster ride' which would 'astound and hurt' the viewer.[11] Unfortunately, this strategy backfired, succeeding only in inciting an angry backlash from those who found it difficult to understand the reasoning behind such an incongruous turn of events.[12]

The final batch of criticism was reserved for the narrative ambiguities peppered throughout the film. Particularly frustrating for viewers was the introduction of the mysterious Man in Black who appeared to be connected to Michael by some form of ancient mysticism. Remaining undeveloped for the duration of the film, this move resulted in widespread confusion, with neither viewers nor the members of the cast themselves able to shed any light on the identity of the stranger or the nature of his relationship with Michael.[13] The inability of anyone to explain this storyline is hardly

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[8] Jim Harper, *Legacy of Blood: A Comprehensive Guide to Slasher Movies* (Manchester: Critical Vision, 2004), 104. Particular points of contention among fans included unexplained changes to Michael's mask and the Myers house, the uncharacteristically aggressive behaviour of Dr. Loomis, and the introduction of a comedy cop duo, which was perceived to create a farcical tone markedly out of kilter with the rest of the series.

[9] James Berardinelli, '*Halloween IV: The Return of Michael Myers*,' *ReelViews*, n. d., http://www.reelviews.net/reelviews/halloween-iv-the-return-of-michael-myers.

[10] Speaking in *Inside Halloween 5*, Moustapha Akkad expresses his regret at the decision to kill Rachel so soon, having subsequently realised that her popularity with viewers would have allowed the character to keep 'going on and on.'

[11] 'Interview with Dominique Othenin-Girard,' *Halloweenmovies.com*.

[12] See Muir, *Horror Films of the 1980s*, 735.

[13] The cast of the film discuss their confusion regarding the Man in Black in *Inside Halloween 5*, where both Danielle Harris and Don Shanks – the stuntman playing Michael Myers – confirm that they were left perplexed by the storyline pertaining to the character. Typical examples of the frustrated fan reaction are evident in letters submitted to *Fangoria*; see, for instance, Glenn Kay, 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hokum,' *Fangoria* 91 (April 1990): 7-8; and Brian Sullivan, 'The Postal Zone: More Shape Comments,' *Fangoria* 92 (May 1990): 8.

surprising; speaking in an online interview, director Othenin-Girard admits that he gave no thought to the origins of the Man in Black, creating the character wholly 'on the fly' in order to provide an 'additional hook for the next sequel.'[14] In many ways, this comment cuts straight to the heart of the negativity surrounding *Halloween 5,* with the aforementioned catalogue of narrative shortcomings perceived as evidence that the director did not appreciate the importance of maintaining the integrity of the hypertextual system.[15]

Produced for a budget of approximately $5 million, *Halloween 5* went on to take just $11.6 million at the box office – the lowest figure of any entry in the series and an accurate reflection of the disappointment which resulted from the film's failure to uphold the expected standards of hypertextual integrity.[16] In the next chapter, I will seek to examine more closely the implications of hypertextual inconsistencies and incongruities, but for the purpose of the current discussion it is sufficient to note that the perceived deficiencies of *Halloween 5* were seen to betray the carefully crafted processes of development which had been so integral to the success of the previous film. Under such circumstances, it may be tempting to dismiss the hypertextual value of *Halloween 5* altogether. However, no matter the extent of the perceived narrative deficiencies within the film, I argue that the fifth instalment of the *Halloween* series still makes an important contribution to the overall development of the fictional world.

In a hypertextual system, the fictional world develops over the course of multiple films, resulting in the creation of an increasingly elaborate hyperdiegetic world, or hyperdiegesis.[17] Perceived deficiencies within a hypertext, such as those identified in *Halloween 5,* lead to the logical assumption that the hypertext in question represents a substandard component of the total narrative system. However, shortcomings pertaining to specific aspects of narrative construction – processes of characterisation or plot development, for example – do not necessarily prevent the hypertext from playing some part in the creation of the hyperdiegetic world. In order to scrutinise this notion more closely, and to gain an understanding of its bearing upon the hypertextual significance of *Halloween 5,* it is necessary to examine the representation of the fictional world within the film.

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[14] 'Interview with Dominique Othenin-Girard,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*

[15] It is particularly interesting to note that Donald Pleasence reinforces this perspective in an interview with *Fangoria,* where he offers his opinion on Othenin-Girard's approach toward the production: 'I don't think he understands that he's making the fifth film in a series, rather than his own idea of what the film should be.' See Marc Shapiro, 'Myers Cries! Loomis Dies! On Set with *Halloween 5,' Fangoria* 87 (December 1989): 40.

[16] '*Halloween 5,' Box Office Mojo,* http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween5.htm.

[17] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 104.

The majority of the action in the *Halloween* series takes place in the fictional town of Haddonfield, Illinois.[18] Earlier in the study, I discussed the representation of Haddonfield in the first *Halloween* film, drawing attention to key locations both within the town and further afield. In studying the representation of these locations, it became clear that the demands of the plot placed inevitable restrictions on the process of geographic exploration, resulting in the provision of a somewhat fragmented picture of the fictional world. Hypertextually speaking, such a fragmented picture represents a prime opportunity for further development, with ellipses and omissions in the hypotextual rendering of the world providing a chance for subsequent sequels to 'fill in' the missing information. *Halloween 5* contributes to this spatially-augmentative process in two ways: by elaborating the existing spaces within the world and by expanding the known boundaries of the world.

In *Halloween* 5, the town of Haddonfield is represented by Salt Lake City, Utah – the same shooting location which was previously used in *Halloween 4*. Returning to Salt Lake City for *Halloween 5* enabled the filmmakers to re-use many of the same locations featured in the previous film, an advantage which not only facilitated the maintenance of geographic continuity but which also provided an opportunity to engage in a more extensive exploration of some of the existing spaces within the fictional world.[19] The process of spatial elaboration first becomes apparent during the opening sequence of *Halloween 5*. This section of the film includes a sequence of footage from the previous film showing Michael falling into the abandoned mine before the entrance proceeds to collapse on top of him. By neglecting to include any shots of the mine interior during the brief period between Michael's fall and the collapse, *Halloween 4* implied that Michael had perished beneath a mountain of rubble. However, by employing the technique of hypertextual defocalisation, *Halloween 5* offers an alternative perspective on this sequence of events. Lingering inside the mine during the period which was not shown in *Halloween 4* allows *Halloween 5* to reveal the existence of a previously-unseen tunnel; this provides Michael with a means of escape, thereby enabling him to vacate the mine before his fate is sealed by the dramatic cave-in. By elaborating upon an existing space in this way, *Halloween 5* succeeds in transforming a

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[18] The only *Halloween* films wholly to deviate from the Haddonfield setting are the narratively-divergent *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* and the 'murderous hypertext' *Halloween H20: Twenty Years Later*, both of which are set in California. The concept of *Halloween H20* as a 'murderous hypertext' is subject to further elaboration later in the study.

[19] *Halloween 4* and *Halloween 5* are not the first pair of *Halloween* films to share the same filming locations as each other. This was previously the case for *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, which were both filmed in South Pasadena, California, an arrangement which enabled the sequel to retain continuity by re-using many of the sets which featured in the original film.

170

narrative and a spatial 'dead end' into a pathway facilitating the continuation of Michael's story.

The mine is not the only interior space subjected to hypertextual elaboration in *Halloween 5*, with the Carruthers house also undergoing a similar process of spatial augmentation. The Carruthers house first appears in *Halloween 4*, where several different spaces within the house are presented to the viewer: these include the lounge, Jamie's bedroom, the kitchen, the dining room, the stairs, the upstairs hallway, and the bathroom, where Jamie's violent outburst almost results in the death of her foster mother. Naturally, the film does not show every part of the house, restricting its spatial exploration solely to areas relevant to the development of the plot. This allows *Halloween 5* to augment the existing representation of the Carruthers house, both by presenting previously-unseen spaces, such as the shower room and Rachel's bedroom, and by revealing more of the spaces which connect the individual rooms. To elaborate, with the exception of two brief subjective point-of-view sequences, *Halloween 4* presents most of the spaces inside the Carruthers house using static camera shots, thereby limiting the film's ability to establish a coherent sense of the spatial dynamics within the building. In *Halloween 5*, however, the Carruthers house is explored using prolonged point-of-view sequences and other mobile camera shots. These are employed to follow various characters as they walk from room to room and from floor to floor, thereby establishing a greater sense of the spatial relationships between the different areas of the house. Notable examples of this type of spatial elaboration are found in the sequences where Michael stalks Rachel inside the house, where Tina wanders around the house looking for Rachel, and where Tina and Sammy run through the house before leaving to meet Mikey.

Other interior spaces subject to hypertextual elaboration in *Halloween 5* include Haddonfield police station, which is shown to house a previously-unseen area of holding cells, and the Myers house, which is shown to feature an attic and a large basement, neither of which has been seen in previous films. However, in the case of both of these locations the process of spatial elaboration is complicated by the fact that the buildings used in *Halloween 5* are noticeably different from those featured in *Halloween 4*. The architectural discrepancies associated with the police station can – perhaps – be explained in terms of narrative logic; after all, the previous film saw an attack by Michael result in the destruction of both the station itself and the personnel within. In such circumstances, it is not beyond the realms of possibility for the viewer to infer that the Haddonfield police force may have moved to new premises, thereby

explaining the presence of a new building in *Halloween 5*. Unfortunately, the same sense of narrative logic cannot provide an explanation for the modification of the Myers house, which transforms from an unremarkable family home – as featured in *Halloween* and *Halloween II* – into a large and imposing building somewhat resembling a Gothic mansion. According to Othenin-Girard, such a dramatic architectural modification was necessary in order to accommodate the needs of the plot, which included an elaborate pursuit sequence set inside the house.[20] However, what the *Halloween 5* director failed to consider was the fact that modifying such a recognisable location might disrupt the carefully crafted coherence of the hyperdiegetic world. The implications of modifying the Myers house will be discussed in more depth later in the study; at this point, however, it is most important to note that not all forms of spatial transformation serve to enhance the overall coherence of the hyperdiegesis.

The elaboration of interior spaces in *Halloween 5* represents a relatively subtle form of augmentation; the elaboration of the town of Haddonfield itself, however, provides a much more conspicuous demonstration of this process in action. *Halloween 5* introduces several previously-unseen locations within the town of Haddonfield. These can be loosely categorised according to which area of the town they serve to develop: the urban centre, the suburbs, or the rural outskirts. Newly-introduced urban locations include the bus stop outside Vincent Drug, which serves as the point of arrival for the mysterious Man in Black; the Quick Food Mart, which employs Sammy's boyfriend, Spitz; and Dale's Gas Station, where the police rescue Tina from the clutches of Michael Myers. The main addition to the suburban area of the town is the Haddonfield Children's Clinic, which plays host to Jamie as she attempts to recover from the traumatic events of the previous film. The clinic is apparently located in a different neighbourhood from the Myers house, as indicated by the sequences showing the police vehicles driving across the town in order to move between the two locations. Suburban elaboration is also evident in the exploration of the neighbourhood streets, which are shown in detail when Tina and Rachel make the journey from the clinic to the Carruthers house, when Sammy and Tina walk from the Carruthers house to the clinic, and when Jamie and Billy embark on their frantic trek from the clinic to Tower Farm.

Although *Halloween 5* successfully develops both the urban and suburban areas of Haddonfield, the film's elaboration of the rural outskirts of the town represents the most extensive form of spatial augmentation. The existence of rural areas within the town is previously implied in *Halloween II*, where Nurse Janet refers to a sighting of

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[20] See 'Interview with Dominique Othenin-Girard,' *Halloweenmovies.com*.

Michael 'in that field behind the Lost River Drive-in'; and in *Halloween 4*, which not only features an opening montage of anonymous rural locations including woodland, farms, barns, and an assortment of abandoned farm buildings, but also includes sequences which take place in a power station on the edge of the town and at the abandoned mine, situated somewhere along the road out of Haddonfield. In *Halloween 5*, however, the rural outskirts of the town play a much more prominent role within the narrative. This first becomes evident during the aforementioned defocalised sequence at the beginning of the film. After escaping from the mine using the previously-unseen tunnel, Michael emerges next to a fast-flowing river, which promptly sweeps him away downstream. Eventually managing to haul himself up the embankment, Michael soon discovers a ramshackle hut belonging to an old hermit. Not only does this sequence serve to transform the Lost River from an unseen part of the town into a fully realised geographic feature, it also suggests that the inhabited spaces within Haddonfield are not solely restricted to the urban and suburban environments previously presented to the viewer. The rural outskirts of the town are further explored through the introduction of Tower Farm, a location playing host to a Halloween party which appears to attract the majority of the teenagers in Haddonfield. Once the narrative action shifts to the farm several new locations are revealed: these include the farm house, where the party is located; a large barn, in which both Sammy and Spitz are subject to graphic deaths at the hands of Michael Myers; a nearby reservoir, which is mentioned but never seen; the surrounding fields, which Jamie and Billy cross during their attempt to save Tina; and a large area of woodland, which takes centre stage in a sustained pursuit sequence involving Michael, Tina, Jamie, and Billy.

The rural outskirts may designate the geographic boundaries surrounding the town, but they in no way signify the outer limits of the fictional world as a whole. To elaborate, V. F. Perkins suggests that the existence of 'elsewheres' within the fictional world means that the isolation of any one space is always far from complete.[21] In *Halloween 5,* the existence of such 'elsewheres' is implied in several ways: the presence of state troopers drafted in from an out-of-town base;[22] references to a 'cabin in the country,' where Rachel and her parents intend to spend the weekend; a sarcastic comment from Sheriff Meeker questioning the need to 'call out the national guard'

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[21] V. F. Perkins, 'Where is the World? The Horizon of Events in Movie Fiction,' in *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film*, ed. John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 31.

[22] Although the state troopers are initially summoned in *Halloween 4*, they also appear in the defocalised flashback sequence featured at the beginning of *Halloween 5*.

every time Jamie senses something is awry; and the arrival of the Greyhound bus, which signifies an initial point of departure somewhere outside the town. By implying the presence of such 'elsewheres,' the film succeeds in situating Haddonfield within a wider geographic context, thereby establishing that the fictional world extends beyond the boundaries of the town.

Halloween 5 not only augments the spaces within the fictional world, but also expands the population of the world itself. Just as the hypotextual process of geographic exploration is curtailed by the demands of the plot, so too is the process of introducing the inhabitants of the world to the viewer. As a result, there are gaps in the body of hypotextual information pertaining to the population of the fictional world, a situation which presents an opportunity for any subsequent sequels to fill in the missing details by introducing new characters.

The newly-introduced inhabitants in *Halloween 5* fall into one of three categories: members of the Haddonfield community, those on the outskirts of the community, and outsiders. Within these categories, it is the community of Haddonfield which undergoes the most extensive process of augmentation. This is accomplished by the introduction of new characters including Rachel's social group, the teenagers in attendance at the Tower Farm party, the staff and children at the clinic, the parents of the children, and the new crop of local police officers, presumably drafted in to replace those slaughtered by Michael the previous Halloween. Although these characters are entirely new to the series, many possess an existing body of knowledge which appears to confirm their status as members of the Haddonfield community. For example, the way in which Tina Williams interacts with her environment implies a certain degree of familiarity with the locations in the town. When visiting Jamie at the clinic, rather than use a door to enter the room, Tina throws open the window and climbs in along with Rachel's dog, Max. Even though this is the first time Tina has been introduced, she completes this action with a sense of ease which suggests that she has used this unconventional form of entry many times before. Later in the film, when Tina arrives at the Carruthers house intent on spending the weekend away from her parents, she walks up to the back door and retrieves a spare key from its hiding place above the doorway.[23] Despite the fact that the viewer has never before observed Tina entering the house, the automatic nature of her movement in reaching for the key suggests that the character is not only aware of its presence but has used the object on previous occasions. As it

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[23] V. F. Perkins discusses a similar example in respect to the creation of 'worldhood' in *All I Desire* (Douglas Sirk, 1953). See Perkins, 'Where is the World?,' 29-32.

transpires, the door is unlocked and the key is not required, allowing Tina to enter the house to look for Rachel. As she does, she casually wanders through each room, walking with an air of confidence which implies that she feels entirely at home in the space. It is not only Tina's spatial interactions which demonstrate the character's pre-existing body of knowledge: when Rachel offers Tina a reminder that Max is not permitted in the clinic ('You know they won't let the dog in.'), it becomes clear that the decision to enter through a window was an attempt to avoid detection, implying that she possesses prior knowledge about the rules and regulations governing the facility; when she greets Rachel, Jamie, Sammy, Mikey, and Spitz with a warm sense of familiarity, this indicates that her relationships with these characters pre-date her introduction to the viewer; and the fact that she knows about Jamie's costume pageant, Rachel's trip away with her parents, and the Tower Farm Halloween party ('The Tower Farm parties always rock') suggests an existing awareness of the current events taking place within the world.

Despite the fact that the somewhat shallow representation of Tina was perceived by some as evidence of sub-standard processes of development within *Halloween 5*, it is nonetheless apparent that the character assumes an important function within the world-building process.[24] Her demonstration of a vast body of knowledge pertaining to the fictional world suggests that the character possesses a 'store' of experiences and memories relating to Haddonfield and its residents.[25] Significantly, the viewer has not witnessed the acquisition of any of this knowledge; every experience and memory pertaining to the fictional world has been amassed by Tina prior to her introduction at the children's clinic.[26] This implies that Tina's life – and, therefore, the fictional world itself – has developed somewhere beyond the boundaries of the screen, a suggestion which serves to enhance the coherence of the hyperdiegesis by leading the viewer to infer the existence of a world which is both temporally and spatially continuous.

Although I have drawn specific attention to the character of Tina in this respect, it is vital to note that Tina is not the only character in *Halloween 5* – or, indeed, the series as a whole – who demonstrates a vast body of knowledge pertaining to the fictional world. On the contrary, the interactions between each character and their

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[24] John Kenneth Muir is one writer who suggests that the representation of Tina encapsulates the underdeveloped processes of characterisation in the film. See *Horror Films of the 1980s*, 735.
[25] Perkins, 'Where is the World?,' 30.
[26] Although the knowledge-acquisition process remains largely hidden in the case of newly-introduced characters such as Tina, in the case of recurrent characters such as Dr. Loomis and Michael Myers the viewer is likely to observe at least part of the process. This is due to the fact that the experience and memories possessed by such characters accumulate over the course of multiple films, often as a result of events witnessed by the viewer.

surroundings frequently indicate the existence of a store of knowledge, experience, and memories accumulated as the result of a life lived within the fictional world. This is true even in the case of apparently insignificant characters occupying only minor roles, as highlighted in *Halloween 5* during the sequence where Tina's life is saved by the knowledge of a local police officer. Having inadvertently accepted a lift to Tower Farm from the disguised Michael Myers, Tina rides across Haddonfield unaware that her life hangs in the balance. As they stop at a gas station to buy cigarettes, Jamie's psychic connection to Michael alerts her to the fact that Tina is in danger. Battling a convulsion, Jamie tries to communicate Tina's location to Billy, Dr. Loomis, and assorted police officers gathered at the clinic, but succeeds only in uttering a restricted collection of words including the seemingly incoherent phrase, 'Cookie woman.' As Loomis draws a blank and looks around at the others in confusion, a spark of recognition suddenly spreads across the face of one of the police officers, who immediately reaches for his radio to raise the alarm: 'Dale's Gas Station – 5th and Main!' In this instance, only the local police officer recognises the location to which Jamie is referring – all due to the fact that his existing familiarity with Dale's Gas Station allows him to infer that the 'Cookie woman' is actually a large advertising sign in place outside the building ('Giant Cookies – A real taste treat!').

A life lived within the community of Haddonfield has the seemingly-unavoidable consequence of developing an unwelcome familiarity with the town's most prodigal son. This is demonstrated by the fact that newly-introduced members of the community appear to know all about Michael Myers, thereby suggesting that his infamy has spread throughout the town. One sequence which illustrates this point takes place at Tower Farm. With the Halloween party in full swing and two police offers on standby outside, Tina and Sammy suddenly come running out of the house, apparently pursued by Michael. As Michael raises his knife ready to stab Tina, the police officers draw their guns and are just about to shoot when the character purporting to be the deadly Boogeyman removes his mask. At this point, the police officers realise it is actually Sammy's boyfriend, Spitz, dressed in a costume bearing an uncanny resemblance to the outfit usually worn by Michael. This scene reveals that Michael's appearance has become so well known within the fictional world that it can be closely imitated and instantly recognised by the local population.[27] One of the reasons the community of

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[27] This is not the first time that such an event has occurred: in *Halloween II*, Ben Tramer is mistaken for Michael Myers after wearing a similar costume on Halloween night and in *Halloween 4*, a group of several youths narrowly avoid drawing gunfire from Dr. Loomis after dressing up as the infamous killer.

Haddonfield has amassed such a store of knowledge pertaining to Michael is the extensive media coverage of his actions over the years. From the news bulletins heard on the radio and seen on the television in *Halloween II* to the community-wide curfew issued during the hunt for Michael in *Halloween 4*, it has been almost impossible for those living in Haddonfield to avoid the gradual accumulation of information about the terrifying Boogeyman and his deadly escapades.

The fact that newly-introduced characters are familiar with Michael Myers highlights the ubiquity of his intrusion into the collective consciousness of the Haddonfield residents. However, their knowledge not only serves to illustrate the extent of Michael's notoriety, it also highlights the devastating impact of his actions on the community as a whole. This becomes apparent in the sequence where Tina and Sammy walk toward the children's clinic discussing their plans for the weekend. After Sammy mentions that she has been in a 'weird mood' all day, Tina responds with the comment: 'Well, everybody in this town is in a weird mood. They should ban Halloween in this town.'[28] By suggesting that Haddonfield is engulfed by a noticeable shift in mood during the days leading up to Halloween, Tina's comment both demonstrates her awareness of the behavioural norms within the town – an observation which reinforces the notion that her character has developed inside the fictional world – and reveals the community-wide implications of a decade of seasonal trauma. Multiple attacks by Michael over the preceding years have claimed the lives of dozens of members of the community, consequently inflicting a continual cycle of suffering and distress upon those living within the town. This point is driven home in the scene where Dr. Loomis implores Sheriff Meeker not to ignore Jamie's warnings about Michael's return: 'How many people did he kill last year? Have you forgotten? Your own daughter!' The death of Kelly Meeker was one of several which occurred during Michael's previous killing spree; as a result, the sheriff became one of the most recent additions to a long line of Haddonfield residents left bereft as a result of Michael's actions.[29] In this way, it becomes apparent that the members of the community are bonded not only by their

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The hypertextual significance of Michael's costume will be subject to further elaboration in the section of the study dedicated to *Halloween: Resurrection*.

[28] In *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, it is revealed that the residents of Haddonfield do, in fact, decide to ban the celebration of Halloween following the events which take place in *Halloween 5*. In one of many unfortunate coincidences within the film, the ban remains in place for six years before being lifted on the eve of Michael's return.

[29] Other bereaved characters include Laurie Strode, who, in *Halloween II*, is shown to struggle with the psychological trauma of losing her friends to Michael as a result of the events which took place in *Halloween;* Sheriff Brackett, who discovers during the events of *Halloween II* that his daughter, Annie, was one of Michael's original victims; and one of the members of the lynch mob formed in *Halloween 4*, who claims his son was killed during the 1978 massacre.

collective awareness of Michael but also by their shared experience of the devastating events which have transformed Haddonfield from a quiet town in which 'the only gun shots you used to hear were at the start of a track meet'[30] into a traumatised hub of paranoia.

The paranoid behaviour which seems to grip the town around the season of Halloween is demonstrated in the sequence where a brick is thrown through Jamie's window at the children's clinic. Upon closer inspection, Dr. Loomis discovers that the brick is encased in a note declaring that, 'The evil child *must* die!' Angry at this turn of events, Rachel turns to Dr. Loomis to vent her frustration:

> Rachel: How could they? When are they going to realise that she
>   is *not* him, she's just a child.
>
> Dr. Loomis: They know that Michael Myers is her uncle, and that she
>   attacked her step-mother. That's why they fear her –
>   especially on Halloween.[31]

The 'they' to whom Rachel and Dr. Loomis refer are the members of the Haddonfield community at large – an unseen collective of scared and anxious individuals bonded by experiences which render them hypersensitive to any potential threat, particularly in the days surrounding Halloween.

As a result of the suffering inflicted upon the town, the community has apparently developed into a fiercely protective force determined to do all it can to safeguard its members. This is evidenced at the end of the aforementioned sequence at Dale's Gas Station. The moment the authorities are aware that Tina may be in danger, the forecourt of the gas station is suddenly swarmed by police cars arriving from every direction. As the officers protectively surround Tina and urgently search for any sign of Michael Myers, they fail to notice that the Boogeyman is parked across the street – a position which ultimately allows him to flee the scene unobserved. Objectively speaking, the scale of this police response may seem disproportionate to the apparent level of threat. After all, at this point in the film the police have received no concrete evidence of the return of Michael Myers; as far as they are aware, the only signs suggesting that the town is in danger are the telekinetic visions of a psychologically-traumatised child, the suspicions of an obviously unbalanced doctor, and the

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[30] Deputy Hunt to Dr. Loomis, *Halloween II*.
[31] Confusingly, Rachel and Dr. Loomis both refer to Jamie's foster mother as her 'step-mother' throughout the film; although only a minor discrepancy, this adds to the general sense of inconsistency which plagued *Halloween 5*.

178

unexplained excavation of a coffin at the local cemetery. However, the scale of the police response is indicative of the fact that the residents of Haddonfield have amassed a collective wealth of unwelcome knowledge and experience pertaining to Michael Myers. No matter how implausible the possibility of Michael's return, or how unsubstantiated the evidence pointing toward such an occurrence, the over-sensitised inhabitants of the town take the threat seriously, rounding up all available resources in an attempt to save another member of the community falling into the fatal hands of the Boogeyman.[32]

The only Haddonfield inhabitants to remain apparently unaffected by Michael's actions are those individuals who exist on the outskirts of the community. *Halloween 5* introduces one such character in the shape of an elderly hermit who lives on the banks of the Lost River. Apparently unaware of Michael's identity or his dangerous nature, the hermit takes in the injured Boogeyman and cares for him after he falls unconscious following his escape from the mine.[33] This naive attempt to rehabilitate Michael highlights a fundamental lack of knowledge and experience resulting from the hermit's segregation from the rest of the community. Despite the fact that the hermit's presence reveals the existence of a previously-unseen section of Haddonfield society, the character does not survive long enough to offer many further insights. The only reward he receives for his misguided offer of sanctuary is a swift death once his guest regains consciousness – a fate which demonstrates the notion that ignorance is far from bliss when it comes to the indiscriminately brutal Michael Myers.

The last type of new character introduced in *Halloween 5* is the outsider, represented by the perpetually mysterious Man in Black. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this character was not well received by viewers, who perceived his unexplained presence as serving little purpose other than to confuse and frustrate. However, despite such widespread unpopularity, the character nonetheless serves a useful function within the overall world-building process, his arrival on a Greyhound bus implying the existence of a wider population situated in an unknown 'elsewhere' somewhere outside the boundaries of Haddonfield.

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[32] Evidence that the inhabitants of Haddonfield have developed into a fiercely protective community is also provided in *Halloween II*, where a destructive lynch mob gathers outside the Myers house; and in *Halloween 4*, where the formation of a similar mob results in the death of Ted Hollister, an innocent member of the community who is inadvertently killed during a hunt for Michael Myers.

[33] Parallels can be drawn between the old hermit in *Halloween 5* and the blind man who cares for Frankenstein's Monster in *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935). In both cases, it is a lack of knowledge which allows the hermits to care for characters who are found threatening by more informed residents of the fictional world.

The processes of spatial augmentation and population expansion in *Halloween 5* serve to facilitate the construction of a more coherent hyperdiegesis. Every time an existing location is elaborated or an additional character is introduced, the viewer receives a new piece of information which can be used to fill in an existing ellipsis or omission within their envisioned picture of the fictional world. Such augmentative processes are by no means restricted to *Halloween 5*. On the contrary, these processes are ongoing throughout the *Halloween* series, with each film making its own distinct contribution to the development of the fictional world. The result is an increasingly detailed hyperdiegesis comprised of information accumulated across multiple films – a construct which enables the viewer's imagined concept of the fictional world to assume a more concrete form.[34]

For some of the most ardent fans of the series, the process of transforming an imagined concept of the world into something more concrete is not solely confined to the cognitive realm. This is evident in the creation of physical artefacts inspired by the fictional world. Examples include maps of Haddonfield meticulously pieced together using every available fragment of geographical information; material reproductions of the badges and patches worn by members of the Haddonfield police force; and fan-made newspapers and magazines claiming to provide reports about the terrible succession of tragedies inflicted upon the town of Haddonfield.[35] The production of such artefacts demonstrates a sense of attachment to the fictional world which is also expressed in other ways, such as online discussions where fans debate the imagined benefits of living in the various different 'versions' of Haddonfield; and in the vast library of fan fiction which has developed around the series.[36] Matt Hills suggests that

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[34] The cumulative nature of the world-building process in the *Halloween* series is evidenced in Appendix Two: Locations in the *Halloween* series. This spreadsheet reveals an increasingly extensive list of locations revealed to exist within the town of Haddonfield (column C), and also provides information pertaining to the development of the world beyond these boundaries (column E).

[35] Examples of such maps are provided online; see Zombie, 'A Map of Haddonfield,' *OHMB*, July 14, 2010, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?18002-A-map-of-Haddonfield/.
Copies of the maps included in the discussion thread are provided in Appendix Three: Maps of Haddonfield. Evidence of material productions of badges is available on the OHMB; see cinezombi, 'Haddonfield Sheriff Badge Replicas,' *OHMB*, April 12, 2010, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?17685-Haddonfield-Sheriff-Badge-Replicas; and cinezombi, 'Haddonfield Sheriff's Patches,' *OHMB*, March 16, 2010, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?17590-Haddonfield-Sheriff-s-Patches. For examples of fan-made news reports, see Eyes of Darkness, 'Made this in Photoshop, Haddonfield Paper,' *Horror Domain*, October 3, 2009, http://horrordomain.com/forums/topics/posts/index.cfm?t=9993;
SLCer, 'Mock Haddonfield Tribune Front Pages I Did,' *Dreadit: The Horror Reddit*, March 31, 2014, https://www.reddit.com/r/horror/comments/21sz1q/mock_haddonfield_tribune_front_pages_i_did/; and The_Mad_Butcher, '*Halloween H20* Newspaper Replicas,' *OHMB*, October 25, 2015, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?21856-Halloween-H20-Newspaper-Replicas.

[36] For a discussion of the different 'versions' of Haddonfield, see Zombie, 'What Haddonfield Would You Like to Live In?'*OHMB*, August 3, 2009, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?16158-What-

the formation of such attachments can lead to the creation of 'cult geographies' – material extensions of the hyperdiegesis which cult fans take as the basis for touristic practices. According to Hills, the process of visiting sites which form part of the hyperdiegesis enables fans to extend their engagement with a text by extratextually 'inhabiting' the fictional world.[37] In the case of the *Halloween* series, there appears to be ample evidence of fans participating in such practices. Not only have dedicated viewers exhaustively catalogued the shooting locations featured within the films, but these spaces have also become sites of touristic pilgrimage, with fans seeking out key locations and swapping photos and videos of their expeditions, and documentarians returning to explore the original filming sites decades after the cameras stopped rolling.[38]

Despite the perceived deficiencies of *Halloween 5*, the augmentative processes at work within the film nonetheless succeed in contributing to the overall development of the hyperdiegetic world. However, the film was still judged as an inadequate narrative successor to *Halloween 4*. Riddled with underdeveloped characters and storylines, *Halloween 5* left viewers feeling both frustrated and confused as they struggled to answer the questions left unresolved by the film. The responsibility for answering these questions would fall to the next film in the series, but the attempt to do so would ultimately bring about the downfall of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*.

Haddonfield-would-you-like-to-live-in. Numerous examples of fan fiction related to the *Halloween* series are available in the creator's area of *The Official Halloween Message Board*. See 'The Lost River Drive In,' http://www.ohmb.net/forumdisplay.php?4-The-Lost-River-Drive-In.

[37] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 110-1. Here, Hills' description of cult geographies draws on the work of Scott Bukatman; see Scott Bukatman, 'Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space,' in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 266.

[38] For an example of location-cataloguing, see proudhug, '*Halloween* Filming Locations Master List,' *OHMB*, March 28, 2010, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?17635-Halloween-filming-locations-master-list. For examples of touristic pilgrimage, see MischievousSpirit, 'My *Halloween* Locations Pictures,' *OHMB*, October 20, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?1721-My-Halloween-Locations-Pictures; adamthewoo, '*Halloween* - Filming Locations - 1978 John Carpenter Horror Classic,' YouTube video, posted October 30, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqgNumot-Qk; ChadATL, '*Halloween 4 & 5* Filming Locations,' YouTube videos, posted November 1, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD2QeuNRnZY;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuMSgnqWJzk;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQuK1HfW6Zw; and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ue_YZIs8EA; and the online blog *Movie Locations and More*, which includes entries for each of the *Halloween* films. See *Movie Locations and More*, http://movielocationsandmore.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/halloween-1978.html. The documentary series *Horrors Hallowed Grounds* (2006-) also dedicates several episodes to the locations featured in the *Halloween* films; this includes a special episode featuring a bus tour commissioned to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the original film; see *Halloween: 35 Years of Terror Bus Tour* (2014).

CHAPTER NINE

HALLOWEEN: THE CURSE OF MICHAEL MYERS: THE IMPLICATIONS OF HYPERTEXTUAL INCOHERENCE

Six years after the cliffhanger ending of *Halloween 5* saw Michael Myers mysteriously vanish from Haddonfield police station, *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* arrived in cinemas. Charged with the task of restoring coherence to the hypertextual system, the sixth instalment in the series attempted to address the plethora of questions left unanswered by its predecessor. Unfortunately, the effort was seriously compromised by a combination of textual and extratextual factors, which conspired to leave the film riddled with inconsistencies, impossible coincidences, and a slew of other narrative deficiencies. In this chapter, I will subject the problematic areas of the narrative to close analysis, discussing the ways in which they sought to restore coherence and the issues which ultimately compromised this goal. Through a subsequent analysis of the film's reception, I hope to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which hypertextual incoherence can impact upon the series viewer.

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers heralded the start of a new era for the *Halloween* series after Miramax took over the rights and scheduled the new film for release under its Dimension Films label. The pre-production phase was problematic, with multiple screenplays rejected before Daniel Farrands was finally hired to write the film. A 'quintessential *Halloween* fan,' Farrands was determined to give series viewers what they wanted – a sequel that would tie up all of the loose ends left by *Halloween 5* while simultaneously developing the story in a manner faithful to the original production.[1] With Joe Chappelle assuming the director's chair, production eventually began. However, the production team had to contend with a raft of problems: unexpected budgetary constraints necessitated unplanned compromises; financial disputes curtailed any chance of Danielle Harris resuming her role as Jamie Lloyd; bad weather threatened to wreak havoc on the filming schedule; a continually-changing script complicated the task of writing an ending for the picture, with Farrands

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[1] Marc Shapiro, 'Stop Calling Us! *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* is Here!' *Fangoria* 147 (October 1995): 42; and Marc Shapiro, 'The New Faces of *Halloween*,' *Fangoria* 148 (November 1995): 21-22. Farrands has described himself as an avid *Halloween* fan on multiple occasions; see, for example, Shapiro, 'The New Faces of *Halloween*,' 20-21; 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com*, n. d., http://halloweenmovies.com/features/halloween-various-interview-daniel-farrands/; and *Halloween Returns to Haddonfield Convention – Panel Discussions* (2003).

contending with multiple different options well into the shoot; and conflicting views about the levels of gore led to the early dismissal of the special-effects crew.[2]

Eventually, however, the film was ready to face the unavoidable rite of passage imposed upon most big-studio productions: the test screening. After a disastrous reaction from viewers panicked the studio, the original version of the film was subject to extensive re-shoots – a process which resulted in the release of a significantly altered theatrical cut.[3]

Despite the ongoing problems behind the scenes, there existed a palpable sense of optimism surrounding the release of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, with many fans hopeful that the film would succeed in setting the *Halloween* series back on track. After all, the writer was a self-confessed fan who professed to know the *Halloween* films inside out; the director appeared confident, certain that the series could 'only get better' following the widely-criticised *Halloween 5*; and production reports from fanzines, such as *Fangoria*, appeared to indicate that the new instalment was heading in the right direction.[4] However, once the film was unleashed on the public, it soon became apparent that any such optimism was misplaced. Although notable for being the last picture made by Donald Pleasence, who died shortly after completing the film, *Curse* drew negative criticism from almost every faction. The majority of critics and fans were in staunch agreement that this 'unbelievably bad' film was by far the 'most inept' episode of the series, prompting many to echo the views of one particularly disappointed fan, who wrote in to *Fangoria* to ask, 'what the hell were they thinking when they wrote this movie?' Even the fanzine editor himself was in wholehearted agreement, proclaiming that: 'The bad taste this awful sequel left in my mouth still lingers.'[5] It was not only the viewers who were bitterly disappointed by the film, but also the filmmakers themselves, with Akkad blaming Miramax for 'ruining' his sequel

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[2] For further details on the problematic production process, see Shapiro, 'Stop Calling Us!'; Shapiro, 'The New Faces of *Halloween*'; Shapiro, 'The New Faces of *Halloween*'; and *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* (Stefan Hutchinson, 2006).

[3] *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* suggests that as much as a third of the film was reshot following the initial test screening.

[4] Joe Chappelle quoted in Shapiro, 'Stop Calling Us!,' 43. After the release of the film, one disappointed fan directed his anger firmly toward the writers of *Fangoria*, blaming the 'fine coverage' provided by the fanzine for falsely raising his hopes about the quality of the film by making it 'sound as if the filmmakers knew what they were doing.' See Ralph Mehlman, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' *Fangoria* 150 (March 1996): 6.

[5] See, respectively, John Stell. *Psychos! Sickos! Sequels! Horror Films of the 1980s* (Baltimore, MD: Midnight Marquee Press, 1998), 77; and Stephen Holden, 'Midwestern Druids Did It,' *New York Times*, September 30, 1995, C4, 15, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/30/movies/film-review-midwestern-druids-did-it.html; Jim Abucewicz, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' *Fangoria* 150 (March 1996): 6; and Anthony Timpone, 'Editorial: Elegy: The Night He Should Have Stayed Home,' *Fangoria* 151 (April 1996): 4.

and Farrands left distraught by the version which was eventually released by the studio: 'I feel so bad for the fans,' he told *Fangoria*, 'That wasn't my vision of the film, not even one-tenth of it.'[6] The general sense of disappointment regarding the film was reflected at the box office, where *Curse* brought in just over $15 million – one of the lowest figures in the series.[7]

The majority of negative criticism received by the film revolved around narrative developments which were intended to address the most salient questions left unanswered by *Halloween 5*: What happened to Michael and Jamie? What was the significance of the symbol on Michael's wrist? Who was the Man in Black and what was his relationship to Michael? By examining these narrative developments more closely, I hope to reveal why a film which was intended to restore coherence to the hypertextual system became regarded instead as the film which placed this coherence most at risk.

Due to the fact that the narrative developments in *Curse* are particularly convoluted, an expanded summary of the main plot points is provided below:

- After the massacre at Haddonfield police station at the end of *Halloween 5*, Michael and Jamie are delivered into the hands of the Cult of Thorn, a Druidic sect led by the Man in Black. Six years later, Jamie escapes after giving birth to a son who is destined to serve as a blood sacrifice. On the way to Haddonfield, Jamie calls a local radio station and makes a desperate plea for help; this is overheard by Dr. Loomis and Tommy Doyle, one of the survivors of Michael's 1978 attack. Neither Loomis nor Tommy can provide immediate help, resulting in Jamie's death at the hands of Michael; not, however, before she has succeeded in hiding her baby.

- Meanwhile in Haddonfield, where a six-year ban on Halloween has just been lifted, Tommy maintains a vigil over the Myers house and its new residents, the Strode family. Relatives of Laurie's adoptive parents, the Strodes are seemingly oblivious to the history of the house. The family includes single mother Kara and her young son, Danny. Convinced that Michael is fated to return to

[6] See Timpone, 'The Night He Should Have Stayed Home.'
[7] 'Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween6.htm.

Haddonfield, Tommy teams up with Dr. Loomis to protect Kara, Danny, and Jamie's baby, whom he finds and names 'Steven.'

- Tommy theorises that Michael's drive to kill is the result of an ancient curse. He explains that the tattoo on Michael's wrist is a runic symbol known as 'Thorn.' To the ancient Druids, Thorn represented a demon that spread sickness and death. According to Celtic legend, one child from each tribe was chosen to be inflicted with the curse of Thorn: to offer blood sacrifices of its next of kin on the night of Samhain. In this way, the sacrifice of one family was believed to spare the lives of the rest of the tribe. Tommy further explains that the Thorn symbol is actually an astrological constellation, the periodic appearance of which appears to correspond to the dates of Michael's previous attacks.

- The theory that Michael's actions are motivated by an external force is reinforced by Tommy's landlady, the elderly Mrs Blankenship, who is later revealed to be a member of the cult. Mrs Blankenship explains that she was babysitting Michael on Halloween night 1963, when a mysterious voice apparently drove him to kill Judith. According to Mrs. Blankenship, the same voice is now inciting Danny to kill, hinting that the young boy is being groomed to take on Michael's mantle.

- The final piece of the puzzle left unresolved by *Halloween 5* falls into place when the Man in Black is revealed to be Dr. Terence Wynn, the administrator of Smith's Grove, and the source of the voice heard by both Michael and Danny.

- After kidnapping Danny and Steven and taking them to the sanitarium, Wynn reveals his purpose to Dr. Loomis, explaining that he serves as Michael's guardian, both protecting and manipulating the Boogeyman in order to harness his evil power. After suggesting that Jamie's baby may have been the result of an unspecified genetic experiment, Wynn rounds up the cult to conduct an unexplained medical procedure on Steven and Danny. Before the children can be killed or corrupted, the members of the cult are slaughtered by Michael, who subsequently suffers a brutal beating at the hands of Tommy.

- As Tommy prepares to leave with Kara and the children, Dr. Loomis goes back into Smith's Grove to confirm Michael's death, only for a bloodcurdling scream to fill the air, leaving the doctor's fate ultimately unconfirmed.

From the outset, *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* establishes its intention to contribute toward the creation of a coherent narrative system. Not only is the opening sequence designed to confirm the film's status as a proleptic continuation but, by revealing what happened to Jamie and Michael after the massacre in *Halloween 5*, it also aims to resolve immediately one of the most salient questions left unanswered by the previous film. In revealing the fate of these two characters, *Curse* also introduces a previously-unknown backstory involving the mysterious Cult of Thorn. It is through this development that the film seeks to restore hypertextual coherence by addressing the unresolved hypotextual questions en masse. Thus, the viewer not only learns the significance of the Thorn symbol though the revelation of its connection to Druidic mythology, but also discovers the identity of the Man of in Black and the nature of his relationship to Michael, as it is revealed that Dr. Wynn has been acting as Michael's guardian for years. The backstory was not only intended to restore narrative coherence by providing answers to the questions left unresolved by *Halloween 5*, but also by addressing a number of longer-standing gaps within the hypertextual system. By suggesting that Michael's actions are the result of his infliction with the curse of Thorn and his manipulation at the hands of the cult of Thorn, the film provides a vital piece of causal information which was previously missing from the story. At the beginning of the series, Michael is represented as a motiveless psychopath who kills his older sister, Judith, in a random act of violence; in *Halloween II*, the revelation of Michael's relationship with Laurie establishes that sororicide is the character's primary motive; and in subsequent sequels, the familial component of Michael's modus operandi is further developed, as he becomes fixated with the task of killing his young niece, Jamie. However, it is only with the introduction of the new backstory that the viewer receives any insight into precisely *why* Michael is so relentlessly driven to wipe out the members of his family.

In addition to revealing previously-unknown information about Michael's motive, the backstory also provides new details about the events which took place immediately before he killed Judith. Prior to the release of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, the earliest known event on the series timeline is the moment at which Michael approaches the Myers house on Halloween night 1963. However, Mrs.

186

Blankenship's revelation about babysitting Michael on this fateful night provides a means for the viewer to acquire new information about the series of events which occurred prior to this moment. Before approaching the house and murdering Judith, Michael apparently spent the evening across the road with Mrs. Blankenship, where he remained until he heard a sinister voice inciting him to kill his sister. At this point, Michael left Mrs. Blankenship's house and began the journey home, at which moment the viewer originally joined the action at the beginning of the first *Halloween* film. Representing a form of *analeptic continuation*, the act of revealing what happened before the viewer originally joined the story fills in an existing temporal gap in much the same way that the development of Michael's motive fills in an existing gap in the chain of cause and effect. In both cases, information provided by the backstory results in the construction of a more complete story, thereby enhancing the coherence of the hypertextual system as a whole.

The narrative developments introduced by the film were also intended to reinforce hypertextual coherence by consolidating the overall sense of hyperdiegetic 'worldhood.' Convinced that fans of the series would appreciate a sequel which overtly acknowledged its hypotextual legacy, writer Daniel Farrands set about creating a story which was not only 'chock full of references'[8] to the first *Halloween* film, but also foregrounded connections to the other films in the series.[9] As a result, *Curse* features regularly-returning characters such as Dr. Loomis, Michael Myers, and Jamie Lloyd; re-introduces more obscure *Halloween* alumni, such as Dr. Terence Wynn and Tommy Doyle; uses recurrent locations such as Smith's Grove and the Myers house, which are afforded starring roles within the narrative; recognises the impact of Michael's previous attacks by suggesting that Haddonfield is coming to the end of a six-year ban on Halloween; acknowledges Michael's historic catalogue of crimes by showing Tommy's collection of newspaper clippings; and reflects the progressive spread of Michael's notoriety across the nation by featuring a radio show in which listeners call in to discuss their theories about the Boogeyman. Each of these developments – and many more within the film – represents an attempt to reinforce hypertextual coherence by suggesting that all of the events depicted in the series take place within the same fictional world.

However, despite this, the overwhelmingly negative response to the film appears to suggest that the sixth instalment of the series fell seriously short of the mark. The

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[8] See 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*
[9] See Shapiro, 'The New Faces of *Halloween*,' 21.

film found itself on the back foot from the opening sequence, which was intended to uphold narrative coherence, but succeeded only in angering series fans. In theory, the continuation of Jamie's storyline should have reassured viewers about the hypertextual competence of the film; after all, the inclusion of such a beloved character indicated that the filmmakers were aware of the attachment the viewers had formed to Jamie over the last two *Halloween* films. In practice, however, the grisly fate which befell Jamie so early in the film was perceived as an unnecessarily brutal turn of events which prematurely curtailed the character's development and showed a certain degree of disrespect toward her existing hypotextual legacy.[10]

Jamie's early exit at the hands of Michael was not the resolution originally envisioned for the character's storyline. Fully aware of the existing fan attachment, Farrands' original script championed the notion of Jamie lying injured for the majority of the film before sacrificing herself as part of an heroic comeback.[11] However, this idea was passed over by the studio, initially in favour of a version of events where Jamie survives Michael's attack only to be killed in hospital by the Man in Black and subsequently for the final version in which she is swiftly dispatched when Michael impales her on a piece of farm machinery.[12]

Fans were not only angered by the manner of Jamie's death but also by the decision to re-cast the character, with series newcomer J. C. Brandy replacing fan favourite Danielle Harris. Had Brandy been perceived as an appropriate choice to replace Harris, viewers might not have responded with such dismay; however, the actress was regarded as too dissimilar in physical appearance to Harris and too old to play Jamie convincingly as a teenager – a factor which threatened to compromise the temporal logic of the hypertextual system by confusing viewers about the character's supposed age.[13] It is worth noting that the filmmakers did attempt to convince Harris to resume her role in the series but the actress refused after reading the script, all too aware that Jamie's brutal death would not be received well by fans.[14]

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[10] See, for example, Abucewicz, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork'; and Matt, 'Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers (1995),'*Horrorfreak News*, June 10, 2016, http://horrorfreaknews.com/halloween-curse-michael-myers-1995-review.

[11] See 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com*.

[12] This version of events survives in the producer's cut of the film, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

[13] J.C. Brandy discusses the perception that she was too old to assume the role of Jamie Lloyd in *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*. For examples of the viewer response to the decision to recast Jamie, see Fred Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' *Fangoria* 148 (November 1995): 26; and Josh Soriano, 'A Look Back At *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' *Icons of Fright*, November 26, 2013, http://iconsoffright.com/2013/11/26/a-look-back-at-halloween-6-the-curse-of-michael-myers/.

[14] Danielle Harris discusses her decision not to return to the series in *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*. For a description of the struggle to convince the studio that Harris' involvement would be vastly beneficial to the film, see 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com*.

The decision to recast the role of Jamie was not the only development seen to introduce inconsistency into the hypertextual system. Despite the intention to reinforce the coherence of the hyperdiegesis by retaining familiar characters and locations, modifications to these elements proved contentious. The disappearance of Dr. Loomis' extensive scar tissue – a continual presence since his near-death experience at the end of *Halloween II* – prompted a sarcastic response from one reviewer, who questioned whether the make-up might have been eliminated due to budget constraints; and changes to the Myers house saw the property morph back into a traditional family home, thereby shedding the Gothic trappings introduced in the previous film.[15] In the case of Loomis' missing scar tissue, Farrands had at least attempted to provide a logical explanation, originally including a scene in which the doctor tells Wynn that he has recently undergone plastic surgery. However, this scene was cut by the studio executives – who significantly downsized Loomis' role within the film after the initial test screening – thereby removing any explanation to account for the changes to his appearance.[16] When it came to modifying the Myers house, far from compounding hypertextual inconsistency, the changes were overtly introduced by Farrands as part of his attempt to restore coherence. By reverting to an earlier incarnation of the property as a standard family home rather than a Gothic mansion, the writer hoped to make amends for the controversial architectural changes which had been introduced by Dominique Othenin-Girard in *Halloween 5*.[17] In an attempt to ensure that the new modifications could be accounted for logically, Farrands even ensured that the property was draped in tarpaulin sheets, thereby suggesting that the house was undergoing extensive structural renovation.[18]

The hypertextual inconsistencies within the film may have been frustrating for viewers, but the criticisms directed toward these flaws were relatively restrained in comparison to the wholehearted condemnation of the new backstory involving the Cult of Thorn. Intended to restore hypertextual coherence by answering unresolved questions and filling in missing story information, the introduction of the Druidic cult proved to be a major misstep, with the majority of viewers perceiving the development as both unbelievable and unnecessary – reactions which abruptly curtailed any possibility of the

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[15] See Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' 27; Mehlman, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' 6; and Vince Forrington, ibid.

[16] See *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers – The Producer's Cut* (1995).

[17] Farrands discusses this objective in a 2003 panel discussion where he also describes taking pictures of the original Myers house in South Pasadena order to find a similar-looking property in Salt Lake City, where *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* was due to be filmed. See *Halloween Returns to Haddonfield Convention – Panel Discussions* (2003).

[18] 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*

Thorn backstory restoring coherence. Despite the fact that a minority of critics recognised Farrands' backstory as a 'loyal' attempt to tie up loose ends, most viewers were far less forgiving.[19] For many, the idea that Michael was effectively serving as 'a hitman for some lame-assed cult' was just too incredible to believe, one of several 'preposterous' narrative developments that left fans wondering how anyone could be expected to 'buy any of that ludicrous claptrap about druids.'[20]

To make matters worse, hypertextual inaccuracies within the backstory threatened to undermine its validity. For example, in his 'fascinating but extremely flawed' theory pertaining to Michael's *modus operandi*, Tommy asserts that the curse of Thorn compels the Boogeyman systematically to sacrifice the members of his family.[21] This point is foregrounded in an earlier voiceover which serves to summarise Michael's gruesome legacy: 'One by one, he killed his entire family, until his nine-year old niece, Jamie, was the only one left alive.'[22] However, a number of observers have questioned the legitimacy of Tommy's theory, not only pointing out that the vast majority of Michael's victims have no familial connection with their killer, but also highlighting the fact that, far from killing his 'entire family' as Tommy's voiceover claims, up to this point in time Michael has only actually succeeded in sacrificing a single relative – his older sister, Judith.[23] Although Laurie died in the ellipsis between *Halloween II* and *Halloween 4*, she was not sacrificed by Michael but died in a car crash along with her husband; aside from Laurie, there has been no mention of other deaths within the Myers family, suggesting that Michael did not kill his parents – who appeared in *Halloween* – or any other surviving relatives.

While some viewers criticised the new backstory for falling beyond the boundaries of belief, others railed against the development for 'over explaining something which shouldn't have been explained in the first place.' For many, the continued sense of ambiguity surrounding Michael Myers was a defining feature of the *Halloween* series and, although previous films had begun the process of removing this shroud of ambiguity, never before had the character's motive been so candidly exposed.

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[19] Joseph Maddrey, quoted in John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s* (London: McFarland, 2011), 377.

[20] See, respectively, Elwaldo Baptiste, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' *Fangoria* 150 (March 1996): 6; Richard Harrington, '*Halloween*: Old Tricks, Few Treats,' *Washington Post*, October 2, 1995, D6. Nexis; and Mehlman, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' 6.

[21] Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s*, 380.

[22] Tommy provides this voiceover at the beginning of the film during a sequence where the cult performs an occult ritual on Jamie's newborn baby.

[23] See, for example, Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s*, 380; and Dave J Wilson, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' *Cinematic Shocks*, October 31, 2015, http://www.cinematicshocks.com/2015/10/halloween-curse-of-michael-myers-1995.html.

The decision explicitly to demystify Michael by laying bare his motivation puzzled critics, who felt that this 'needless elaboration' rendered the character less terrifying and demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of Michael's appeal, and irritated fans, many of whom wrote in to *Fangoria* to express their dismay.[24]

However, although viewers may have felt that the backstory succeeded only in 'muddying the very sense of horror that made Michael Myers such an iconic figure to begin with,'[25] Akkad himself was adamant that the elaboration was necessary in order to ensure that viewers did not 'lose interest' in the character.[26] Obviously, neither Akkad nor Farrands had any idea that the backstory would generate such a fervently negative response. On the contrary, by reintroducing a concept originally touched upon in the Carpenter-penned *Halloween II*, Farrands believed that an exploration of Michael's connection to Druidism would reinforce hypertextual coherence by tying into the 'very backstory that John Carpenter created in his own sequel.' What Farrands failed to take into consideration was the extent to which his original idea would be altered during production, changing what was initially a more fully realised narrative arc into what he describes as a 'haphazard' realisation of the Thorn backstory which came across as both 'intrusive and silly.'[27]

Farrands' expansion of the pre-existing Druidic concept was indicative of the writer's determination to unify the hyperdiegesis by acknowledging the film's hypotextual legacy. While this objective was undoubtedly admirable, it was also a source of criticism, with some observers suggesting that the sixth instalment of the series was so preoccupied with establishing hypertextual coherence that the film ended up compromising its own narrative integrity. As John Kenneth Muir observes, *Curse* is 'a well-intentioned sequel so determined to answer questions, fill in details, and enrich the mythology that at times it forgets to present a cogent narrative.'[28]

The plot came under specific criticism for including too many impossible coincidences. For example, Dr. Loomis and Tommy just happen to be listening to the radio on the night of Jamie's escape; the new family who move in to the Myers house

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[24] See, respectively, Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' 26; Wilson, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*;' and Bob Golm, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' *Fangoria* 150 (March 1996): 7. For additional criticism of the decision to 'demystify' Michael Myers, see Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' 26; Quaid, 'Guilty Pleasure – *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*... with Paul Rudd?!?' *Moviechopshop*, April 30, 2009, http://moviechopshop.com/2009/04/30/guilty-pleasure-halloween-the-curse-of-michael-myerswith-paul-rudd/; and Wilson, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*.'
[25] Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s*, 379.
[26] Moustapha Akkad, interviewed in *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*.
[27] 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com*.
[28] Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s*, 378.

are relatives of Laurie's adoptive parents; and the members of the family seem to be the only people in Haddonfield who are unaware of the property's connection to Michael.[29] In addition, the plot was also perceived to be entirely too convoluted, with Farrands' attempt to bring together the storylines of all of the main characters resulting a 'murky' subplot in which 'a great number of details get jumbled up to the point of near indecipherability.'[30] Farrands has acknowledged that the complexity of the plot spiralled out of control, describing how, at times, it was so difficult to keep track of all of the characters that it felt like he was writing '*Halloween: War and Peace.*' In reflecting on the writing process, he goes on to state: 'Looking back, I would have scaled back the number of characters and focused more on the traditional elements – a girl, a dark house and a killer with a very big knife.'[31]

The problems resulting from Farrands' attempt to reconcile so many individual storylines culminated in the final act of the film, which was accused of rapidly descending into an incomprehensible 'bizarro zone.'[32] With the last thirty minutes comprising a chaotic jumble of unspecified medical procedures, unexplained genetic engineering experiments, and battles fought with syringes full of unidentified yet potent chemicals, it was little wonder that viewers were left both confused and unsatisfied by such a 'lame' ending.[33] One fan even wrote in to *Fangoria* to query whether he had, perhaps, fallen asleep during the final sequence and missed the expected showdown between Loomis and Myers.[34] Even Farrands himself admits that the final act was 'something of a mish-mash' which 'never made a lot of sense.'[35] As previously mentioned, Farrands has explained how continual changes to the script made it difficult to settle upon an appropriate ending for the film.[36] Any possibility of succeeding in this task was further compromised by the studio, which demanded a host of changes including entirely reshooting the original ending. However, in the midst of 'a mad rush to finish the film and get it into theaters in time for the release date,' sequences which might have helped the ending retain some degree of coherence were replaced with much more ambiguous scenes. In one example, the original ending included a sequence in

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[29] See, for example, Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers,*' 26; Mehlman, 'The Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork,' 6; Vince Forrington, ibid., 6; and Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986* (London: McFarland, 2002), 173.
[30] Matt, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers.*'
[31] 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*
[32] Soriano, 'A Look Back At *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers.*'
[33] Baptiste, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork.' See also Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s,* 378; and Wilson '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers.*'
[34] Abucewicz, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork.'
[35] 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*
[36] See Shapiro, 'Stop Calling Us!,' 40

which a dying Dr. Wynn bequeaths his guardianship of Michael to Dr. Loomis, who survives only to assume responsibility for protecting his sworn adversary. By removing this sequence, the fate of Dr. Wynn was left entirely unknown and Dr. Loomis was consigned to an off-screen finale which refused to resolve his storyline definitively. When asked to explain why Dr. Loomis is heard screaming at the end of the film, Farrands takes the opportunity to express his opinion about the ending imposed by the studio: 'I agree it is totally unclear and utterly confusing. I don't think at that point the director even knew what was supposed to be happening.'[37]

By categorically failing to resolve 'all the issues that had been peripherally raised'[38] throughout the film, the 'impenetrable' plot of *Curse* remained riddled with unanswered questions and plot holes.[39] Faced with such overwhelming levels of narrative incoherence, it was little surprise that contemporary viewers felt that, 'There is nothing in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* that is half as frightening as the possibility of a *Halloween 7*.'[40] As discussed earlier in the study, narrative deficiencies within a film do not necessarily pose an insurmountable problem for the viewer, who will usually strive to overcome such obstacles in the pursuit of a coherent story. However, in the case of *Curse*, the perceived deficiencies appear to have posed a particularly challenging problem, with many viewers unable to discern any semblance of coherence from the information presented on screen. In order to understand why the sixth instalment of the series proved to be such a problematic viewing experience, it is necessary to examine more closely the cognitive implications of the narrative deficiencies identified within the film.

The inconsistencies, inaccuracies, ambiguities, and other unresolved plot convolutions in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* provide examples of what narratologist Todd Berliner refers to as 'narrative incongruities,' or, information which is incongruous with viewer hypotheses.[41] Prior to watching *Curse*, it would have been reasonable for series viewers to hypothesise that the film would develop in a direction which maintained hypertextual consistency and credibility, and to expect that it would – at the very least – provide sufficient cues to construct a coherent story. What these

[37] 'Interview with Daniel Farrands,' *Halloweenmovies.com.*
[38] Maddrey, quoted in Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s*, 377.
[39] Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 173.
[40] Raskin, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' 27.
[41] I discussed Berliner's concept of narrative incongruity in Chapter Three. See also Todd Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling and Aesthetic Pleasure,' in *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*, ed. Arthur P. Shimamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), particularly 201.

viewers could not have foreseen was the presence of a series of narrative incongruities which would test their hypotheses to the extreme.

Earlier in the study, I drew attention to Henry Jenkins' assertion that 'continuity, consistency, and completeness' are three of the most important requirements within fan culture.[42] Successfully meeting these requirements ensures that the credibility and coherence of the hyperdiegesis is continually reinforced. This enables fans to treat the fictional world as if it were a real place, thereby encouraging them to draw close to the world in order to 'enjoy more fully the pleasures it offers them.' This notion was explored in some depth in the previous chapter, where an examination of the relationship between *Halloween* fans and the hyperdiegesis revealed that some viewers have developed particularly close attachments to the town of Haddonfield, its inhabitants, and the surrounding world. However, if a hypertext fails to meet the requirements of continuity, consistency, and completeness which are so integral to the fan experience, it may risk compromising the viewer's attachment to the hyperdiegesis. According to Jenkins, this is due to the fact that a close attachment can be sustained only 'as long as the imagined world maintains both credibility and coherence.'[43] *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* appears to have failed in precisely this manner, seriously compromising fan attachment to the hyperdiegetic world by introducing a series of narrative incongruities which undermined the overall integrity of the hypertextual system.

In addition to compromising the closeness of the viewer's attachment to the hyperdiegesis, the narrative incongruities in *Curse* also provide an unwelcome reminder that the fans' relationship with the series is a 'tentative' one, which is both marginalised by and in continual conflict with the demands of those involved in the production process.[44] This was made evident by a series of decisions which demonstrated a blatant disregard for the film's hypotextual legacy and a general misunderstanding of Michael's popular appeal, thereby relegating the hypertextual integrity of the narrative system fans valued so highly to an arbitrary afterthought.

According to Henry Jenkins, although fans often react with hostility toward those with the power to reshape their narratives into something different, such viewers remain acutely aware that they cannot, ultimately, prevent the occurrence of such events. As a consequence, it is generally acknowledged that frustration and antagonism

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[42] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 104. See also Chapter Six: *Halloween III: Season of the Witch.*
[43] Ibid., 118.
[44] Ibid., 24.

are inevitable facets of fan spectatorship. Jenkins further asserts that, in spite of the general recognition that popular narratives often fail to satisfy, such narratives continue to fascinate fans, who 'cannot dismiss them from their attention but rather must try to find ways to salvage them for their interest.'[45] In most cases, fans will therefore strive to resolve incongruities in order to continue engaging with the narrative. For Berliner, the most useful skills in attempting to resolve such incongruities are creative problem-solving strategies such as *abductive reasoning* – a cognitive process involving 'pondering evidence or problems and conjecturing a provisional explanation.'[46]

There is ample evidence to suggest that such cognitive processes have been employed by fans attempting to discern coherence from *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, as confusion caused by the convoluted plot has led many to seek clarification from their peers via online discussion groups.[47] Such groups have hosted numerous debates about the events that take place within the film, with contributors offering multiple different perspectives on questions including: What happened to Jamie during her imprisonment by the cult of Thorn? Why did Michael wait so long to kill Jamie following her imprisonment? Why did Dr. Wynn refrain from sacrificing Steven immediately after birth? What are the precise details of the mythology surrounding the curse of Thorn? And what was the unspecified medical procedure taking place at Smith's Grove?[48] Attempts by fans to understand the incongruous elements of the film have also led to speculation about other unresolved issues, such as the precise nature and purpose of Jamie's impregnation, and the identity of Steven's father, with several fans questioning whether the child was the product of incest, artificial insemination, or various other nefarious means.[49]

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[45] Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 24.

[46] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 201.

[47] In an attempt to address the plot convolutions en masse, one fan has offered a meticulous explanation of the most confusing aspects of the film; see rockerhalloween, '*Halloween 6* Confusing Plot Points Explained,' *OHMB*, January 2, 2013, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?19990-Halloween-6-Confusing-Plot-Points-Explained.

[48] See, for example, OllieMyers, 'All About Jamie,' *OHMB*, September 21, 2007, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?12266-All-About-Jamie; urg, 'Jamie and Steven Question,' *OHMB*, January 7, 2005, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?3259-jamie-and-steven-question; slasher2040, 'Why Did Michael Wait Six Years to Kill Jamie?' *OHMB*, January 13, 2008, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?13355-Why-did-Michael-wait-6-years-to-kill-Jamie; tmlfan4life, 'Why Didn't Wynn Have Michael Kill Steven Right After He Was Born?' *OHMB*, May 23, 2011, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?18742-Why-didn-t-Wynn-have-Michael-kill-Steven-right-after-he-was-born; OllieMyers, 'How Thorn Works,' January 26, 2007, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?10538-How-Thorn-Works; blacksymbiote, 'Question About the Passing of the Curse,' February 10, 2008, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?13632-Question-about-the-passing-of-the-curse; and Blackfstrat14, 'Operating Room,' *OHMB*, January 6, 2005, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?3244-Operating-Room.

[49] See the following online discussion threads for examples: steelecards1974, 'Purpose,' October 5, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?987-Purpose; MacG, 'Michael's Baby?' April 21, 2009,

The narrative incongruities within *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* not only inspire speculative discussion and debate, but also act as a catalyst for activities of fan appropriation. Through the creation of fan fiction, for example, it has been possible for *Halloween* fans to assume a proactive role in repairing areas of narrative incongruity. In one such instance, a series fan has attempted to enhance the coherence of the story of *Curse* by writing the opening chapter of an imagined novelisation of the film.[50] In this case, the fan faction not only provides greater insights into the connection between Michael, Jamie, and the Cult of Thorn, but also serves to develop further the characters of Dr. Loomis and Tommy Doyle and their relationship with one another. In another example, a fan has attempted to make reparations for Dr. Loomis' undignified ending by writing a proleptic continuation which develops the character's storyline in a more 'honourable' direction;[51] and, in one case, a dedicated fan has painstakingly re-written the entire series to incorporate the Thorn storyline from the outset, even penning a new story which corroborates Mrs. Blankenship's version of events by revealing more details about Michael initial infliction with the curse of Thorn.[52]

The creation of these reparative fictions demonstrates how fans have taken advantage of the perceived flaws in the film in order to 'intervene in the narrative and reshape it according to their own plans.'[53] According to Todd Berliner, by encouraging engagement in such 'dexterous feats of imaginative thinking,' narrative incongruities have the effect of intensifying the viewer's cognitive activities, thereby generating an exhilarating aesthetic experience which – although challenging – is ultimately pleasurable.[54] Indeed, in the case *of Curse*, despite the perception that the film was 'universally detested,' this is not actually the case; for a minority of viewers, the film represents one of the most interesting entries in the series.[55] Several commentators have written pieces extolling the virtues of the film as an underrated and enjoyable addition to the franchise; and, while some fans have taken to the pages of *The Official Halloween Message Board* to proclaim their enthusiasm for the sixth instalment, others

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http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?15338-Michael-s-baby; Firpo, 'The Incest Question,' January 7, 2007, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?10373-The-Incest-Question; and DavidWard, 'Who is Stephen's Father?' October 27, 2012, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?19832-Who-is-Stephen-s-father.

[50] See TommyDoyle2, 'Opening of the *Halloween 6* Novel...HERE!' *OHMB*, March 22, 2007, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?10900-Opening-Of-The-Halloween-6-Novel-HERE.

[51] See Kruegerlives, '*Halloween: Bloody Thorn*,'*OHMB*, June 19, 2006, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?8542-Halloween-Bloody-Thorn.

[52] See rockerhalloween, '*Halloween: The Beginning Thorn Edition*,' *OHMB*, October 30, 2012, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?19846-Halloween-The-Beginning-Thorn-Edition.

[53] Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 76.

[54] Berliner, 'Hollywood Storytelling,' 205, 196.

[55] Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 174.

have gone to more extreme lengths.[56] This was demonstrated at a panel discussion during the twenty-fifth anniversary convention, *Halloween Returns to Haddonfield*, where one particularly avid fan of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* revealed that he had been tattooed with the 'Thorn' symbol in honour of the film.[57]

Such enthusiastic viewers represent a particularly adaptive group of *Halloween* fans, willing to accept the hypertextual developments presented by *Curse* in spite of the associated narrative incongruities. However, although the most adaptive fans may choose to engage in cognitive processes which facilitate the assimilation of new information irrespective of problems with continuity, consistency, and completeness, there is generally a limit to the viewer's capacity for creative comprehension. Thus, in the majority of cases, incongruities which are perceived as irresolvable – such as plot holes – or those which are seen to stretch narrative characteristics 'beyond an acceptable range of probability' risk alienating viewers by preventing the construction of a coherent and credible story.[58] I would suggest that this form of alienation is precisely what happened in the case of *Curse*. Whereas it may have been possible for viewers to overcome a certain degree of narrative incongruity – a task successfully accomplished at several other points in the series[59] – the accumulation of so many incongruities at once simply stretched the narrative beyond the boundaries of acceptability, thereby resulting in the wholesale rejection of the film. Nowhere is this illustrated more clearly than in the comments of Adam Rockoff, who declared that *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* was 'so bad and disrespectful to the series' that it should be regarded as a *Halloween* film only in name.[60]

This sense of rejection was so strong that fans began searching for an alternative to the theatrical cut almost immediately after the film was released. Aware that not all of

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[56] For examples of positive reviews of *Curse*, see Quaid 'Guilty Pleasure'; David Nusair, 'The *Halloween* Series: *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' *Reel Film Reviews*, March 3, 2011, http://reelfilm.com/hallween.htm#6; and Dr. Jose, 'Guilty Pleasures – *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*,' *Camera Viscera*, April 30, 2015, https://cameraviscera.com/2015/04/30/guilty-pleasures-halloween-the-curse-of-michael-myers/. For examples of fans defending the film, see the following online discussion threads on *The Official* Halloween *Message Board*: Dchabz, 'Did You Enjoy the Atmosphere in this Film?' September 15, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?67-Did-you-enjoy-the-atmosphere-in-this-film; Dchabz, 'The Thorn Plot,' September 15, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?70-The-Thorn-Plot; and Devil_730, 'Your Opinions on *Halloween 6* – Post All Personal Reviews Here,' September 29, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?769-Your-Opinions-on-Halloween-6-Post-All-Personal-Reviews-Here.
[57] See *Halloween Returns to Haddonfield Convention – Panel Discussions*.
[58] This process is sometimes referred to by fans as 'stretching it.' See Cassandra Amesley, 'How to Watch *Star Trek*,' *Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (October 1989): 333.
[59] A prime example would be the introduction of the familial relationship between Michael and Laurie in *Halloween II*, which was perceived as incongruous with the existing narrative information, yet was successfully assimilated into the overall story.
[60] Rockoff, *Going to Pieces*, 173.

the material featured in the trailer made it into the final film and conscious of Daniel

Farrands' assertion that the studio had insisted upon significant amendments to the

original cut, fans wasted no time in seeking out the missing footage.[61] As bootleggers

began splicing together excised scenes and circulating alternative versions of the film, it

was not long before a much more positive reaction began to emerge.[62] However, despite

the fact that the *Fangoria* team made both Miramax Home Video and Moustapha

Akkad aware of growing interest in the alternate 'producer's cut' as early as July 1996,

an official release was not sanctioned until September 2014, when the film was included

as part of the Blu-ray box set *Halloween: The Complete Collection (Limited Deluxe

Edition)*, released by Anchor Bay Entertainment/Scream Factory.[63]

     Perceived by many fans as considerably more coherent than the theatrical

release, the producer's cut restores many of the scenes which were removed by the

studio following the initial test screening and makes some significant changes to the

plot.[64] Consequently, Jamie survives Michael's initial attack and instead meets a more

dignified end at the hands of Dr. Wynn much later in the film; an explanation is

provided for Dr. Loomis' missing scars; flashbacks to the jailbreak at the end of

Halloween 5 and to Jamie's impregnation – seemingly at the hands of Michael himself

– help to remove some of the ambiguity surrounding the new narrative developments;

and a greater emphasis on the Thorn storyline enables both the cult and the curse to be

explored in more depth. In addition, an entirely different ending removes much of the

confusion surrounding the final sequence by making the proceedings more overtly

occult, and the final twist also redeems Dr. Loomis' storyline by transforming the

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[61] Evidence of fan awareness pertaining to the missing material is provided in the letters page of *Fangoria*, where one fan expressed his disappointment that 'half' the scenes in the trailer were not in the film. See Baptiste, 'Postal Zone: *Halloween* Hackwork.' According to the editor of *Fangoria*, by April 1996, bootleg tapes of the alternative cut were being widely circulated among fans. See Timpone, 'The Night He Should Have Stayed Home.' In the same issue of the magazine, one fan claims to have viewed the alternative cut a mere week after the film's official theatrical release. See Darryl Quinn, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: More on *Halloween*,' *Fangoria* 151 (April 1996): 6.

[62] This process is detailed in *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*. A particularly early proponent of the producer's cut, series fan Darryl Quinn makes a case for the superiority of the alternative version in the April 1996 issue of *Fangoria*. See Quinn 'Postal Zone: More on *Halloween*.'

[63] See *Fangoria*'s response to Jordan Santora, 'The Postal Zone: Question of the Month,' *Fangoria* 154 (July 1996): 6. Following its inclusion in the Anchor Bay collection, a standalone edition of the producer's cut was subsequently released by Lion's Gate Entertainment/Miramax in September 2015. It is worth noting that in the years following the theatrical release, fans sent multiple petitions to Miramax imploring the studio to release the alternative cut; see, for example, Matt Cavanaugh, '*Halloween 6 Producer's Cut*,' *ipetitions*, 2007, http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/Halloween6ProducersCut2007/; and Film Fan Pete, 'Release the *Halloween 6: Producer's Cut* on Blu-ray/DVD,' *Change.org*, September 2013, https://www.change.org/p/miramax-films-release-the-halloween-6-producer-s-cut-on-blu-ray-dvd.

[64] This is confirmed by multiple fans online; see the comments in the following discussion thread for examples: EvilOnTwoLegs, 'Choose Your Cut,' *OHMB*, May 12, 2005, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?4671-Choose-Your-Cut.

character into Michael's guardian, rather than simply killing him off somewhere beyond the boundaries of the screen. However, whereas online polls appear to suggest that the majority of fans prefer the producer's cut, there are still many viewers who remain unimpressed, perceiving the alternative version as the 'lesser of two evils' which is only 'ever so slightly less awful' than the theatrical cut.[65] As a result, fans have subsequently engaged in speculation about how the two separate cuts might be combined to create a single 'amalgamation cut' comprised of the 'best' aspects of both versions – an activity which demonstrates the persistent sense of dissatisfaction regarding the film.[66]

By continuing an existing storyline, reintroducing familiar characters, and providing a backstory to fill in missing information, *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* seemed equipped with the strategies necessary not only to restore but also to enhance the coherence of the hypertextual system. The fact that the film failed so spectacularly can be largely attributed to the scale of the narrative problems inherited from *Halloween 5*. These problems led to a series of narrative incongruities which overstretched the viewer's capacity for creative comprehension by descending into a confusing mass of incoherence. Thus, with the series 'hopelessly mired in a mythos of Myers as Druidic creation,' the producers decided that extreme action was necessary in order to regain some semblance of control.[67] With this in mind, the decision was made to rule a line under the Cult of Thorn by unleashing the murderous hypertext, *Halloween H20: Twenty Years Later*.

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[65] See, respectively, EvilOnTwoLegs, 'Choose Your Cut'; and CJ7, 'The Ending (PC vs. TC),' *OHMB*, January 6, 2015, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?21449-The-Ending-(PC-vs-TC); Soriano (2013) 'A Look Back At *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*'; and Wilson, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers.*'

[66] See Swahili, 'The *Halloween 6* Amalgamation Cut Thread,' *OHMB*, June 4, 2015, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?21637-The-Halloween-6-Amalgamation-Cut-Thread.

[67] Michael Sauter, '*Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers,*' *Entertainment Weekly*, September 13, 1996, 142, EBSCOhost (9609127763).

CHAPTER TEN

HALLOWEEN H20: 20 YEARS LATER: THE MURDEROUS HYPERTEXT

After the release of *The Curse of Michael Myers* left the *Halloween* series in a state of narrative confusion, the producers were faced with an unenviable choice. In order to extend the series any further, it would be necessary to continue the altogether incoherent story established in the theatrical cut or to deviate from the officially sanctioned version of events by continuing the marginally more coherent story established in the producer's cut. In the end, neither of the options was seen to present a viable path for hypertextual development and the decision was made entirely to abandon the Thorn storyline. Thus, the seventh entry in the series, *Halloween H20: 20 Years Later*, imposed a complete break in narrative continuity, wholly ignoring the storyline developed across *Halloween 4, Halloween 5,* and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* in order to establish an alternative timeline connected directly to the events established in the first two *Halloween* films. As a consequence, the film not only functions as a proleptic continuation of *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, but also assumes the mantle of a *murderous continuation* – a hypertext which almost entirely erases or reverses the significance of its hypotext(s).[1] In order to understand the impact of introducing this type of continuation into such a well-established hypertextual system, this chapter will focus specifically on analysing the narrative and cognitive implications of the murderous act committed by *Halloween H20*, first examining the motive behind the murder and the moment at which the film's nefarious intent is revealed before subsequently engaging in a forensic examination of the chosen method of execution – the creation of an alternative timeline.

Under different circumstances, the vehemently negative response to *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* might have discouraged Dimension from prioritising the

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[1] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 196-8. *Halloween H20* is far from unique in its identity as a murderous continuation, with many other examples of film sequels adopting this practice as a means of emancipating themselves from existing hypotextual parameters. See, for example, *Jaws: The Revenge* (Joseph Sargent, 1987), the fourth instalment of the *Jaws* series, which ignores the events of *Jaws 3-D* (Joe Alves, 1983); *The Exorcist III* (William Peter Blatty, 1990), which ignores the events of the preceding film, *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (John Boorman, 1977); and *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006), which ignores the events of *Superman III* (Richard Lester, 1983) and *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (Sidney J. Furie, 1987). It is also worth noting that there are strong parallels between the process of murderous continuation and the process of *retroactive continuity*, or retcon – a term which originated in the comic world to describe the practice of altering previously-established facts within a serial narrative in order to continue the story in a new direction or reconcile potential contradictions. See M. Keith Booker, 'Retcon,' in *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels, Vol. 2*, ed. M. Keith Booker (Greenwood: Oxford, 2010), 510.

production of a further sequel. However, a year after the film was released, the future of the series began to look a lot brighter, thanks in part to the unexpected success of the studio's horror hit, *Scream* (Wes Craven, 1996). An overtly self-conscious film which demonstrated a keen awareness of slasher conventions, *Scream* not only reinvigorated the narrative framework associated with slasher cinema, but also reignited audience interest in the much-maligned sub-genre.[2] Once the studio executives became aware that the slasher film was still a viable financial prospect, they were determined to use their stake in the *Halloween* series to take advantage of the contemporary climate. It was not only the resurgence of slasher cinema that prompted this decision, but also the rapid approach of the twentieth anniversary of John Carpenter's *Halloween*, often lauded as a seminal genre classic. Many felt it would be apt to acknowledge the anniversary of the series' progenitor in some way, and when Jamie Lee Curtis confirmed that she would be willing to mark the occasion by returning in a new sequel, the studio became increasingly determined to initiate the production of a seventh *Halloween* film. Curtis was keen to participate in the process of narrative development which would ultimately bring a sense of resolution to the story of one of her most well-known characters.[3] As a consequence, the actress spearheaded the efforts to assemble the production team, meeting with *Scream* writer Kevin Williamson in order to discuss potential ideas for the sequel. Although he was not eventually brought on board to write the film, Williamson did agree to write a short treatment, which was subsequently developed by screenwriters Robert Zappia and Matt Greenberg.[4] Entertaining a notion that the new sequel had the potential to function as a reunion of sorts, Curtis hoped to secure the directorial services of John Carpenter; however, Carpenter declined the invitation, having previously made his feelings about the *Halloween* sequels unequivocally clear.[5] In the absence of

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[2] It should be noted that *Scream* was not the first slasher film to attempt to reinvigorate the sub-genre in this way. In 1994, *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* overtly blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction by suggesting that the fictional monster, Freddy Krueger, was attempting to break free of the cinematic realm in order to terrorise the lives of the 'real' cast and crew associated with the production of the original *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984). As discussed by Andrew Tudor, although this film was not as commercially successful as *Scream*, it nonetheless demonstrated the potential of introducing a more self-conscious approach into the sub-genre. See Andrew Tudor, 'From Paranoia to Postmodernism? The Horror Movie in Late Modern Society,' in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), 110.

[3] Jamie Lee Curtis, speaking in the documentary *Halloween H20: Unmasking the Horror* (1998).

[4] Kevin Williamson discusses his initial meeting with Jamie Lee Curtis and his subsequent involvement in the project in an interview for *Fangoria*. In this interview, Williamson explains that he agreed to write the treatment for *Halloween H20* as a favour to Miramax's Bob Weinstein, who secured the screenwriter his first directorial role on the film, *Teaching Mrs. Tingle* (Kevin Williamson, 1999). See Ian Spelling and Anthony C. Ferrante, 'Monster Invasion: Kevin Williamson's Latest,' *Fangoria* 172 (May 1998): 8-9.

[5] Carpenter confirms that he was approached to direct the film in the documentary *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* (Stefan Hutchinson, 2006); the reasons for this decision are elaborated in an interview with *Fangoria*. See Craig W. Chrissinger, 'Nailing Vampires,' *Fangoria* 177 (October 1998): 82.

Carpenter, Steve Miner of *Friday the 13th* parts two and three was approached to direct and production subsequently began on the new *Halloween* film.

Picking up the story twenty years after Michael's murderous rampage ended in flames at Haddonfield Memorial Hospital, *Halloween H20: 20 Years Later* opens with a sequence showing the Boogeyman resurfacing and proceeding to ransack the home of the late Dr. Loomis. Here, he discovers a file detailing the whereabouts of his sister, Laurie Strode, who appears to have faked her death, moved to the town of Summer Glen in Northern California, and changed her identity. Now living under the assumed name Keri Tate, Laurie is the caustic headmistress of a secluded boarding school. An overprotective and paranoid single mother to seventeen-year-old son John, Laurie has become a 'functioning alcoholic,' still deeply traumatised by the events of Halloween 1978. Despite Laurie's best efforts to evade her homicidal brother, Michael soon arrives at the school and proceeds to kill several of John's friends and Laurie's boyfriend, Will. Finally mustering the courage to face her demon head-on, Laurie eventually stops running and embarks upon a vengeful mission of pursuit, determined to hunt Michael down. When a violent struggle appears to result in Michael's death, Laurie refuses to believe that everything is truly as it seems. Her suspicions are soon confirmed when she steals the coroner's van carrying Michael and his body begins to reanimate, resulting in a final showdown which ends with Michael's decapitation at the hands of his long-suffering sibling.

Halloween H20 divided the critics, with several unimpressed by the sedate approach which seemed to lack the 'true details of evisceration as in the fabled days of gore;' others dismissing the film as little more than an over-hyped but below-par attempt to capitalise on the success of *Scream*; and some accusing the latest sequel of relying upon a dated set of conventions which appeared to include 'every hackneyed horror movie stereotype of the past two decades.'[6] However, despite such negativity, there were many who believed that *Halloween H20* offered 'exactly the right ingredients for the 20th anniversary of the Boogeyman,' with several observers describing the film as the best sequel in the series, most notably as the result of a 'note

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[6] See, respectively, Stephen Hunter, '*Halloween: H20*, Just a Bloody Bore,' *Washington Post*, August 5, 1998, C1, Nexis; Bob Graham, 'Sweet Revenge: Jamie Lee Curtis Returns to Face Down Her Killer Brother in *Halloween H20*,' *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 5, 1998, http://www.sfgate.com/movies/article/Sweet-Revenge-Jamie-Lee-Curtis-returns-to-face-2998235.php; and Michael O'Sullivan, '*Halloween* Fails the *Scream* Test,' *Washington Post*, August 7, 1998, N41, Nexis.

perfect conclusion,' and the psychologically-complex characterisation of Laurie Strode, a role which was seen to be portrayed with 'fierce' credibility by Jamie Lee Curtis.[7]

Although critical opinion was undoubtedly divided, there was at least one point of general consensus. For most observers, the abandonment of the storyline established in *Halloween 4, Halloween 5,* and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* was a wise move which represented no great loss to the series. Indeed, one critic even suggested that few viewers would even remember the sequels which had been disregarded by the alternative timeline established in *Halloween H20.*[8] The fact that the critics were so quick to dismiss the significance of the hypotextual storyline demonstrates the extent to which the seventh *Halloween* film overshadowed the three previous sequels – four, if the narratively deviant *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* is also taken into consideration. This is also evident in the volume of academic discourse surrounding *Halloween H20.* Whereas *Halloween* parts four, five, and six generated only a negligible amount of academic discussion, *H20* inspired analyses from a range of different perspectives, thanks largely to its association with the emergent wave of self-conscious slasher films; and its credible development of Laurie Strode.[9] However, despite the considerable volume of academic and critical analysis surrounding the film, the impact of the murderous form of continuation upon dedicated series fans has rarely been addressed. While many fans balked at the decision to disregard the Thorn storyline, taking issue with the notion that Michael Myers had simply disappeared for twenty years without incident, others were more forgiving, understanding the need to

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[7] See, respectively, Muir, *Horror Films of the 1990s,* 559; David Nusair, 'The *Halloween* Series: *Halloween: H20: 20 Years Later,*' *Reel Film Reviews,* March 4, 2011, http://reelfilm.com/hallween.htm#7; and Liz Nicholls, 'Time-Honoured Horror Cocktail Spiked Up a Notch,' *Edmonton Journal,* August 6, 1998, C1, ProQuest (252540606). On the strength of the performance by Jamie Lee Curtis, see also Marc Bernardin, '*Halloween H20,*' *Entertainment Weekly,* December 12, 1998, 92, ProQuest (219087389); and Kevin Thomas, 'Living Up to Its Gory Past,' *Los Angeles Times,* August 5, 1998, 1, http://articles.latimes.com/1998/aug/05/entertainment/ca-10094.
[8] Dennis Harvey, 'Echo of a *Scream, H20* Holds Water,' *Variety,* 3 August, 1998, 35, ProQuest (236192813). See also Peter Howell, 'Middle-Age Crazy with a Vengeance,' *Toronto Star,* August 5, 1998, D1, ProQuest (437803811); and Marc Shapiro, '*Halloween H20*: Back in Shape,' *Fangoria* 176 (September 1998): 19-24, 76.
[9] See, for example, Steven Jay Schneider, 'Kevin Williamson and the Rise of the Neo-Stalker,' *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* 19, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2000): 73-87, ProQuest (2142182); Andrew Patrick Nelson, 'Franchise Legacy and Neo-Slasher Conventions,' in *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film,* ed. Wickham Clayton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 81-91; and Kelly Connelly, 'From Final Girl to Final Woman: Defeating the Male Monster in *Halloween* and *Halloween H20,*' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 12-20, doi: 10.3200/JPFT.35.1.12-21.

make a fresh start after *The Curse of Michael Myers* and celebrating *H20* as a welcome – and coherent – return to form.[10]

Whatever the reaction, the film undoubtedly prompted debate amongst the fan community. Online message boards show that some fans refused to accept the narrative division enforced by *Halloween H20*, instead employing processes of creative comprehension in an attempt to reconcile the new storyline with the existing Thorn saga.[11] Others, however, were happy to accept the notion of a split timeline,[12] recognising that the alternative story presented in *H20* was precisely that – an *alternative* that did not consign the existing story to oblivion, but merely suggested that the Thorn saga might not provide the definitive version of events.[13]

Although the murderous approach adopted by *Halloween H20* may have divided opinion, the decision to abandon the Thorn storyline proved less divisive at the box office. Released in 1998 during the somewhat unseasonable month of August, *Halloween H20* was a huge commercial success, attracting existing series fans intrigued by the return of Jamie Lee Curtis, and new viewers whose interest was piqued by the film's association with the post-*Scream* slasher resurgence.[14] Generating over $55 million in the U.S., the financial success of the seventh *Halloween* film virtually guaranteed the continuation of the series – even if this meant finding a way to circumvent the seemingly definitive death of Michael Myers.[15]

Although the strategy of deploying a murderous hypertext may represent a relatively extreme narrative measure, for Dimension it seemed that the gamble of severing ties with the Thorn saga had paid off. The studio and the producers were

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[10] For fan negativity, see David Grove, letter featured in 'The Postal Zone: *H20*: Pro or No?' *Fangoria* 179 (January 1999): 7; for positive fan reaction, see letters by Erik Daniele, Dan McCandless, and John Herron, featured in 'The Postal Zone: *H20*: Pro or No?' *Fangoria* 179 (January 1999): 6-7.

[11] See, in particular, Fishercherrlyn, 'Would It Have Been that Hard to Connect *4-6* to *H20?*' *OHMB*, May 27, 2006, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?8322-Would-it-have-been-that-hard-to-connect-4-6-to-H20; EvilOnTwoLegs, 'The Impossibility of Connecting *Halloween 4-6* to *H20* Thread,' *OHMB*, May 13, 2012, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?19445-The-Impossibility-of-connecting-Halloween-4-6-to-H20-thread; halloweenfan89, 'The Thorn Curse Broke in *H20?*' *OHMB*, October 12, 2006, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?9724-The-Thorn-Curse-Broke-in-H20; and snickrep, '*H4* Storyline Sort of Works with *H20*,' *OHMB*, February 3, 2015, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?21495-H4-storyline-sort-of-works-with-H20.

[12] A poll conducted on *The Official* Halloween *Message Board* suggests that the alternative storyline presented in *Halloween H20* is viewed favourably by fans. See Nightmareman88, 'Thorn or *H20?*' *OHMB*, August 9, 2005, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?5746-Thorn-or-H2O.

[13] See, for example, NYCKing87, 'Is It Safe to Look at *H20* as a "What If" Sequel?' *OHMB*, January 22, 2008, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?13439-Is-it-safe-to-look-at-H20-as-a-quot-what-if-quot-sequel.

[14] According to the editor of *Fangoria*, the usual autumn release date was changed by Bob Weinstein in order to avoid placing *Halloween H20* in direct competition with a raft of other horror films due for release around that time. See Anthony Timpone, 'Elegy: Summer of the Shape,' *Fangoria* 176 (September 1998): 4.

[15] '*Halloween: H20*,' *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=halloween7.htm.

understandably relieved, feeling that the strategy enabled them to regain control of the series and reinvigorate audience interest after the 'major disappointment' of the previous film.[16] *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* had already demonstrated just how wrong things could go if the resolution of hypotextual issues is a primary hypertextual objective, and the decision-makers were determined not to make the same mistake twice. This was not the only motive driving the decision to adopt a new direction in *Halloween H20*. The new developments within the horror genre had raised the stakes of slasher cinema, encouraging the producers to adopt narrative conventions which were more readily associated with the contemporary era.[17] This necessitated a sleeker, smarter, more streamlined approach which was seemingly incompatible with the impossibly convoluted Thorn saga. However, such changes were not only necessitated by new developments within the horror genre but also by new developments within mainstream cinema in general, where processes of storytelling had entered an overtly dynamic phase during the 1990s, as described earlier in the study. With viewers becoming more accustomed to spatio-temporally fractured narratives and other forms of complex storytelling, there had never been a better opportunity to introduce an alternative timeline into the *Halloween* series. If these reasons were not motive enough, then the advent of the twentieth anniversary of *Halloween* and the prospect of Jamie Lee Curtis returning to the series were simply too tempting to pass up, and the task of accommodating the return of Laurie Strode – long since dead in the Thorn storyline – inevitably necessitated a major shake-up in the established system of narrative continuity.[18]

Thus, *Halloween H20* set about 'murdering' *Halloween 4*, *Halloween 5*, and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* by disregarding all of the events that occurred after the end of *Halloween II* and establishing an alternative timeline. Prior to the film's release there was little evidence to suggest that the seventh entry in the series had such nefarious intentions. This was largely due to the fact that Kevin Williamson's original treatment for the film had planned to retain the existing system of continuity. Consequently, when asked whether *Halloween H20* intended to ignore the established storyline, Williamson emphatically denied that this would be the case, explaining that

[16] Moustapha Akkad, quoted in Shapiro, '*Halloween H20*: Back in Shape,' 22.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Producer Paul Freeman explains that Jamie Lee Curtis' decision to return the series had a direct impact upon the direction of narrative development in the film. See '*Halloween H20*: Behind the Scenes,' *Halloweenmovies.com*, n. d., http://halloweenmovies.com/films/halloween-h20-1998/halloween-h20-behind-the-scenes/. Freeman's comments are corroborated in the documentary *25 Years of Terror*, where Nick Philips of Dimension Films confirms that the continuity of the series was disrupted largely to accommodate the return of Curtis.

the film would include a scene which directly acknowledged the events that occurred in the preceding films.[19] With such interviews implying that there would be no break in narrative continuity and with the trailer deftly avoiding any confirmation of the relationship between *Halloween H20* and its predecessors, viewers remained generally unaware of the film's murderous intent prior to the moment the act was committed onscreen.

The intent of the film is not initially made apparent due to the fact that the first part of the pre-credits sequence focuses on establishing hypertextual connectivity rather than ruling out any narrative connection to the hypotextual predecessor. The film opens in the suburban neighbourhood of Langdon, Illinois, on October 29, 1998. A car pulls up to a house and a nurse emerges from the vehicle, a cigarette hanging from her mouth. As she makes her way to the front door, it becomes clear that the nurse is played by Nancy Stephens – a fact which, for series viewers, immediately identifies the character as Marion Chambers, who previously appeared in *Halloween* and *Halloween II*. Realising that there has been a break-in at the property, Marion heads to her neighbours' house where she meets teenagers, Jimmy and Tony. Upon further investigation, Jimmy discovers that Marion's office has been ransacked but finds no sign of an intruder. As Marion returns home to inspect the damage, she finds a photo of Dr. Loomis and an empty file on Laurie Strode strewn among the chaos. At first oblivious to the fact that she is not alone, Marion soon realises that someone is in the house – a piece of information the viewer learns moments earlier when Michael Myers is revealed to be lurking in the depths of the property. Marion leaves to seek sanctuary with her neighbours, only to discover that Jimmy and Tony have been brutally murdered. Finally making his presence known, Michael attacks the terrified nurse, cutting her throat just as the police arrive next door. While the officers fail to notice the gruesome scene unfolding in the background, Michael seizes the opportunity to escape and calmly drives away from the scene.

Throughout this sequence a plethora of series references and motifs is used to establish hypertextual connectivity. Should the presence of recurrent characters – whether corporeal or not – be deemed insufficient to verify the hypertextual credentials of the film, there is no shortage of additional material designed to serve the same purpose. In an overt reference to the opening of *Halloween II*, the first scene of

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[19] See Staff, 'Kevin Williamson Interview Concerning *Halloween 7* and *Killing Mrs Tingle*!!!' *Ain't It Cool News*, December 2, 1997, http://www.aintitcool.com/node/316; and Spelling and Ferrante, 'Monster Invasion: Kevin Williamson's Latest,' 9.

Halloween H20 is accompanied by the song 'Mr. Sandman' by the Chordettes; the intertitles are written in the same typeface featured in several previous films; and incidental music from *Halloween* punctuates the revelation of Dr. Loomis' photograph and Laurie's file. In addition, the sequence is littered with hypotextually evocative formal techniques, including mobile camerawork and shots which make use of the background – as seen during the initial revelation of Michael's presence behind Marion and during the arrival of the police officers, who are oblivious to the perilous situation unfolding in the property to their rear.

The hypertextual significance of these motifs and references can only be recognised by series viewers with an appropriate body of knowledge. Such viewers will be capable of discerning the fact that the hypertextual connections established in this sequence pertain only to *Halloween* and *Halloween II* – there is no attempt to establish a relationship with any subsequent films in the series. However, despite the prevalence of references to the first two *Halloween* films, at this stage *Halloween H20* offers no explicit confirmation that it intends to deviate from the Thorn storyline. The return of Jamie Lee Curtis was well publicised ahead of the release of *Halloween H20*, so it is reasonable to expect a greater focus on establishing connections to the films in which her character previously appeared. Aside from this emphasis, the opening sequence gives no other indication of a narrative break. On the contrary, due to the fact that the fate of Michael Myers – and Dr. Loomis – was left unconfirmed at the end of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, at this point the viewer has no reason to assume that *H20* functions as anything other than a standard proleptic continuation. In the hypotexts preceding *H20*, revelatory opening sequences are often used to confirm Michael's survival from one film to the next. With this existing narrative schema in mind, the series viewer – not expecting a break in continuity and striving to forge a coherent connection between *H20* and its predecessors – logically infers that Michael's re-appearance in Langdon is the latest version of this 'revelatory sequence,' now serving to confirm the Boogeyman's escape from Smith's Grove following the massacre of the Cult of Thorn.

With the prospect of a narrative break still undisclosed, the viewer's cognitive activities remain focused on standard hypothesis-forming activities. Cues within the film not only raise intrigue about the significance of Marion Chambers' presence; but also prompt the viewer to ruminate on ways in which Dr. Loomis' role may be filled in the absence of the late Donald Pleasence; to question the content of the file discovered by Michael; and to speculate about the precise nature of Laurie's return. It is not until

the sequence shifts to the next day that the cognitive activities of the viewer are placed under greater strain, as the murderous intent of the film is – somewhat subtly – revealed.

As the authorities descend upon the neighbourhood the day after Michael's attack, two police detectives – Fitz and Matt – walk through Marion's house while discussing the chaotic scene:

Matt: So whose house is this, anyway?

Fitz: Marion Whittington, Dr. Sam Loomis' nurse.[20] He was that shrink that died a few years ago; he lived here – she took care of him.

Matt: I remember him – I saw a thing on *60 Minutes* on him; spent his life tracking down that Halloween guy who butchered all those kids up in Haddonfield, right?

Fitz: Michael Myers.

Matt: Hey, you don't think...?

Fitz: They never found his body.

Matt: Yeah, but that was, like, twenty years ago...

Swiftly moving on from this seemingly innocuous yet hypertextually significant exchange, the detectives enter a room which stops them in their tracks. As they examine the walls, plastered with research about Michael Myers and the Haddonfield murders, the extent of the late Dr. Loomis' obsession is firmly driven home. Detective Fitz – old enough to remember Michael's original reign of terror – announces his intention to warn the Haddonfield police department, a proposal which prompts a sarcastic outburst from his younger, less knowledgeable colleague: 'All right – you tell 'em to look for a guy with a cane and Alzheimer's...' In response to this comment, Fitz wastes no time in reminding Matt (and the viewer) that Michael would still be young enough to cause havoc, having committed his first murder when he was only a child. As Fitz leaves to radio Haddonfield, Matt closes the door to Loomis' room, letting out a final, sceptical, sigh: 'Michael Myers... yeah, right...!'

Although this brief sequence may appear relatively inconsequential, it not only bears significant expositional responsibility, but also serves to transform the narrative

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[20] The logical deduction is that Marion Chambers has married (or divorced) in the twenty-year period since the events of Halloween 1978.

dynamic of the hypertextual system as a whole. In one fell swoop, the scene both confirms the death of Dr. Loomis – who apparently spent his last days obsessing over Michael under the care of Marion Chambers[21] – and brings the viewer up to speed with the exploits of the Boogeyman, who seemingly disappeared for twenty years following the events of Halloween 1978. The disclosure of this information represents the point at which the series viewer is made aware of the film's murderous intent. This is because the facts provided by the detectives are incompatible with the viewer's existing body of hypotextual knowledge. To elaborate, Fitz tells Matt that Michael's body was never found following the explosion at Haddonfield Memorial Hospital and Matt's response suggests that Michael has made no attempt to resurface in the twenty-year period since the night he disappeared. This information directly contradicts the version of events with which series viewers are familiar. According to the story presented in *Halloween 4, Halloween 5*, and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, Michael fell into a comatose state following the explosion in 1978 and spent the next decade hospitalised at Ridgemont Federal Sanitarium. When he awoke, compelled by the Druidic curse of Thorn, he subjected his orphaned niece – and the residents of Haddonfield – to an intermittent but devastating campaign of terror, during which scores of innocent victims were killed. Throughout this period, Michael's infamous reputation steadily grew until he attained widespread notoriety among those living in the hyperdiegetic world. This information is entirely incongruous with the exposition provided at the start of *Halloween H20*, which suggests that Michael has been confined to the annals of history by his prolonged absence – his name now forgotten by the younger generation living within the fictional world.

The introduction of this hypotextually-incompatible information signifies beyond doubt *Halloween H20*'s intention to deviate from the continuity established by its immediate predecessors. By creating an alternative timeline that shares the same origins as the Thorn story but subsequently splits to follow a separate path of development, *H20* effectively transforms the hypertextual system into a type of forking-path narrative. As discussed earlier in this study, David Bordwell defines such narratives as those in which mutually exclusive lines of action proceed from a fixed point – a fork – and lead to different futures.[22] In the case of the *Halloween* series, the

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[21]The life and death of Dr. Loomis are explored in more detail in the official online comic, *Halloween: Sam*, which suggests that the doctor met a gruesome end at the hands of Michael Myers. See Stefan Hutchinson, *Halloween: Sam* (Halloweencomics.com, 2008), http://www.halloweencomics.com/sam.php.
[22] David Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' in 'The American Production of French Theory,' special issue 97, *SubStance* 31, no. 1 (2002): 89, doi:10.1353/sub.2002.0004.

fork can be seen to occur after the end of *Halloween II*, as illustrated in the diagram below:
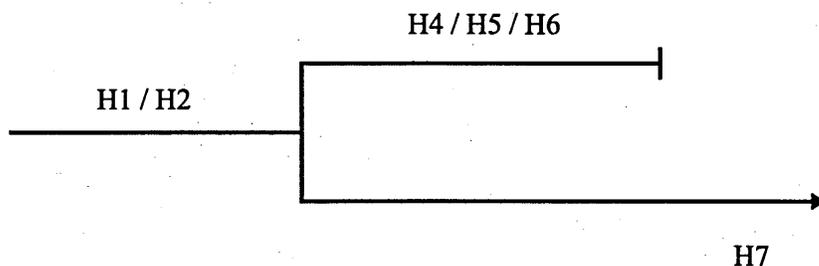

Figure 5. The forking-path structure of the Halloween *series*

The creation of an alternative timeline inevitably results in the corresponding creation of an alternative hyperdiegetic world. In the case of *Halloween H20*, this new world functions to 'reinvent' the character of Michael Myers by absolving him of many previous sins and relieving him of his burdensome backstory.[23] The version of Michael Myers who exists in the *Halloween H20* timeline has not committed any of the murders which occurred in the Thorn storyline during 1988, 1989, and 1995. In addition, by choosing to deviate from its hypotexts, *H20* effectively erases any trace of the Cult of Thorn from Michael's storyline – a development which simultaneously strips away his Druidic past and his curse-derived motivation. In hypertextual terms, this serves as an example of *demotivation* – a transformative process whereby a hypertext suppresses or elides a hypotextually-established motivation.[24] In conjunction with the removal of Michael's backstory, this has the effect of *remystifying* the character following his increasingly demystified representation in the Thorn storyline. However, whereas the process of remystification may seem relatively unproblematic on a narrative level, on a cognitive level the process is not so straightforward. This is due to the fact that the viewer is unable simply to 'erase' or 'forget' their existing body of knowledge pertaining to Michael. Instead, they must create a separate body of knowledge pertaining to the 'reinvented' version of the character. Such processes are an inevitable consequence of the forking-path model: in order to continue engaging with the series, viewers must be willing to adapt their cognitive activities to accommodate the existence of two different versions of the hyperdiegetic world. Fortunately, however, this task is unlikely to lie beyond the viewer's mental capabilities; according to David Bordwell,

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[23] Moustapha Akkad confirmed that the film was specifically being positioned to 'reinvent the classic monster which is Michael Myers' in an interview with *Fangoria*. See Shapiro, '*Halloween H20:* Back in Shape', 22.
[24] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 325.

210

due to the fact that most viewers can easily imagine two or three alternative chains of events at any one moment, as long as forking-path narratives employ the strategy of 'option restriction' they are likely to remain 'cognitively manageable.'[25] In terms of the *Halloween* series, the developments introduced by *Halloween H20* require viewers to imagine only two alternative chains within the same hypertextual system – a task that falls well within the 'cognitively manageable' limits proposed in Bordwell's discussion.

Once the existence of the alternative timeline has been revealed, the film proceeds to establish the basic parameters of the alternative hyperdiegesis – a process which begins during an expository credit sequence. After the detectives have left Dr. Loomis' room, the camera remains inside, slowly exploring the space as the credits unfold. The walls are filled with newspaper clippings, magazine articles, psychiatric reports, and other research notes. This collection – along with a voiceover relaying Loomis' infamous 'devil's eyes' speech from *Halloween*[26] – serves to provide a succinct summary of the story of the first two *Halloween* films. Prior to the revelation of the narrative break, the emphasis on forging connections to *Halloween* and *Halloween II* did not necessarily serve as evidence of the film's murderous intent. Now, however, the lack of research relating to the Thorn storyline serves to reinforce the split within the hypertextual system, a process which is intensified as the sequence continues to unfold. After establishing the basic hypotextual context, the sequence moves on to show a newspaper headline describing the apparent death of Laurie Strode: 'Survivor of Halloween Murders Killed in Auto Accident.' This event did not take place in *Halloween* or *Halloween II*, suggesting that it must have occurred within the parameters of the alternative hyperdiegesis. This not only raises the viewer's intrigue by introducing a piece of information which is seemingly incompatible with Laurie's impending return, but also risks causing some confusion among those familiar with the original timeline, in which Laurie also died in a car crash, albeit alongside her husband. Introducing such a similar development in the *H20* timeline somewhat compromises the distinction between the two hyperdiegetic worlds – a particularly risky course of action to take at a stage where the viewer is still processing the initial revelation of the narrative break. However, as the film continues to progress and more information about the parameters of the alternative world is revealed, the separation between the two timelines becomes more overtly established.

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[25] Bordwell, 'Film Futures,', 174.
[26] It should be noted that the original passage as read by Donald Pleasence is not included in the film; instead, the lines are delivered in an imitative style by actor Tom Kane.

The post-credit sequence begins in the dark hallways of a school building; the camera sweeps into an empty classroom and reveals a teacher's desk adorned with a photograph of a teenage boy and a name plate reading 'Head Mistress Keri Tate'. As a calendar ominously changes to show October 31, the camera enters a cupboard at the back of the classroom, before the scene suddenly cuts to a flashback showing Laurie cowering in a wardrobe while under attack from Michael on Halloween night 1978. The scene cuts back to the classroom and the camera returns to the desk, where the photograph now lies smashed, impaled by a large kitchen knife. As the camera sweeps around to show the name 'Laurie Strode' scrawled on the blackboard, the scene abruptly cuts to an overhead shot of Jamie Lee Curtis, lying in bed and screaming in terror as she wakes from the nightmare. The boy from the photograph – seemingly Laurie's son, John – comforts his mother as she thrashes her arms, an action which confirms her identity by revealing a scar acquired as a result of Michael's attack in 1978. As Laurie regains her composure, John searches through countless bottles of pills until he finds the medication designed to ease his mother's nightmare-induced anxiety.

This sequence serves to establish the general parameters of the alternative hyperdiegesis. In this world, Laurie Strode is still alive two decades after the events of Halloween 1978, despite later revealing that Michael's disappearance from Haddonfield hospital drove her to fake her own death, move to Northern California, and assume the new identity of 'Keri Tate', headmistress of Hillcrest Academy. Not only is Laurie alive, but she also has a teenage son, who appears burdened with the responsibility of helping his mother cope with the symptoms of the psychological trauma which still plagues her after twenty years. The establishment of these parameters unequivocally confirms the abandonment of the Thorn storyline, thereby encouraging viewers to continue the process of cognitively 'compartmentalising' the two separate timelines. In addition, the sequence also serves to demonstrate the 'resurrective' potential of the murderous continuation. Although this concept may seem somewhat perverse, *Halloween H20* nonetheless brings Laurie back to life by ignoring the advent of her death in the Thorn storyline. This retrospectively transforms the first two *Halloween* films into the beginning, rather than the end, of the character's story – an action which reinitiates the process of character development that was prematurely curtailed in the original timeline.

The manner of Laurie's reintroduction appears to suggest that the development of her life has been entirely shaped by the events which occurred in Halloween 1978. As the film progresses beyond establishing the general parameters of the alternative world

and begins the process of hyperdiegetic elaboration, this notion is soon confirmed. A fraught conversation with John over breakfast reveals that – following the Haddonfield murders – Laurie descended into a self-destructive world of fear and anxiety. Having survived a dysfunctional marriage to an abusive drug addict, she now exists in an overprotective and paranoid state which threatens to destroy her relationship with her son; this is illustrated by Laurie's refusal to allow John to participate in the school camping trip, and by the way she severely rebukes him for leaving the security of the school campus. The deep-seated extent of Laurie's trauma is indicated not only by recurrent nightmares but also by hallucinations, which see the character continually haunted by apparitions of Michael. With her ability to function now dependent upon a constant supply of pills and alcohol, Laurie is aware that she remains psychologically 'handcuffed to her dead brother.'[27] This is made apparent in a conversation with Will, where Laurie tearfully confesses to the existence of 'a little backstory' with which she has not been 'completely successful,' before reeling off a long list of treatments she has tried in an attempt to move on from her past.

The resurrection of Laurie Strode provides an opportunity for viewers to learn what the character's life might have been like had she survived the car crash which occurred in the original timeline. However, the function of recommencing Laurie's storyline and reinitiating the process of development is not, evidently, to bestow upon the character a life which turned out 'happily ever after,' but to demonstrate the devastating long-term impact of Michael's attack. When the viewer re-encounters Laurie in such a dysfunctional state, any pre-existing conjectural notions that her survival may have led to an idyllic future are immediately quashed. However, although the alternative timeline paints a somewhat bleak picture of Laurie's life after the Haddonfield murders, this picture nonetheless represents the most logical outcome. Prior to Laurie's reintroduction in *Halloween H20*, the character was last seen in a state of total mental exhaustion at the end of *Halloween II*, having survived a terrifying night in which several of her friends were slaughtered by Michael. In light of this, *Halloween H20* can be said to provide a credible process of character development which successfully takes into account all of the relevant hypotextual information.[28]

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[27] This phrase is used by John in the midst of a heated argument with his mother in Summer Glen, where he rails against the fact that Laurie's psychological problems have slowly taken over both of their lives.
[28] Jamie Lee Curtis was adamant that the representation of Laurie should credibly reflect the trauma of living for twenty years with the memory of Michael's attack, stipulating that she would only return to the series in order to explore the psychological development of the character. See Marc Shapiro, '*Halloween* Heroine,' *Fangoria* 177 (October 1998): 35; and Shapiro, '*Halloween H20*: Back in Shape,' 22-23.

By resurrecting Laurie and re-initiating her development, the alternative timeline also facilitates the realisation of events that would not have been possible in the Thorn storyline. Most notable in this respect are the reunion of Laurie and Michael at Hillcrest Academy, where the two characters finally come face-to-face after twenty years; the ensuing pursuit sequence in which Laurie succeeds in confronting her fears and assumes the role of predator, arming herself and hunting down Michael rather than seizing the chance to flee; and the climactic showdown at the end of the film, during which Laurie appears to exact her revenge by decapitating her homicidal brother.[29] This series of events lay beyond the realms of possibility in the original timeline, where Laurie's unceremonious offscreen death during the ellipsis between *Halloween II* and *Halloween 4* ruled out any chance of the characters meeting again. As a result, the realisation of their reunion in *Halloween H20* represents a particularly rewarding narrative outcome for series viewers. Originally deprived of the opportunity to witness a final showdown between Laurie and Michael, the viewer finally receives this chance in the alternative timeline, which provides a satisfying resolution to Laurie's prematurely-truncated story by delivering the desired face-off and making it possible for the tormented heroine to succeed at last. The outcome of the climactic showdown not only serves to satisfy previously-frustrated narrative expectations, but also has wider hypertextual implications. Whereas the final sequence of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* descended into a state of incoherence which prevented the viewer from discerning any definitive conclusion to the Thorn storyline, the decapitation of Michael Myers at the end of *Halloween: H20* appears to provide a more definitive resolution. This brings the alternative timeline to a convincing point of closure, thereby providing a coherent conclusion for the hypertextual narrative as a whole.

Although the process of murderous continuation introduced by *Halloween H20* has clear advantages for the hypertextual system, it is also inevitably disadvantageous for *Halloween 4*, *Halloween 5*, and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*. By transforming the storyline established in these films into one of multiple narrative paths within the system, *Halloween H20* essentially strips the Thorn saga of its identity as the only – official – version of events within the *Halloween* series. In an archetypal demonstration of the power of the murderous continuation, this undermines the narrative authority of the three preceding hypotexts, thereby 'reversing' their overall significance within the system. The significance of these hypotexts is further

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[29] Narrative developments in *Halloween: Resurrection* subsequently serve to undermine Laurie's victory; this point is subject to further discussion in the case study dedicated to the film.

undermined by the fact that the alternative timeline is likely to be perceived as more plausible than the original. This is due to the recency effect, a cognitive bias which plays a significant role in the comprehension of forking-path narratives. As discussed earlier in the study, the cognitive biases of primacy and recency guide the viewer's process of comprehension. Whereas the primacy effect dictates that information presented at an early stage of a film establishes the dominant hypotheses which shape the viewer's perception about what follows, the recency effect dictates that information presented at a later stage will serve to qualify or negate the viewer's first impressions, thereby modifying their perception about what occurred before.[30] In the case of forking-path narratives, the first path encountered is therefore perceived as the dominant frame of reference against which any subsequent developments are measured, but the last path prompts the viewer to modify this perception. As David Bordwell explains:

> If something like a primacy effect establishes the first future as a benchmark, the 'recency effect' privileges the *final* future we see. Because endings are weightier than most other points in the narrative, and because forking-path tales tend to make the early stories preconditions for the last one, these plots suggest that the last future is the final draft, the one that 'really' happened; or at least they reduce the others to fainter possibilities.[31]

If the *Halloween* series can be perceived as a form of forking-path narrative, then the timeline established by *Halloween H20* represents the 'final future' presented to the viewer. In accordance with Bordwell's theory, the recency effect serves to privilege this future, encouraging the viewer to perceive the *H20* timeline as the final draft, or the one that 'really happened,' and reducing the Thorn timeline to a 'fainter possibility.' Viewed from this perspective, the detrimental impact of *Halloween H20* upon the three preceding hypotexts becomes plainly apparent: with the primacy of the original timeline negated, the narrative status of these films is retrospectively reconceptualised and the Thorn storyline is downgraded to a 'draft version' of the final story. This calls into question the legitimacy of the original timeline, an action which inevitably undermines the significance of the individual characters who featured in the Thorn storyline. In a particularly notable example, the alternative timeline establishes a version of the hyperdiegetic world where Jamie Lloyd simply does not exist. In *Halloween H20* there is no mention of Laurie's daughter from the original timeline, suggesting that that

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[30] See David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Methuen, 1985), 165; and 'Film Futures,' 97-102.
[31] Bordwell, 'Film Futures,' 100.

215

character is entirely swept aside in favour of Laurie's son, John. In this way, the deadly capabilities of the murderous continuation are made plainly apparent.

The recency effect is not the only reason the timeline presented in *Halloween H20* assumes a privileged position within the hypertextual system. According to Bordwell, the final future presented in a forking-path narrative is also privileged by its presupposition of earlier narrative paths and its absorption of earlier lessons learned. In this way, he suggests that forking paths may also be envisioned as 'multiple draft' narratives, 'with the last version presenting itself as the fullest, most satisfying revision.'[32] Although the *Halloween* series does not represent a typical forking-path narrative, the alternative timeline established by *Halloween H20* is nonetheless privileged by its absorption of lessons learned in the earlier narrative path. However, whereas the final path in a standard forking-path narrative is typically privileged by its absorption of lessons learned by those living within the *diegetic* world, *Halloween H20* is privileged by its absorption of lessons learned by those living within the *extra-diegetic* world. To elaborate, the choice to deviate from the Thorn storyline was a conscious reaction against the factors which had rendered *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* such a disappointing viewing experience. Absorbing lessons learned along the first narrative path, the producers of *Halloween H20* made no attempt to address the issues left unresolved by the preceding hypotext, instead focusing on securing the coherence of the film in question while also taking the opportunity to create a satisfying viewing experience by reinventing recurrent characters, resurrecting previous characters, and realising events rendered impossible in the original timeline. By learning from the mistakes made in the original timeline and adapting accordingly, the alternative timeline established in *Halloween H20* is therefore likely to be perceived as the 'fullest, most satisfying revision' of the story.

Despite the fact that the murderous continuation, *Halloween H20*, entirely disrupts the series' continuity, the film's assimilation into the hypertextual system was undoubtedly eased by the fact that it respected the cognitively manageable limits of the viewer's comprehension, delivered a credible process of character development, and provided a coherent conclusion. Now transformed into a forking-path system with a more definitive sense of narrative resolution, the *Halloween* series appeared to have come to a close, with Michael's decapitation rendering any further continuation a seemingly insurmountable challenge. However, the ending of *Halloween H20* was not

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[32] Ibid., 102.

quite as definitive as it appeared, as would soon be revealed by the last film in the series, *Halloween: Resurrection.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN
HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION: THE NARRATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF HYPERTEXTUAL MOTIFS

The end of *Halloween H20* might have appeared to bring the *Halloween* series to a definitive conclusion, but the arrival of *Halloween: Resurrection* soon demonstrated that Michael Myers was capable of surviving even the most insurmountable odds. Serving as a proleptic continuation of *H20*, *Halloween: Resurrection* opens with an extended prologue which serves to negate the coherent state of resolution attained by the previous film. This is achieved by establishing that Laurie Strode killed the wrong man – a development which allows the film to circumvent the death of Michael Myers and resume the continuation of his story. This process of continuation is facilitated by two key hypertextual motifs – elements which accrue significance as they recur throughout the series narrative: Michael's mask, which is ultimately shown to be responsible for the character's survival; and the Myers house, which serves as the catalyst that 'reactivates' Michael once Laurie's storyline has been drawn to a swift conclusion. Taking the opening sequence of *Halloween: Resurrection* as a starting point, this chapter will focus specifically on the analysis of Michael's mask and the Myers house.[1] By examining the representation of these elements within the film, studying their interaction with the hypertextual system as a whole, and analysing the associated cognitive activities, I aim to discover more about the processes which facilitate their ascent to narrative significance.

After the critical and financial success of *Halloween H20*, the production of an eighth *Halloween* film was immediately 'fast-tracked.'[2] However, while Dimension was keen to develop the *Halloween* series in a new direction following the apparent demise of Michael Myers, executive producer Moustapha Akkad remained unconvinced. Still harbouring painful memories of the commercial failure of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*, Akkad was determined not to make the same mistake again. As a consequence, he insisted that the new film should serve as another Michael Myers piece, rather than deviating along an alternative narrative path.[3] Thus, writer Larry Brand was commissioned to create a treatment that would explain the survival of Michael, and

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[1] Screenshots showing the mask and house in each film in which they appear are included in Appendix Four: Michael's Mask and Appendix Five: The Myers House.

[2] Marc Shapiro, '*Halloween: Resurrection*: Trapped in Michael's Web,' *Fangoria* 214 (July 2002): 41.

[3] This is confirmed by Larry Brand, screenwriter of *Halloween: Resurrection*, speaking in the documentary *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror* (Stefan Hutchinson, 2006).

provide the means for the character to continue his reign of terror. The treatment written by Brand – and later honed by screenwriter Sean Hood – was sufficient to convince Jamie Lee Curtis to extend her contractually-obliged appearance from a brief cameo to a more significant role intended to draw the story of Laurie Strode to a definitive conclusion. In addition to ending Laurie's story, Brand's treatment also introduced a technological dimension to the series. Drawing inspiration from reality television, which had risen to prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and found-footage films, which had become a regular feature of horror cinema in the wake of *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999), the plot of *Halloween: Resurrection* was to revolve around a live internet show broadcast from inside the Myers house – a development designed to update the series for the contemporary audience. With the story in place, the directorial duties were assigned to Whitney Ransick, but concerns about the filmmaker's lack of experience eventually led to his dismissal.[4] Hired in Ransick's place was *Halloween II* veteran Rick Rosenthal, for whom the 'millennium sensibility' of the script was particularly appealing, affording a unique opportunity to 'mix digital video and film and create an interchangeable new medium.'[5] Thus, the decision was made to incorporate footage shot not only by traditional film cameras, but also by static webcams and 'lipstick' headcams, worn by the actors in order to capture each individual point of view. The intention was to create something other than the 'typical slasher film' by providing a different perspective on the slew of killings which would inevitably take place within the plot.[6]

Set three years after the dramatic events at Hillcrest Academy, *Halloween Resurrection* opens in the Grace Andersen Sanitarium, California. Confined to the facility with an extreme dissociative disorder, Laurie Strode awaits the return of her homicidal brother as she struggles to cope with the guilt of beheading an innocent man. Through a flashback sequence, the viewer learns that it was not Michael but a nameless paramedic who bore the brunt of Laurie's vengeful fury. Perennially underestimated, Michael seemingly bestowed his mask upon the unfortunate victim, whose larynx was crushed in order to guarantee his silence. Michael soon appears at the sanitarium, where he narrowly avoids succumbing to a carefully-prepared trap before succeeding in killing his sister. With Laurie's storyline drawn to a conclusion, the new chapter begins at

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[4] See Shapiro, '*Halloween: Resurrection*: Trapped in Michael's Web,' 41.
[5] Rick Rosenthal, speaking in the behind-the-scenes documentary *Halloween: Resurrection: Head Cam Featurette* (2004).
[6] See Marc Shapiro, 'Monster Invasion: *Halloween: Homecoming*,' *Fangoria* 206 (September 2001): 8; and Marc Shapiro, 'Rick Rosenthal's *Halloween* Days,' *Fangoria* 215 (August 2002): 53.

Haddonfield University, where six students are selected to take part in an internet reality show broadcast live from the Myers house. Under the watchful eyes of the 'Dangertainment' production company and wise-cracking host Freddie (Busta Rhymes), the participants embark upon a night in Michael's childhood home, where they are charged with the task of uncovering clues that may provide an insight into the development of his psychosis. Unaware that Michael is inside the house, the students soon fall victim to a series of horrific deaths; the only characters to survive are Freddie and Sara – a student reminiscent of a young Laurie Strode – who avoid Michael by following a series of instructions sent by a viewer watching online. Michael's fate appears to be sealed in the fiery aftermath of a climactic showdown, but the final scene reveals that there is still life in his charred remains. Unlike its immediate predecessor, *Halloween: Resurrection* therefore ends at a point which leaves ample potential for the continuation of Michael's story. However, despite the fact that the series previously defied expectations by continuing after the point at which a final conclusion appeared to have been drawn, any expectations for the story to continue after the entirely less definitive ending of *Halloween: Resurrection* were ultimately frustrated when a further sequel failed to materialise.

Following the lead of its predecessor, *Halloween: Resurrection* was scheduled for a summer release, eventually making its way into cinemas in July 2002. The film fared well at the box office, bringing in over $30 million and demonstrating that the *Halloween* series continued to retain its mainstream appeal. However, unlike *Halloween H20*, which drew critical praise for successfully reinvigorating the series, *Halloween: Resurrection* was seen to portend a 'limitless run of sequels that, however fond the loyalists may be, may potentially turn off those craving a satisfying end to it all.'[7] Indeed, for many critics, the decision to continue the story by usurping the finality of *Halloween H20* was an unnecessary development which betrayed the commercial motivation underpinning the series. As a result, *Halloween: Resurrection* was perceived as 'even more uselessly redundant and shamelessly money-grubbing than most third-rate horror sequels.'[8] However, it was not only the revelation of Michael's survival that drew critical ire; the somewhat unremarkable death of Laurie Strode was perceived as 'disrespectful' to the character's journey so far; the attempt to bring the series into the twenty-first century fell flat, with the incorporation of reality TV and found footage tropes accused of 'lacking freshness' in the midst of a cultural oversaturation with such

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[7] Shapiro, '*Halloween: Resurrection*: Trapped in Michael's Web,' 40.
[8] Joe Leydon, '*Halloween: Resurrection*,' *Variety*, July 22, 2002, 24, ProQuest (1896402).

trends; and many felt that the predictable and cliché-ridden plot failed to establish *Halloween: Resurrection* as anything other than an entirely 'anonymous' slasher film.[9]

However, this suggestion fails to take into account the hypertextual identity of the film. No matter how formulaic *Halloween: Resurrection* may appear at a generic level, the picture is far from indistinctive. This is due to the presence of series-specific conventions – recurrent narrative elements associated exclusively with a particular film series. In the case of *Halloween: Resurrection*, the presence of characters including Michael Myers and Laurie Strode, locations such as Haddonfield, and motifs including Michael's mask and the Myers house serve to indicate that the film is part of the *Halloween* series: a hypertextual identity which ultimately precludes a total decline into anonymity. As discussed earlier in the study, series-specific conventions share many operational similarities with genre conventions; as a result, they frequently draw similar criticisms, perceived as overly repetitive by viewers lacking an appropriate framework of knowledge. In contrast, those viewers in possession of such a framework are equipped with specialised viewing skills which permit the identification of nuanced patterns of variation – the recognition of which often reveals processes of hypertextual development hidden beneath the repetitive facade of series-specific conventions. In previous chapters, I have examined the processes of hypertextual development associated with the recurrent characters and locations featured in the *Halloween* films. However, just as important to the construction of the hypertextual narrative is the development of the recurrent motifs which appear throughout the series.

As previously stated, the process of narrative construction in *Halloween Resurrection* is reliant upon the two key hypertextual motifs: Michael's mask and the Myers house. Michael's mask appears recurrently throughout the story of *Halloween*, continually broadening its symbolic potential through the steady accumulation of functionality and meaning. The opening sequence of *Halloween: Resurrection* represents the culmination of this elaborative process, revealing a series of narrative developments which demonstrate the mask's successful transformation into a potent symbolic object.[10]

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[9] See, respectively, Jerry Smith, 'Genre Gut Punches: The Death of Laurie Strode,' *Icons of Fright*, April 28, 2014, http://iconsoffright.com/2014/04/28/genre-gut-punches-the-death-of-laurie-strode/; Frank Scheck, '*Halloween: Resurrection*,' *Hollywood Reporter*, July 15, 2002, 10, Nexis; and Kim Newman '*Halloween: Resurrection*.' *Sight and Sound* 12, no. 11 (November 2002): 44, 46.

[10] The symbolic potential of masks in slasher film series has previously been discussed in relation to the *Friday the 13th* films, the majority of which centre upon masked villain Jason Voorhees. See Bernard Welt, 'Jason Voorhees, RIP,' in *Mythomania: Fantasies, Fables and Sheer Lies in Contemporary American Popular Art* (LA: Art Issues Press, 1996), 78-83; and Ian Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films and the Cultural Function of a Modern Grand Guignol,' in *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of*

The film opens by revealing that Laurie Strode is now a resident of the Grace Andersen Sanitarium – a development which suggests her previous conquest over Michael was far from victorious. As two nurses discuss her case, key moments from *Halloween H20* are presented via flashback, thereby reminding viewers of the events most salient to the current narrative. However, not all of the footage consists of repeated scenes; included within the flashback is a defocalised sequence revealing a previously-unseen series of events. Following Michael's initial 'death' at Hillcrest Academy – where he appeared to have perished after being stabbed by Laurie and falling over a balcony – *Halloween H20* originally cut to show the authorities loading Michael's body into a coroner's van. Suspecting that Michael was far from dead, Laurie subsequently stole the van and decapitated the man in the mask when he emerged, still alive, from the body bag. However, the defocalised flashback reveals new information about the temporal ellipsis between Michael's presumed death at the school and his body being loaded into the coroner's van. During this period, it appears that a lone paramedic unwisely approached Michael's 'corpse,' only to be savagely attacked as soon as the Boogeyman ceased feigning death. After revealing this information, the defocalised flashback cuts to an exterior shot showing the school surrounded by the authorities. A figure dressed in a paramedic uniform exits the building and walks across the scene, but the slow-motion effect accompanying his entrance, the restricted framing revealing the figure only from the neck down, and the knife visibly clutched in his hand soon indicate that this is no ordinary member of the medical crew. As the flashback cuts away to show the discovery of the decapitated head of 'Michael Myers' on the road outside Hillcrest, the viewer begins to reconstruct the missing chain of events which led to such a sharp decline in Laurie's mental state. The junior nurse makes a comment reflecting the viewer's gradual process of realisation ('Oh my God. She killed the wrong person.') and the film subsequently shows a police officer removing the mask from the decapitated head, only to reveal the face of the paramedic instead of Michael. A cut back to the school shows Michael, dressed as the paramedic, walking away from the camera and disappearing into the woods; significantly, he is not wearing a mask. As the junior nurse asks her colleague why the paramedic did not say anything, the gruesome extent of Michael's plan is laid bare, as a final flashback reveals that the Boogeyman crushed the larynx of the paramedic before bestowing the mask upon him.

Contemporary Horror Cinema, ed. Ian Conrich (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 173-90. For further discussion of the narrative functions of Jason's mask, see also Wickham Clayton, 'Bearing Witness to a Whole Bunch of Murders: The Aesthetics of Perspective in the *Friday the 13th* Films' (PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2013), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17040913.pdf.

The revelation of Michael's deception prompts the viewer to engage in an act of retrospective reconceptualisation, transforming the conclusion of *Halloween H20* from a redemptive act of vengeance into an horrific mistake. Significantly, the successful execution of Michael's plan relies on the mask's ability to serve as a symbolic representation of the character – a function acquired at an early point of the series and gradually consolidated over the course of successive sequels.

The symbolic association between Michael and his mask arises from the fact that the character and the object are rarely separated. From the time Michael first arrives back in Haddonfield in 1978, the object is shown to serve not only as a key component of his costume but also as a vital part of the character's identity as a whole. This is demonstrated by the significance Michael instils into the mask, growing angry when it is pulled off during the struggle with Laurie at the end of *Halloween* and quickly pulling it back over his face, and routinely seeking out the object whenever it is taken from him: in *Halloween 4*, the bandaged Boogeyman acquires a replica mask from the Discount Mart as soon as he reaches Haddonfield; and in *Halloween 5*, he reaches out for the mask the moment he regains consciousness in the old man's shack. In addition, with the exception of a string of attacks which take place while Michael's face is bandaged in *Halloween 4*, the Boogeyman only kills his victims while he is wearing the mask – not while it is removed or during periods in which it has been substituted for another disguise. This suggests that the object assumes something of a ritualistic function for the character, forming an essential part of his *modus operandi*. Significantly in this respect, Michael even wears a mask when he commits his first murder as a child, albeit a clown mask which forms part of his Halloween costume rather than the mask more familiarly associated with the adult character. This suggests that the impetus for facial concealment is somehow embedded in Michael's identity from the very beginning. Once the recurrent association between the mask and Michael's crimes is established, the object acquires the ability to function as a narrative signifier. For viewers who recognise the object and are aware of its existing association, a mere glimpse of the white mask looming out of the darkness becomes sufficient to prompt the formation of hypotheses about the upcoming course of action, with violence and bloodshed inferred to be the most logical outcome.

With the mask inexorably bound up with Michael's physicality, identity, and his monstrous *modus operandi*, the development of a symbolic relationship between the object and the character is almost inevitable. Over the course of the series, the association between Michael and the mask is continually reinforced, thereby

223

establishing a general expectation that the presence of the mask indicates the presence of Michael. Thus, at the end of *Halloween H20* when a man wearing Michael's mask emerges from the body bag in the coroner's van, the viewer – and the characters within the hyperdiegetic world – draw the logical inference that the man is Michael. The formation of such an inference is vital for the successful deployment of the mask as a tool of deception. In making the choice to use the mask for this purpose, Michael demonstrates that he expects such an inference to be drawn, therefore establishing that the character is aware of his symbolic association with the object. This point is reinforced by the Michael's actions at the end of the flashback sequence, where – having discarded the mask with which he is so closely associated – he walks away from the school entirely unchallenged. This suggests that Michael is effectively 'anonymous' without the mask – an implication arising from the fact that, unlike the masks of some other slasher villains, such as Jason Voorhees, Michael's mask does not function to conceal any form of distinguishable facial disfigurement. On the few occasions where his face is exposed – during the struggle with Laurie at the end of *Halloween* and twice in *Halloween 5,* first at the old man's shack and later during the climactic scene with Jamie at the Myers house – Michael's face is shown to be entirely unremarkable, leaving the de-masked Boogeyman more than capable of passing entirely unnoticed in public.

However, despite the fact that the mask functions as a symbolic representation of Michael, the deception in the opening sequence nonetheless establishes that the object is not strictly synonymous with the character. Although the viewer may infer that the presence of the mask is likely to signify the presence of the monster, this is not always the case. The basic function of the mask is, after all, to obscure the identity of the wearer, and the unfortunate paramedic beheaded at Laurie's hands represents only one of several 'impersonators' to don the mask over the course of the series. Ben Tramer wears a similar mask in *Halloween II*; in *Halloween 4*, Dr. Loomis, Sheriff Meeker, Jamie, and Rachel find themselves surrounded by multiple 'Michaels' after several local teens dress as the killer; and in *Halloween 5*, Spitz dresses as Michael as part of a dramatic Halloween prank. A further example of such impersonation also occurs at a later point in *Halloween: Resurrection*, when Dangertainment host Freddie dresses as Michael in an attempt to scare the students staying at the Myers house. Such processes of impersonation are made possible by the fact that the mask is not a unique object within the hyperdiegetic world – it is a mass-produced, commercially-available item. This is established in *Halloween*, when comments made by Sheriff Brackett reveal

that Michael's original mask was taken from Nichols' Hardware Store, and is later reinforced in *Halloween 4*, when Michael is shown stealing a replica mask from the Discount Mart. The commercial availability of the mask effectively enables anyone within the world to 'become' Michael Myers.[11] However, due to the widespread association between Michael and the mask, such processes of impersonation can prove to have fatal consequences. Ben Tramer, for example, is accidentally killed after he is mistaken for Michael and Spitz is almost shot by two police officers who presume they have come face-to-face with the Boogeyman.

In consideration of these prior instances of impersonation, the series viewer armed with an appropriate body of existing knowledge should, perhaps, have been able to postulate that the victim at the end of *Halloween H20* was not actually Michael. However, despite the fact that the mask's function as a tool of impersonation was introduced in *Halloween II* and consolidated in subsequent films, all previous instances of the mask being used for this purpose provided the viewer with additional cues to indicate that a process of impersonation was taking place. The mask worn by Ben Tramer in *Halloween II* had white hair rather than the brown shade associated with Michael's mask; the presence of multiple Michaels in *Halloween 4* precluded the possibility of anything other than impersonation; and Spitz's prank in *Halloween 5* is pre-empted by a scene in which Sammy tells Tina that she and Spitz just had 'the greatest idea.' The lack of any such cues at the end of *Halloween H20* left viewers with no reason to question their inference that the man in the mask was, in fact, Michael.

On occasion, the mask's function as an impersonating device leads to the creation of a fatally complacent mindset amongst those living within the hyperdiegetic world. To elaborate, the *Halloween* series contains several instances in which, having witnessed processes of impersonation take place, characters subsequently disregard any potential threat when they encounter the real Michael. This is demonstrated as the opening sequence of *Halloween: Resurrection* continues. After revealing that Laurie is not as catatonic as she appears, the film moves on to show Michael standing in the grounds of the sanitarium, staring straight into his sister's window. Just as Laurie notices, Michael disappears and the film cuts to show a security guard patrolling the perimeter of the facility. The level of suspense begins to build as a subjective point-of-view shot suggests that Michael is approaching the guard. However, it soon transpires

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[11] Ian Conrich and Jonathan Lake Crane and have both discussed similar functions in relation to the mask of Jason Voorhees in the *Friday the 13th* series. See Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films,' 182-3; and Jonathan Lake Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* (London: Sage, 1994), 142.

that the point of view belongs not to Michael but to Harold – a patient at the sanitarium apparently known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of serial killers and his proclivity for wearing masks infamously associated with these criminals. Clearly accustomed to the sight of Harold wearing the mask of a serial killer – in this case a clown mask in honour of John Wayne Gacy – the guard escorts the patient back to the building. As he does, the camera reveals that Michael is standing in the shadows, watching these events unfold. After Harold has been taken back to his room, the film cuts to the security office, where CCTV monitors show Michael walking through the hallways of the sanitarium. Presuming that the figure is simply Harold dressed in a Michael Myers mask, the guards instantly disregard any potential threat and set out to track down 'Harold' in order to secure him for the night – a course of action which ultimately results in the deaths of both men after they unknowingly encounter the real Michael.

The guards within this sequence are not the only characters in the *Halloween* series to fall victim to their own complacency. Having previously witnessed Spitz impersonating Michael, the two police officers in *Halloween 5* subsequently dismiss any potential threat when they see a man emerging from the barn dressed in the Boogeyman's mask. Not realising that Spitz is dead and the man standing before them is the real Michael Myers, the police officers demand that 'Spitz' approach their car – a fatally misguided request which promptly results in the death of both men. A similar set of events also takes place at a later point in *Halloween: Resurrection*, where – aware that Freddie is impersonating Michael – the students take no action when they encounter a man wearing Michael's mask, a decision which ultimately results in Jen's death after the man is revealed to be the real Michael Myers. In such sequences, the viewer is often privileged to additional insights which confirm the presence of Michael behind the mask; in both instances during *Halloween: Resurrection*, the viewer is aware that Michael is present within the vicinity, first at the sanitarium and subsequently at the Myers house; and in *Halloween 5*, the viewer witnesses Michael murder Spitz and Sammy immediately before emerging from the barn. This results in the creation of discrepancies between the level of knowledge possessed by the viewer and the level possessed by the characters on screen, a situation which ultimately serves to enhance the suspense of such scenes.

A similar sense of suspense is also created in instances where Michael obscures his identity by replacing his widely-recognised mask with a different disguise, such as the 'ghost' costume he wears to approach Lynda in *Halloween* or the caveman mask he uses to deceive Tina in *Halloween 5*. In both cases, the absence of Michael's mask – an

essential tool of identification – leads a potential victim to endanger themselves by presuming that they are in the presence of someone else, thereby allowing Michael to exploit the situation by getting close enough to strike.[12]

Halloween: Resurrection provides a more explicit demonstration of Michael's exploitation of the mask's symbolic power in the final part of the opening sequence. After succeeding in leading Michael to the roof of the sanitarium, Laurie sets off a rope trap which leaves her adversary hanging over the edge of the building. However, at the moment she is about to cut the rope and send Michael falling to the ground below, the Boogeyman raises his hands to the mask and shakes his head. In this instant, Michael's manipulative use of the mask transforms the object into a cognitive trigger, with both Laurie and the viewer prompted to recall the tragic accident at the end of *Halloween H20*. With the mask's ability to obscure the identity of the wearer having previously resulted in the death of an innocent man, there now exists a seed of doubt which can be cast out only by looking beneath the deceptive facade of the mask. As this thought process is rendered explicit by a brief flashback showing the helpless paramedic at the end of *Halloween H20*, Laurie tentatively reaches out to remove the mask. As she does, Michael removes any shred of doubt pertaining to his identity by forcefully grabbing Laurie's wrist. In the ensuing struggle, both Laurie and Michael fall over the side of the building, coming to rest suspended above the ground as they hang off the edge of the roof. As Michael stabs Laurie in the back, her final act before falling to her death is to reach up and plant a kiss firmly on the mouth of the mask – an action which both restores and reinforces the symbolic potency of the mask. In this instance, it is clear that the object has developed beyond the function of concealing Michael's real face to be perceived *as* the real face of the man himself;[13] and the fact that this face remains entirely expressionless – even at such an emotionally-charged moment – ensures that the terrifying legacy of the monster is not compromised by any hint of vulnerability.[14]

Due to the fact that the mask effectively functions as the face of Michael Myers, a sense of constancy surrounding the appearance of the object is particularly useful. As fan reactions show, even the most arbitrary alterations to the appearance of the mask

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[12] Whereas Lynda is killed as a result of the deployment of this strategy, Tina is more fortunate: as a result of Jamie's psychic connection to Michael, Tina is saved before Michael has a chance to attack.
[13] This draws parallels with one of the primary functions of the mask of Jason Voorhees, which both Bernard Welt and Ian Conrich discuss in terms of its development into Jason's 'real' face. See Welt, 'Jason Voorhees, RIP,' 83; and Conrich, 'The *Friday the 13th* Films,' 180.
[14] Such vulnerability is revealed only once in the series, when Michael removes his mask at Jamie's request toward the end of *Halloween 5*. As he does, the character is seen to shed a single tear, indicating that emotion does exist beneath the dehumanising facade provided by the mask.

have the potential to prove somewhat disconcerting.[15] Thus, although the mask is subject to hypertextual elaboration at a functional level, it is not subject to any significant form of physical modification.[16] However, not all of the hypertextual motifs associated with the *Halloween* series are so heavily reliant on physical constancy; this is demonstrated by the representation of the Myers house, which assumes a leading role in the story of *Halloween: Resurrection*.

Following the opening sequence at the sanitarium, the focus of the film shifts to Haddonfield, where a group of university students are selected to participate in an internet show designed to investigate the 'deep dark recesses of the human psyche.' As the group assembles at the Motel 2400, Dangertainment producer Freddie outlines the parameters of the students' mission:

> You six have been selected to explore America's worst nightmare.
> Tomorrow night – Halloween – live in front of the whole internet
> universe, you six will enter the birthplace of evil in its purest form: the
> childhood home of our most brutal mass murderer... Michael Myers.

The concept of broadcasting a live show from the Myers house establishes that the association between the property and Michael is well-known within the hyperdiegetic world. Indeed, knowledge of this infamous partnership appears to have permeated the worlds established in both narrative timelines, even though there are considerable discrepancies between the developmental paths taken by the house in the Thorn and *H20* storylines. I will return to discuss these paths later in the chapter; at this point, however, it is sufficient to note that the association between the property and Michael is firmly embedded within the collective hyperdiegetic consciousness. The general sense of awareness regarding this association is demonstrated in *Halloween II*, when Laurie and Jimmy discuss the identity of the attacker responsible for the killing spree that took the lives of her friends:

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[15] This is apparent in the fan reaction to changes made to Michael's mask in *Halloween 5*; see Dave 1031, 'The Mask,' *OHMB*, October 18, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?1611-The-Mask; and Nils, 'Why Did They Use Different Masks for One Single Night?' *OHMB*, October 30, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?2045-why-did-they-use-different-masks-for-one-single-night.
[16] The extent of the modifications made to the mask can be seen in Appendix Four.

Jimmy:	They should have handled him more carefully.
Laurie:	Who?
Jimmy:	Michael Myers.
Laurie:	Michael Myers?
Jimmy:	Yeah, he was the one that was after you.
Laurie:	From the *Myers* house?

In this example, the Myers house is invoked as a means of verifying the identity of the masked killer; this confirms the strength of the association between Michael and the property, as well as reinforcing the notion that this information forms part of a shared body of knowledge. The sense of public awareness surrounding the history of the house is consolidated by additional scenes in the same film, which show a mob of local residents amassing outside the property, and in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, where Beth confirms that the legacy of the house is common knowledge amongst those living in the town – with the exception, it seems, of her boyfriend, who has recently moved in to the property.

The association between Michael and the Myers house is emphasised by formal parallels which draw similarities between the character and the property. In the first *Halloween* film, for example, when Laurie initially approaches the house but fails to realise that Michael is lurking behind the front door, a shot showing Michael's perspective reveals that he is watching Laurie through two small windows. This creates a framing effect which is evocative of the point-of-view footage shot through the eye holes of Michael's clown mask in the opening sequence. Further parallels are subsequently established in both *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, where exterior shots showing the dilapidated white house shrouded in darkness create a visual representation which bears a distinct resemblance to Michael's pale mask looming out of the shadows.

Just as the strength of the association between Michael and his mask resulted in the object assuming the power of symbolic representation, so, too, does the association between Michael and the Myers house result in the creation of a symbolic relationship. This is evidenced by the way in which the house is perceived as a 'substitute' for Michael when the character himself is not present. In *Halloween II*, for example, upon discovering the news of Michael's killing spree and subsequent escape, the residents of Haddonfield gather outside the property and proceed to stone the house. As the

windows are smashed and the police officers struggle to contain the baying mob, it becomes clear that the members of the crowd are deflecting the anger they feel toward Michael onto the house itself.

The intimate nature of the connection between the Myers house and Michael – and the fact that this connection represents one of the most long-standing relationships in the series – creates an impression that the property assumes a privileged position of knowledge in respect to the character. This is made apparent in *Halloween: Resurrection,* where the objective of the students' investigation is to discover what the house can reveal about the secrets of Michael Myers. After Freddie has met with the group at the Hotel 2400, the film cuts to a series of interviews, where co-producer Nora asks the participants what they hope to find in the house. Amongst the more self-serving replies – such as Jen's quip about finding her way into network broadcasting – are a host of responses indicative of the belief that the property holds the key to understanding more about Michael. Donna, for example, hopes to discover more about the ways in which Michael 'embodies the politics of violence embedded in pop mythology;' Rudy hopes to find evidence to support his theory that Michael's violence was the result of a 'poor diet;' and Jim wishes to explore the notion that Michael's actions represent the manifestation of 'every murderous impulse we've ever had.'

In being perceived as the keeper of Michael's horrifying secrets, the Myers house acquires an infamous reputation within the hyperdiegetic world, where it effectively assumes the mantle of a 'cursed' or 'haunted' house.[17] Not only is the property feared by the children of Haddonfield, as demonstrated by Tommy's reluctance to approach the 'spook house' at the beginning of *Halloween,* and by Lonnie's subsequent – and failed – attempt to prove his bravado by entering the property, but it is also avoided by the adult residents, as established by the Strode family's ongoing struggle to sell the house – an issue raised in both *Halloween* and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers.* The sense of notoriety surrounding the house is reinforced by the notion that the property is somehow connected to Michael's evil – an understandable inference in consideration of the fact that the house provides the arena for Michael's first killing and is, therefore, associated with his crimes from the outset. This perception

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[17] In this way, the Myers house is representative of what Carol Clover would term a 'terrible place' – a motif which recurs frequently throughout the history of horror cinema, and in slasher films typically manifests as a place associated with human crimes and perversions. See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 30-31. Peter Hutchings has discussed the representation of the Myers house in the first *Halloween* film in specifically these terms; see Peter Hutchings, 'Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror's New Monsters,' in *Modern Gothic: A Reader,* ed. Victor Sage and Lloyd Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 74.

is not only made apparent in the aforementioned scene in *Halloween: Resurrection* where Freddie refers to the Myers house as 'the birthplace of evil in its purest form,' but is also evident in *Halloween 5*, where Dr. Loomis suggests that the house represents the place in which Michael's rage is strongest; and in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, where the fact that Danny lives in the house appears to play a determining role in his selection as Michael's successor.[18]

As established in *Halloween: Resurrection*, one consequence of the association between the house and Michael is the development of a sense of public fascination which ultimately results in the exploitation of the property. Later in the chapter I will discuss the extra-diegetic manifestation of such an exploitative process, but for the purposes of the current discussion it is the hyperdiegetic examples which take precedence. The Dangertainment producers are not the first characters within the fictional world to attempt to exploit the history of the house for their own purposes; similar examples are also found in *Halloween 5*, where Dr. Loomis uses Michael's association with the house to bait the Boogeyman into returning to the property, where a trap has been prepared; and in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, where radio host Barry Simms believes that he can increase his number of listeners by broadcasting from 'the one, the only, Myers house.'

As *Halloween: Resurrection* continues, the action shifts to an exterior location. A shot shows the Dangertainment van pulling up outside a decrepit property; the windows and doors are invariably boarded up, barred, or smashed, and the garden is filled with dying plants and trees. As a result of the preceding expositional scenes, the property can be instantly identified as the Myers house. Series viewers are also likely to recognise that the property bears a strong resemblance to the original house featured in both *Halloween* and *Halloween II*. This is the result of a meticulous process of replication designed to establish that – in the *H20* timeline – the house has remained untouched for the last twenty years.[19] Maintaining constancy in this way not only helps validate the hypertextual credentials of the film, but also enables the property to function as an efficient trigger for cognitive activity. This is due to the fact that physical constancy facilitates a straightforward process of identification. As soon as series

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[18] A similar plot device is used in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge* (Jack Sholder, 1985), where protagonist Jesse is possessed by the spirit of Freddy Krueger after moving into the house where Nancy was terrorised by the killer in the previous film. For further discussion on this point, see Tony Williams, *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 228-31.

[19] Production designer Troy Hansen discusses the process of replicating the original Myers house in *Halloween: Resurrection: Tour of Set with Production Designer* (2004).

viewers recognise the property, they are prompted to recall their existing knowledge pertaining to the Myers house and its accumulated functionality and, once this information has been accessed, the process of hypothesis-forming can begin.

However, despite the fact that the appearance of the house remains constant throughout the *H20* timeline, this is not the case over the course of the series as a whole. When introduced at the beginning of the first *Halloween* film, the Myers house is represented as a warm and inviting family home; in the fifteen-year period following Judith's murder, however, the building is abandoned and falls into disrepair. Making use of the same South Pasadena filming location, *Halloween II* presents the property in exactly the same condition as its predecessor, with no notable modifications except the damage inflicted by the angry mob. The property is next encountered in *Halloween 5*, where it remains in a dilapidated state but has been modified into a Gothic mansion – a consequence of a new filming location in Salt Lake City. The house is subject to further modification in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, which sought to redress the hypertextually-inconsistent representation of the house in *Halloween 5* by changing the property into a recently-renovated family home. As the house does not appear in *Halloween: H20*, the viewer next encounters the house in *Halloween: Resurrection*, where it is transformed back into its previously-dilapidated state.[20]

Through charting the development of the Myers house in this way, it becomes clear that the physical constancy of this motif is frequently disrupted by the practice of hypertextual modification.[21] By complicating the viewer's recognition process, such disruptions have the potential to obscure the symbolic powers accumulated by the motif over the course of the series: until the viewer is able to confirm the identity of the property, the house remains an anonymous building to which they are unable to attribute a previously-accumulated body of functions. In *Halloween 5,* for example, the building presented as the Myers house bears no resemblance to the original property featured in *Halloween* and *Halloween II*; as a result, the identity of the property is not immediately apparent.[22] In order to perceive the building's hypertextual significance,

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[20] The development of the Myers house is charted in Appendix Five.
[21] Other notable examples of properties subject to processes of hypertextual modification and elaboration include Castle Frankenstein in the Universal *Frankenstein* series, the Bates Motel in the *Psycho* series, and the Elm Street house in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series. Peter Hutchings has discussed the development of the Elm Street house in some detail, highlighting the ways in which the function of the property changes in response to processes of modification. See Hutchings, 'Tearing Your Soul Apart.'
[22] This is evidenced by fan discussions pertaining to the transformation of the Myers house. See Da Shape, 'The "Myers" House Throw Anyone Else Off?' *OHMB*, September 23, 2004, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?421-The-quot-Myers-quot-house-throw-anyone-else-off; and Living Dead Boy, 'Why Was Michael's House a Mansion?' *OHMB*, September 11, 2015, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?21789-Why-was-Michael-s-house-a-mansion.

the viewer must draw on other cues provided by the film: the dilapidated condition of the property; a note of the familiar *Halloween* music; a low-angle shot emphasising the dominating presence of the house; Dr. Loomis' presence outside the property; the suspicious way in which he regards the building; and his drawn gun designating the space as potentially dangerous. All of these cues enable the series viewer to deduce the identity of the house, but it is not until Loomis enters the building and begins to call Michael's name that confirmation is truly provided ('Michael...? Have you come home, Michael?'). The identity of the house is similarly obscured in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* – primarily due to the fact that the property has been transformed into a fully-functioning family home. When the house first appears on screen, the primary cues provided to the viewer include a sign in the garden announcing that the property has been sold by 'Strode Realty' and the revelation of the address – 45 Lampkin Lane. For dedicated series viewers in possession of a specialised framework of knowledge, these cues may be sufficient to identify the property: the task of selling the Myers house was handled by the realty company belonging to Laurie Strode's father in *Halloween* and the address of the house was revealed by a police officer in *Halloween II*. However, such subtle cues which are capable of resonating only with highly specialised viewers are unlikely to provide general assistance in the task of identification. The majority of viewers must, therefore, wait until later in the film to accomplish this task, when Tommy meets Dr. Loomis at Haddonfield Hospital and confirms that there is a new family living in the Myers house. In each case, processes of hypertextual modification necessitate a reliance on other cues to identify the property; once identified, the viewer can transpose their existing body of knowledge from one incarnation of the house to the next, thereby re-attributing the property's previously-accumulated functionality and restoring its symbolic powers.

It is not only the external appearance of the Myers house which is subject to hypertextual modification but also the interior space. This is demonstrated as *Halloween: Resurrection* continues. Once the house has been introduced to the viewer, the film proceeds to show the Dangertainment crew descending upon the property and setting up their filming equipment. The house is wired up with webcams in every room, the feed from which is monitored on a bank of screens in a previously-unseen garage. Shown meticulously placing the cameras is Charley – a member of the production crew who provides a running commentary about the best angles to use in order to emphasise most effectively the sense of suspense; as he works, the film cuts to the garage, where Nora is shown watching his progress on the monitors. Modifying the interior of the

house through the addition of webcams has a somewhat personifying effect: by endowing the property with its own 'point of view,' the cameras imply that the Myers house is 'watching' every move made within its walls – a suggestion indicative of the property's gradual development into a character in its own right. For the first time, the cameras and monitors also bestow upon the house the ability to reveal all of the secret events to which it bears witness. This is made apparent as the sequence at the Myers house continues. One of the cameras set up by Charley shows a dark figure walk across the foreground of the shot; crouched in the background is Charley, his back to the camera as he sets up more equipment. All at once, the shot moves, indicating that the figure is standing behind the camera; this is confirmed by a reverse shot which reveals a familiar torso wearing a boiler suit standing next to the equipment. Cutting back to the camera's point of view, the shot begins to move toward Charley and it becomes clear that Michael has picked up the camera and has begun his approach. A cut to the garage reveals that Nora is no longer watching the monitors, effectively leaving the action unobserved by all except the viewer and the house. Charley turns to face the approaching camera, which shows Michael pointing the legs of the camera tripod toward the unsuspecting victim. As Nora continues to remain oblivious to the events depicted on the monitor, Michael's camera shows Charley being stabbed through the throat before slumping to the floor. Employing a mix of footage from Michael's camera and shots of the action unfolding on the monitors, the film proceeds to show Michael dragging Charley's body out of the frame, a task completed just as Nora returns her attention to the screen.

By showing Michael engaging in the process of murdering Charley and moving the body, this sequence serves to confirm the suspicion that the Myers house functions as a keeper of Michael's secrets. Throughout the series, viewers – and characters within the hyperdiegetic world – have routinely discovered evidence of unseen events occurring within the house: the dead dog in *Halloween,* suggesting that Michael was present within the property at some previous point; the coffin in the attic in *Halloween 5,* brought into the house by Michael on some unobserved occasion; and the bodies of Deb, Tim, and Beth in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, arranged in the house during a period of time entirely omitted from Michael's strand of action. Due to the fact that such events occur during narrative ellipses – whether temporal or lateral – they are obscured from the viewer and are consequently perceived as 'unobserved.' However, by rendering the knowledge-acquisition process of the Myers house explicit, the presence of the webcams in *Halloween: Resurrection* makes the viewer overtly aware that the

234

house functions as a silent witness to Michael's crimes – a development which triggers a realisation that the events which occur in the property during the aforementioned narrative ellipses are not truly 'unobserved.'

As *Halloween: Resurrection* continues and the students begin to explore the house, it becomes clear that the property not only bears witness to Michael's crimes but is also a willing accomplice. To elaborate, as previously mentioned, the house provides Michael with an arena in which to exercise his murderous impulses. This is evident in *Halloween: Resurrection*, but also in *Halloween*, where he kills Judith in her room; in *Halloween 5*, when he murders police officer Charlie at the property; and in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, where the majority of the Strode family are killed at the house. In addition to providing an arena for Michael, the property also serves the purpose of concealment, thereby helping Michael to evade detection while he carries out his crimes. This is demonstrated in several scenes in *Halloween: Resurrection*, where the Boogeyman is shown hiding in the shadows of the house only metres away from his potential victims. In one example, Michael is entirely obscured behind a wall in the house, a position which enables him to burst through a mirror on the other side in order to kill Bill. The house also functions to trap those who enter, its boarded up windows and doors serving to prevent potential victims from escaping. This occurs in *Halloween: Resurrection*, when Sarah and Freddie find themselves unable to leave when Michael is in pursuit, and in *Halloween 5*, where Jamie is confined within the property and finds herself trapped inside a laundry chute. At one point in the series, the house even engages in the act of murder itself, by electrocuting John in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*.

In what appears to be a further instance of the house's conspiratorial relationship with Michael, *Halloween: Resurrection* shows participants Jim and Donna discovering a 'mass grave' hidden in the walls of the basement. However, a close inspection of the 'corpses' soon reveals that they are props, and the grave merely represents an attempt to create a more exciting show. However, although the grave is not real, when it collapses it reveals a hidden tunnel leading underneath the house. As Donna investigates, the presence of a makeshift bed, a newspaper cutting pertaining to Laurie, and a host of half-eaten rats appear to suggest that Michael has been living under the Myers house for the last twenty years – in the alternative timeline, this represents the period of time during which his whereabouts were unknown. In spite of the hypertextual processes which see the house alter drastically over the course of the series, the revelation of the living quarters in the tunnel are indicative of the fact that the property still retains its

basic functionality as Michael's home. As Dr. Loomis emphasises when imploring Debra Strode to leave the property in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*, the house is sacred to Michael, representing a point of refuge which the Boogeyman will always be more than willing to defend.

The preceding discussion demonstrates how Michael's mask and the Myers house acquire narrative significance by accumulating functionality and meaning over the course of the *Halloween* series. Through this cumulative process, these objects are not only transformed into hypertextual motifs endowed with symbolic powers but also become part of the overall series iconography. This allows the motifs to enter the public consciousness, where they subsequently gain the potential to undergo processes of commercial exploitation.[23] This is exemplified by the commodification of both the mask, which has been reproduced for sale by several special-effects companies, and, to a lesser extent, the Myers house, which has been appropriated as a cult geography destination.[24]

As the last film in the series, *Halloween: Resurrection* represents a point of hypertextual culmination which draws upon a body of narrative information stretching back over twenty years. This privileged position allows the film to take advantage of the processes of elaboration and modification which have gradually transformed merely inanimate objects into multi-functional hypertextual motifs. Furthermore, these motifs have the ability to function as cognitive triggers, initiating retrospective and prospective viewing activities which demonstrate that even the most repetitive and commodified elements of the *Halloween* series harbour complex processes of narrative construction and comprehension, albeit perceptible only to those in possession of an appropriately specialised framework of knowledge.

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[23] For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between iconographic series elements and processes of commercial exploitation, see Liz Dixon, 'Freddy's Glove: Symbolising the Monster in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* Series,' in *The Monster Imagined: Humanity's Re-Creation of Monsters and Monstrosity*, ed. Laura K. Davis and Cristina Santos (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010), 161-76.

[24] This is confirmed in *25 Years of Terror*, where crowds of *Halloween* fans are shown gathered outside the building that served as the original Myers house. One resident of the South Pasedena town where the property is located describes seeing fans burst into tears upon approaching the house, behaviour which appears to reinforce the building's status as a revered site of cultural pilgrimage.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this study, I suggested that slasher sequels had been prematurely dismissed by critics, and proposed that the processes of narrative construction within these films may be more complex than previously acknowledged. The aim of this project was, therefore, to answer the question: is there any evidence to suggest that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels are more complex than previously acknowledged? In order to achieve this aim I proposed engaging in the pursuit of three objectives:

1. To outline the historical, critical, and theoretical contexts of both the slasher sub-genre and the film sequel in order to analyse the ways in which each of these formal frameworks contributed to existing critical perceptions of the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels;

2. To draw on works within the domain of historical poetics in order to outline the processes of narrative construction involved in classical and complex films, and to combine these works with the concept of hypertextuality in order to outline the processes of narrative construction involved in film sequels;

3. To use a combined framework of historical poetics and hypertextuality to analyse the processes of narrative construction in the *Halloween* series.

In the course of completing this study, all three of these objectives have been achieved. A critical analysis of the slasher sub-genre confirmed that the negative assumptions about slasher sequels are, on some level, connected to their generic identity. However, both the existence of a well-developed body of research regarding slasher cinema and the gradual revalorisation of the sub-genre within the field of film studies indicated that the generic identity could not be held solely responsible for the persistently dismissive attitude toward the films. To continue exploring the grounds for critical dismissal I therefore shifted the focus of the study away from the slasher sequel's generic identity and toward its identity as a film sequel. By critically examining the origins and development of the format, it was possible to identify a long-standing history of negative assumptions regarding the narrative properties of the film sequel. However, despite the fact that such assumptions were shown to have created an obstacle to academic engagement, the identification of an emergent field of study regarding the

237

process of cinematic sequelisation revealed new critical approaches with the potential to provide fresh perspectives on the film sequel. Amongst these approaches, I identified a number of works drawing on Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality to shed new light on the narrative processes at work within the format, and argued that this concept may prove similarly illuminating in the case of the slasher sequel.

In order to explore this hypothesis further, it was first necessary to outline the fundamental principles of narrative theory. I therefore proceeded to draw on the work of theorists including David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Todd Berliner – all of whom are situated within the field of historical poetics – to outline the constructive processes in narratives of varying degrees of complexity. By examining both the formal and cognitive activities involved in these processes, I established that narrative complexity is not only determined by the arrangement of formal devices, but also by the mental activities required to render this arrangement coherent. With a basic framework of narrative theory in place, I proceeded to an analysis of the constructive processes in the film sequel, drawing on Stuart Henderson's Bordwell-inspired poetics to examine the processes required to restore unity to fragmented systems of continuity. In examining the practice of cinematic sequelisation from this perspective, it was possible to foreground the hypertextual characteristics inherent to the sequel, thereby drawing attention to the existence of dynamic narrative processes operating beneath the conventionalised surface of such films. Having identified both hypertextuality and historical poetics as potentially useful tools for the analysis of sequel narratives, I proceeded to argue that an analytical framework comprised of both approaches may have the potential to provide a new perspective on the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels.

Using the described framework to engage in a narrative analysis of the *Halloween* films confirmed that the grounds for this argument were well-founded. By approaching the *Halloween* series as a hypertextual system, and by drawing on historical poetics to examine the constructive principles underpinning this system, it was possible to reveal a network of dynamic narrative processes operating within the series. The foundations for this network are laid by the first *Halloween* film, which presents an essentially incomplete story and consequently offers an array of prospective opportunities for hypertextual development. With the subsequent production of *Halloween II* serving both to continue the story of *Halloween* and to transform the original film into the hypotextual progenitor of a sequential narrative, the beginnings of the hypertextual system are duly established.

238

Within the hypertextual system of the *Halloween* series, the original story is subject to continual extension, elaboration, expansion, and modification. The means by which these transformative processes are executed are both diverse and distinct, with every individual operation differentiated in some way from every other. However, despite the unique properties which set apart every instance of transformation, it is nonetheless possible to identify certain trends within the overall process of hypertextual development. These can be loosely categorised as those that enhance the overall sense of narrative coherence, those that complicate this coherence, and those that compromise the coherence of the system altogether.

Among the primary operations employed to enhance the overall sense of narrative coherence within the series are the retrospective 'filling in' of missing story information; the hypertextual development of recurrent characters; and the creation of an increasingly elaborate hyperdiegetic world. In all cases, the introduction of new information prompts the series viewer to expand their existing body of knowledge. This results in the gradual accumulation of a vast resource of information pertaining to the series. The viewer is required to retain this information in order to draw upon it as and when the narrative demands. It is only by doing so that they can recognise and react to cues such as hypertextual motifs, which rely upon the viewer's processes of memory and recall to activate their symbolic powers of representation. However, although the introduction of new information frequently serves to enhance narrative coherence, it can also have a complicating function. This is due to the fact that every piece of new information presented in the series represents an instance of removing potential ambiguity and curtailing processes of conjecture. Ambiguities within the system can stimulate processes of creative thinking and problem-solving which ultimately result in a more intensive – and more rewarding – cognitive experience. When narrative revelations serve to fill in missing pieces of information, these activities are therefore brought to a halt, and the viewer must decide whether to accept or reject the version of events offered by the narrative. If they are willing to accept the information, they must be prepared retrospectively to reconceptualise and recontextualise their previously-established knowledge in order successfully to assimilate the new version of events. This can necessitate the dismissal of existing hypotheses and the adjustment of established perceptions and schemata

Although series viewers are often prepared to demonstrate such adaptive viewing skills, particularly in the case of dedicated fans, some of the transformative processes operating within the series present a more difficult challenge. These are the

processes that compromise the overall coherence of the narrative by undermining the general integrity of the system. Instances of hypertextual inconsistency, inaccuracy, and incongruity; hypertextual developments which are seen to disrespect the hypotextual legacy; and occasions on which hypertexts are discontinuous or otherwise deviant all introduce elements of incoherence and narrative perversity which represent a threat to the process of viewer engagement. In order to overcome such threats, the series viewer must be willing to remain active, adaptive, and imaginative, employing skills of abductive reasoning and creative comprehension if they are to succeed in the activity of bringing together the fragmented pieces of the expanded narrative system in order to construct a coherent story.

The processes of narrative construction identified within the *Halloween* series can thus be seen to demonstrate complexity at both a formal and cognitive level. Sharing many of the hallmarks of the explicitly dynamic films discussed in Chapter Three, and inspiring many of the same cognitive processes that are employed in the comprehension of such films, the series represents much more than a simplistic and repetitive narrative system.

This point can be further reinforced by considering the limitations of this study. Although I focused on a particular facet of hypertextuality in the analysis of each *Halloween* film, it is significant to note that the majority of the hypertextual operations are present in all of the films. For example, although I examined the representation of the hyperdiegetic world in *Halloween 5*, such an examination could easily be extrapolated to any of the other films in the series, which all engage in similar processes of hyperdiegetic expansion and elaboration. In this way, it becomes clear that there are many more examples of hypertextual dynamism at work within the *Halloween* series than those selected for discussion in this study.

These findings suggest that there is evidence to challenge not only the existing critical assumptions about the *Halloween* sequels, but also, crucially, the critical assumptions pertaining to the slasher sequel in general. With the exception of the narratively divergent *Halloween III* and the hypertextually murderous elements of *Halloween H20*, the sequels in the *Halloween* series are generally representative of those in other slasher series, sharing many narrative properties and drawing similar criticisms for many of the same perceived deficiencies. It is therefore likely that the array of dynamic hypertextual processes shown to operate beneath the conventionalised surface of the *Halloween* sequels will also be present in other slasher sequels. To provide two indicative examples: in the *Friday the 13th* series, the hypertextual

240

modification of Jason Voorhees into an overtly supernatural character not only prompts the series viewer to engage in continual processes of retrospective reconceptualisation, but also relies on the employment of creative comprehension to preserve narrative coherence; and in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, processes of hypertextual elaboration succeed in transforming Freddy's glove from an inanimate object into a powerful representative symbol capable not only of signifying the monster's presence, but of functioning *as* the monster himself in the character's absence. In each case, it is apparent that the films in question demonstrate the same type of dynamic hypertextual processes that are evident in the *Halloween* sequels.

One of the ways this new understanding can be applied is to extrapolate the findings beyond the boundaries of slasher cinema to re-evaluate film sequels in other genres. Due to the fact that the hypertextual processes discussed within this study pertain not to the generic identity of the slasher sequel, but to its formal designation as a film sequel, the observations have the potential to be applied on a much wider scale. There are other areas of interest which may also be explored in future research. In particular, having studied the implications of the transformative relationship connecting the *Halloween* sequels, it would it would be interesting to expand this analysis even further in order to determine how the introduction of transmodal adaptations, including Curtis Richards' *Halloween* novelisations, and film remakes, including Rob Zombie's *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, impact upon the construction and comprehension of the hypertextual system.

Having engaged in a rigorous narrative analysis of the *Halloween* films and indicated how the findings of this analysis can be extrapolated to other slasher series, it is now possible to answer the research question posed at the beginning of the study by confirming that there *is* evidence to suggest that the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels are more complex than previously acknowledged. In completing the objectives necessary to answer this question, the present study has succeeded in making an original contribution to knowledge, bringing together hypertextuality and historical poetics to analyse the processes of narrative construction in slasher sequels from a new perspective which actively foregrounds their identity as film sequels. By expanding the existing understanding of slasher sequels in this way, this study serves to advance both the established field of research surrounding the slasher sub-genre and the emergent field of research surrounding the film sequel.   **Word count: 86579**

APPENDIX ONE: A TAXONOMY OF ALTERNATIVE PLOTS[1]

Area of nonconformity	Plot formation	Examples
Plots based on the number of protagonists	The polyphonic or ensemble plot: multiple protagonists, single location	*Dazed and Confused* (1993) *Magnolia* (1999) *Gosford Park* (2001) *Crash* (2004)
	The parallel plot : multiple protagonists in different times and/or spaces	*Traffic* (2000) *The Hours* (2002) *Syriana* (2005)
	The multiple personality (branched) plot	*Fight Club* (1996) *Sliding Doors* (1998) *Identity* (2003)
	The daisy chain plot: no central protagonist, one character leads to the next	*Twenty Bucks* (1993) *Slacker* (2002) *Chungking Express* (2004)
Nonlinear plots based on the re-ordering of time	The backwards plot	*Memento* (2000) *Irréversible* (2002) *The Rules of Attraction* (2002)
	The repeated action plot: one character repeats action	*Groundhog Day* (1993) *Run Lola Run* (1998)
	The repeated event plot: one action seen from multiple characters' perspectives	*Jackie Brown* (1997) *One Night at McCool's* (2001)
	The hub and spoke plot: multiple characters' story lines intersect decisively at one time and place	*Go* (1999) *21 Grams* (2003)
	The jumbled plot: scrambled sequence of events motivated artistically, by filmmaker's prerogative	*Reservoir Dogs* (1992) *Pulp Fiction* (1994) *Out of Sight* (1998)
Plots which deviate from classical rules of subjectivity, causality, and self-referential narration	The subjective plot: a character's internal (or "filtered") perspective	*Being John Malkovich* (1999) *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)
	The existential plot: minimal goal, causality, and exposition	*The Thin Red Line* (1998) *Last Days* (2005)
	The metanarrative plot: narration about the problem of movie narration	*Adaptation.* (2002) *American Splendor* (2003)

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[1] Charles Ramírez Berg, 'A Taxonomy of Alternative Plots in Recent Films: Classifying the 'Tarantino Effect',' in 'Complex Narratives,' ed. Janet Staiger, special issue, *Film Criticism* 31, no. 1-2, (Fall/Winter 2006): 5-61, EBSCOhost (23005750).

Film	Main filming location(s)	Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Haddonfield: Existing locations featured	Non-Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Non-Haddonfield: Existing locations featured
Halloween	South Pasadena	Strode house		Smith's Grove Warren County Sanitarium, Illinois	
	West Hollywood	Myers house #1		Highway, 73 miles outside Haddonfield	
		Wallace house		Phelps Garage [unseen]	
		Doyle house		Rabbit in Red Lounge [unseen]	
		Haddonfield High School			
		Haddonfield Elementary School #1			
		Haddonfield streets			
		Haddonfield cemetery			
		Nichols Hardware			
Halloween II	South Pasadena	House next door to Doyle house	Myers house #1 [Address revealed: 45 Lampkin Lane]		Smith's Grove Sanitarium [unseen]
	West Hollywood	Haddonfield back streets	Doyle house		
		Elrod house	Wallace house		
		Alice's house	Haddonfield Elementary School #1		
		Haddonfield Memorial Hospital #1	Haddonfield streets		
		Haddonfield morgue #1			
		Haddonfield town centre			
		Shop and Bag [unseen]			
		Mall [unseen]			
		Field behind Lost River Drive-in [unseen]			

| Film	Main filming location(s)	Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Haddonfield: Existing locations featured	Non-Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Non-Haddonfield: Existing locations featured
Halloween III	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Halloween 4	Salt Lake City	Rural outskirts	Haddonfield Elementary School #2	Ridgemont Federal Sanitarium	Smith's Grove Sanitarium [unseen]
		Carruthers house	Haddonfield streets	Mill Creek, four hour drive from Haddonfield	
		Ice rink [unseen]		Penney's Service Station	
		Vincent Drug [drugstore]		Highway, 119 miles outside Haddonfield	
		Haddonfield police station #1		State trooper base [unseen]	
		Earl's Bar		Highway patrol substation, four miles outside Haddonfield [unseen]	
		Park memorial			
		Meeker house			
		Power station			
		Road out of Haddonfield			
		Abandoned mine			

Film	Main filming location(s)	Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Haddonfield: Existing locations featured	Non-Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Non-Haddonfield: Existing locations featured
Halloween 5	Salt Lake City	Lost River [mentioned in Halloween II]	Road out of Haddonfield [flashback]	Cabin in the country [unseen]	State trooper base [unseen]
		Hermit's shack	Abandoned mine	Greyhound departure point [unseen]	
		House next door to Carruthers house	Carruthers house		
		Haddonfield Children's Clinic	Vincent Drug [drugstore]		
		Bus stop outside Vincent Drug	Myers house #2		
		Quick Food Mart	Haddonfield streets		
		Dale's Gas Station: 5th and Main	Haddonfield police station #2		
		Tower Farm	Haddonfield cemetery [unseen]		
		Reservoir [unseen]			
Halloween: Curse	Salt Lake City	Blankenship house	Myers house #3 [Strode house]	Loomis house #1	Smith's Grove Sanitarium
	Reshoots in Los Angeles	Haddonfield Junior College	Haddonfield Memorial Hospital #2	Bus depot	
		Strode Real Estate	Haddonfield streets	Farm outside Haddonfield	
				Radio station	
			Haddonfield [unseen]	Highway 18, near Porterville [unseen]	

245

Film	Main filming location(s)	Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Haddonfield: Existing locations featured	Non-Haddonfield: New locations introduced	Non-Haddonfield: Existing locations featured
Halloween H20	Los Angeles			Whittington/Loomis house: 4046 Cypress Pond Rd, Langdon, Illinois	
				Jimmy's house: Cypress Pond Road, Langdon, Illinois	
				Hillcrest Academy High School Campus, Summer Glen, California	
				Highway 139 Rest Area, Northern California	
				Yosemite [unseen]	
				Summer Glen town centre	
				Summer Glen restaurant	
				Beckers' house, Summer Glen [unseen]	
				Road to Hillcrest	
Halloween: Resurrection	Vancouver	Haddonfield University	Myers house #4	Grace Andersen Sanitarium	Hillcrest Academy High School Campus [flashback]
		2400 Court Motel	Haddonfield morgue #2		Road to Hillcrest [flashback]
		The Richest Rags [costume store]	Haddonfield streets		

246

Haddonfield map designed by *Halloween* fan, 'Zombie':[1]

COUNTY ROAD 63

HADDONFIELD
ILLINOIS

ASPEN AVENUE

PINE STREET

BALLPARKS

CORNHUSKERS DRIVE

HADDONFIELD
CORNHUSKERS
COUNTRY
CLUB

OAK AVENUE

HADDONFIELD
HIGH SCHOOL

FIR STREET

LAMPKIN LANE

MAPLE DRIVE

JEFFERSON STREET

DEARBORN STREET

COLUMBIA STREET

HUSKERS WAY

WILLOW STREET

HADDONFIELD PD ??

CURTIS STREET

EVERGREEN STREET

YALE STREET

HARVARD STREET

BROWN STREET

5TH AVE

4TH AVE

3RD AVE

2ND AVE

1ST AVE

EAST STREET

ORANGE GROVE

TO HIGHWAY

CHESTNUT STREET

HFDP

TOWN SQUARE

NICHOLS HARDWARE

YMCA

HADDONFIELD
DEPOT

LINCOLN MEMORIAL
PARK

BELMONT AVENUE

DALE'S GAS

MAIN STREET

TO SMITH'S GROVE

WEST STREET

BISHOP STREET

CHICAGO DRIVE

HADDONFIELD
TRIBUNE

LIBRARY

HARDIN
COUNTY
COURTHOUSE

SHERIFF'S
DEPT.

STRODE
REALTY

LOST RIVER
SHOPPING PLAZA

EAGLE DRIVE

WASHINGTON STREET

HADDONFIELD
LAWN

ILLINOIS AVENUE

HADDONFIELD COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

HADDONFIELD
CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL

LIBERTY PARK

RURAL ROUTE 9

HADDONFIELD
MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL

LOST RIVER
DRIVE-IN

LOST RIVER NATURE TRAIL

LOST RIVER ROAD

LOST RIVER

N W E S

TOWER FARM

TO LANGDON

[1] Zombie, 'A Map of Haddonfield,' *OHMB*, July 14, 2010, http://www.ohmb.net/showthread.php?18002-A-map-of-Haddonfield/.

Haddonfield map designed by artist Jim Means; this map was commissioned for the 2003 fan convention 'H25: *Halloween* Returns to Haddonfield':[2]
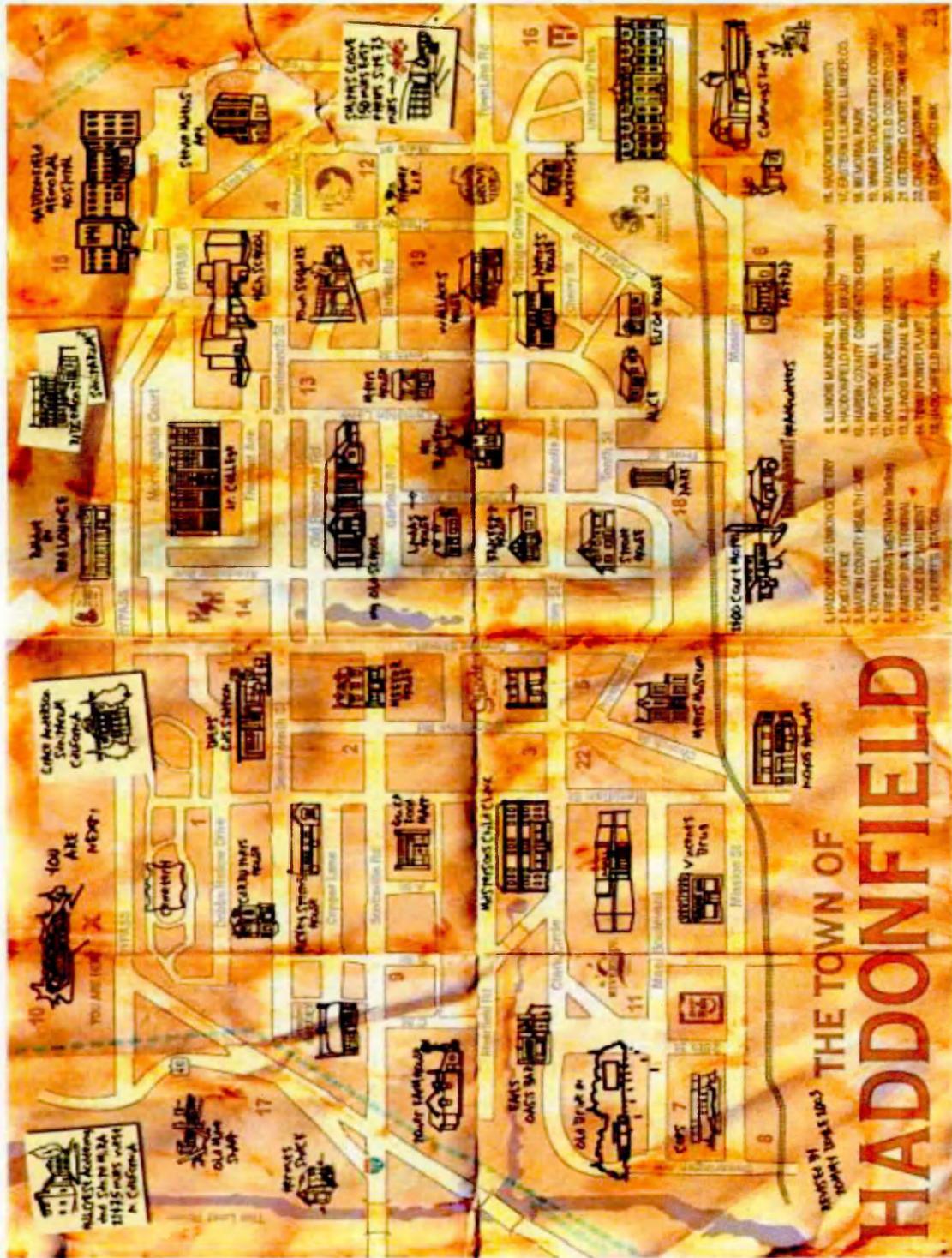
Halloween

Halloween II

Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers

Halloween 5
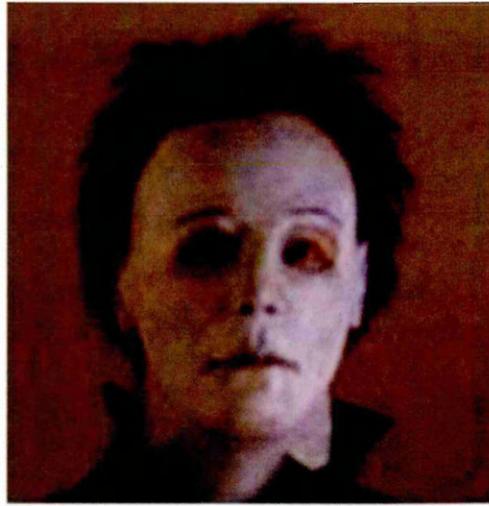
Halloween: October 1963

Halloween: October 1978

Halloween: October 1978

Halloween II: October 1978

Halloween 5: October 1989

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers: October 1995

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- *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master.* Directed by Renny Harlin. 1988. *The Nightmare on Elm Street: The Ultimate Collector's Edition.* Entertainment in Video, 2004. DVD.

- *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Dream Child.* Directed by Stephen Hopkins. 1989. *The Nightmare on Elm Street: The Ultimate Collector's Edition.* Entertainment in Video, 2004. DVD.

- *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare.* Directed by Rachel Talalay. 1991. *The Nightmare on Elm Street: The Ultimate Collector's Edition.* Entertainment in Video, 2004. DVD.

- *Freddy vs. Jason.* Directed by Ronny Yu. 2003. Entertainment in Video, 2004. DVD.

- *Wes Craven's New Nightmare.* Directed by Wes Craven. 1994. *The Nightmare on Elm Street: The Ultimate Collector's Edition.* Entertainment in Video, 2004. DVD.

- *A Nightmare on Elm Street.* [Remake]. Directed by Samuel Bayer, 2010. Warner Home Video, 2010. DVD.

April Fool's Day

- *April Fool's Day.* Directed by Fred Walton. 1986. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

- *April Fool's Day.* [Remake]. Directed by The Butcher Brothers. 2008. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

Black Christmas

- *Black Christmas.* Directed by Bob Clark. 1974. Metrodome Group, 2010. DVD.

- *Black Christmas.* [Remake]. Directed by Glen Morgan. 2006. Twentieth Century Fox, 2007. DVD.

Burning, The. Directed by Tony Mylam. 1981. Vipco, 2002. DVD.

Candyman

- *Candyman.* Directed by Bernard Rose. 1992. Columbia Tristar Home Video, 2000. DVD.

- *Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh.* Directed by Bill Condon. 1995. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002. DVD.

- *Candyman: Day of the Dead*. Directed by Turi Meyer. 1999. Warner Home Video, 2003. DVD.

Cheerleader Massacre. Directed by Jim Wynorski. 2003. Film 2000, 2003. DVD.

Child's Play

- *Child's Play*. Directed by Tom Holland. 1988. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Child's Play 2*. Directed by John Lafia. 1990. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Child's Play 3*. Directed by Jack Bender. 1991. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Bride of Chucky*. Directed by Ronnie Yu. 1998. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Seed of Chucky*. Directed by Don Mancini. 2004. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Curse of Chucky*. Directed by Don Mancini. 2013. *Chucky: The Complete Collection*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

- *Cult of Chucky*. Directed by Don Mancini, forthcoming 2017.

Christmas Evil. Directed by Lewis Jackson. 1980. Arrow Films, 2012. DVD.

Final Destination

- *Final Destination*. Directed by James Wong. 2000. *Final Destination: Thrillogy*. Entertainment in Video, 2003. DVD.

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- *Final Destination 3*. Directed by James Wong. 2006. *Final Destination: Thrillogy*. Entertainment in Video, 2003. DVD.

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- *Final Destination 5*. Directed by Steven Quale. 2011. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

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- *Friday the 13th Part III*. Directed by Steve Miner. 1982. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter*. Directed by Joseph Zito. 1984. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*. Directed by Danny Steinmann. 1985. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Jason Lives: Friday the 13th Part VI*. Directed by Tom McLoughlin. 1986. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood*. Directed by John Carl Buechler. 1988. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*. Directed by Rob Hedden. 1989. *Friday the 13th: From Crystal Lake to Manhattan Ultimate Edition DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.
- *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday*. Directed by Adam Marcus. 1993. Pathé, 2003. DVD.
- *Jason X*. Directed by James Isaac. 2001. Entertainment in Video, 2003. DVD.
- *Freddy vs. Jason*. See *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.
- *Friday the 13th*. [Remake]. Directed by Marcus Nispel. 2009. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Funhouse, The. Directed by Tobe Hooper. 1981. Arrow Films, 2007. DVD.

Halloween
- *Halloween*. Directed by John Carpenter. 1978. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.
- *Halloween II*. Directed by Rick Rosenthal. 1981. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.
- *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*. Directed by Tommy Lee Wallace. 1982. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

- *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*. Directed by Dwight H. Little. 1988. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

- *Halloween 5: The Revenge of Michael Myers*. Directed by Dominique Othenin-Girard and Arthur Speer. 1989. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

- *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*. Directed by Joe Chappelle. 1995. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

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- *Halloween H20: 20 Years Later*. Directed by Steve Miner. 1998. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

- *Halloween: Resurrection*. Directed by Rick Rosenthal. 2002. *Halloween: The Complete Collection*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

- *Halloween*. [Remake]. Directed by Rob Zombie, 2007. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

- *Halloween II*. [Remake sequel]. Directed by Rob Zombie, 2009. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010. DVD.

Happy Birthday to Me. Directed by J. Lee Thompson. 1981. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

He Knows You're Alone. Directed by Armand Mastroianni. 1980. Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.

House on Sorority Row

- *House on Sorority Row, The*. Directed by Mark Rosman. 1983. Boulevard Entertainment, 2002. DVD.

- *Sorority Row*. [Remake]. Directed by Stuart Hendler. 2009. Entertainment One, 2010. DVD.

I Know What You Did Last Summer

- *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. Directed by Jim Gillespie. 1997. Entertainment in Video, 1999. DVD.

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- *I'll Always Know What You Did Last Summer*. Directed by Sylvian White. 2006. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Maniac

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- *Maniac*. [Remake]. Directed by Franck Khalfoun. 2012. Metrodome Distribution, 2013. DVD.

My Bloody Valentine

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- *My Bloody Valentine 3D*. [Remake] Directed by Patrick Lussier. 2009. Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Pandemonium. Directed by Alfred Sole. 1982. [Unavailable]

Prom Night

- *Prom Night*. Directed by Paul Lynch. 1980. *Prom Night: The Complete Collection*. Network, 2009. DVD.
- *Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night II*. Directed by Bruce Pittman. 1987. *Prom Night: The Complete Collection*. Network, 2009. DVD.
- *Prom Night III: The Last Kiss*. Directed by Ron Oliver. 1989. *Prom Night: The Complete Collection*. Network, 2009. DVD.
- *Prom Night IV: Deliver Us from Evil*. Directed by Clay Borris. 1992. *Prom Night: The Complete Collection*. Network, 2009. DVD.
- *Prom Night*. [Remake]. Directed by Nelson McCormick. 2008. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

Prowler, The. Directed by Joseph Zito. 1981. Blue Underground, 2003. DVD.

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- *Psycho II*. Directed by Richard Franklin. 1983. *Psycho Collection I-IV*. Universal Pictures UK, 2011. DVD.
- *Psycho III*. Directed by Anthony Perkins. 1986. *Psycho Collection I-IV*. Universal Pictures UK, 2011. DVD.
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- *Psycho*. [Remake]. Directed by Gus Van Sant. 1998. Universal Pictures UK, 1999. DVD.

261

Redeemer: Son of Satan, The. Directed by Constantine S. Gochis. 1978. Code Red, 2010. DVD.

Return to Horror High. Directed by Bill Froehlich. 1987. Boulevard Entertainment, 2010. DVD.

Saw

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- *Saw V.* Directed by David Hackl. 2008. Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

- *Saw VI.* Directed by Kevin Greutert. 2009. Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2010. DVD.

- *Saw 3D: The Final Chapter.* Directed by Kevin Greutert. 2010 Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2011. DVD.

- *Saw: Legacy.* Directed by The Spierig Brothers, forthcoming 2017.

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- *Scary Movie 4.* Directed by David Zucker. 2006. Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

- *Scary Movie 5.* Directed by Malcolm D. Lee. 2013. Entertainment in Video, 2013. DVD.

Scream

- *Scream.* Directed by Wes Craven. 1996. *Scream Trilogy.* Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

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  Entertainment, 2005. DVD.
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  1989. *Silent Night, Deadly Night: Three-Disc Set*. Lionsgate Home
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- *Silent Night, Deadly Night 4: Initiation*. Directed by Brian Yuzna. 1990.
  Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- *Silent Night, Deadly Night 5: The Toy Maker*. Martin Kitrosser. 1991. Lionsgate
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- *Silent Night*. [Remake]. Directed by Steven C. Miller. 2012. Kock Media, 2013.
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Sleepaway Camp

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- *Sleepaway Camp II: Unhappy Campers*. Directed by Michael A. Simpson. 1988.
  Sleepaway Camp: 3 DVD Box Set. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.
- *Sleepaway Camp III: Teenage Wasteland*. Directed by Michael A. Simpson.
  1989. *Sleepaway Camp: 3 DVD Box Set*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004.
  DVD.
- *Return to Sleepaway Camp*. Directed by Robert Hiltzik. 2008. Magnolia Home
  Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

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  Slumber Party Massacre Collection. Shout! Factory, 2010. DVD.
- *Slumber Party Massacre II*. Directed by Deborah Brock. 1987. *The Slumber*
  Party Massacre Collection. Shout! Factory, 2010. DVD.

- *Slumber Party Massacre III*. Directed by Sally Mattison. 1990. *The Slumber Party Massacre Collection*. Shout! Factory, 2010. DVD.

Sorority House Massacre

- *Sorority House Massacre*. Directed by Carol Frank. 1986. Prism, 2003. DVD.
- *Sorority House Massacre II*. Directed by Jim Wynorski. 1990. New Concorde, 2003. DVD.

Student Bodies. Directed by Mickey Rose. 1981. Legend Films and Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

Terror Train. Directed by Roger Spottiswoode. 1980. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Toolbox Murders

- *Toolbox Murders, The*. Directed by Dennis Donnelly. 1978. Vipco, 2003. DVD.
- *Toolbox Murders*. Directed by Tobe Hooper. 2004. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2005. DVD. [Remake].

Urban Legend

- *Urban Legend*. Directed by Jamie Blanks. 1998. Columbia Tristar Home Video, 1999. DVD.
- *Urban Legends: Final Cut*. Directed by John Ottman. 2000. Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 2001. DVD.
- *Urban Legends: Bloody Mary*. Directed by Mary Lambert. 2005. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Wacko. Directed by Greydon Clark. 1982. Pegasus, 2002. DVD.

When a Stranger Calls

- *When a Stranger Calls*. Directed by Fred Walton. 1979. Lighthouse, 2000. DVD.
- *When a Stranger Calls*. [Remake] Directed by Simon West. 2006. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

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21 Grams. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. 2003. MGM Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

A Fish Called Wanda. Directed by Charles Crichton. 1988. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

A Good Day to Die Hard. Directed by John Moore. 2013. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2013. DVD.

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein. Directed by Charles Barton. 1948. *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein/Meet The Mummy*. Universal Pictures UK, 2006. DVD.

Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy. Directed by Charles Lamont. 1955. *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein/Meet The Mummy*. Universal Pictures UK, 2006. DVD.

Adaptation. Directed by Spike Jonze. 2002. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

Adventures of Kathlyn, The. Francis J. Grandon. 1913. [Lost]

Alien. Directed by Ridley Scott. 1979. *Alien Quadrilogy*. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

Aliens. Directed by James Cameron. 1986. *Alien Quadrilogy*. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

All About Eve. Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. 1950. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

All I Desire. Directed by Douglas Sirk. 1953. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

American Pie. Directed by Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz. 1999. *American Pie: 1, 2, 3, & Reunion*. Universal Pictures UK, 2012. DVD.

American Splendor. Directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. 2003. Optimum Releasing, 2004. DVD.

Animatrix, The. Directed by Peter Chung, Andy Jones, Yoshiaki Kawajiri, Takeshi Koike, Mahiro Maeda, Koji Morimoto, and Shinichiro Watanabe. 2003. *The Ultimate Matrix Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.

Back to the Future. Directed by Robert Zemeckis. 1985. *Back to the Future Trilogy*. Universal Pictures UK, 2002. DVD.

Batman. Directed by Tim Burton. 1989. *Batman: The Motion Picture Anthology 1989-1997*. Warner Home Video, 2009. DVD.

Being John Malkovich. Directed by Spike Jonze. 1999. Universal Pictures UK. 2000. DVD.

Bird with the Crystal Plumage. Directed by Dario Argento. 1970. Blackhorse Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Blazing the Overland Trail. Directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet. 1956. [Unavailable]

Blood and Black Lace. Directed by Mario Bava. 1964. VCI Entertainment, 2008. DVD.

Blood Feast. Directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis. 1963. *The Blood Trilogy*. Something Weird Video, 2000. DVD.

Bride of Frankenstein. Directed by James Whale. 1935. *Frankenstein Triple*. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

Butterfly Effect, The. Directed by Eric Bress. 2004. Icon Home Entertainment, 2007. DVD.

Chungking Express. Directed by Wong Kar-wai. 2004. Artificial Eye, 2009. DVD.

Citizen Kane. Directed by Orson Welles. 1941. Universal Pictures UK, 2004. DVD.

Cobra. Directed by George P. Cosmatos. 1986. Warner Home Video, 1999. DVD.

Color Me Blood Red. Directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis. 1965. *The Blood Trilogy*. Something Weird Video, 2000. DVD.

Crash. Directed by Paul Haggis. 2004. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Curse of Frankenstein, The. Directed by Terence Fisher. 1957. DVD. Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.

Daughters Courageous. Directed by Michael Curtiz. 1939. *Four Daughters Movie Series Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

Dazed and Confused. Directed by Richard Linklater. 1993. Criterion, 2006. DVD.

Deep Red. Directed by Darion Argento. 1975. Blue Underground, 2010. DVD.

Déjà Vu. Directed by Tony Scott. 2006. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2007. DVD.

Die Hard. Directed by John McTiernan. 1988. *Die Hard Trilogy*. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Dirty Harry. Directed by Don Siegel. 1971. *Dirty Harry Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2009. DVD.

Don Q, Son of Zorro. Directed by Donald Crisp. 1925. *The Mark of Zorro/Don Q Son of Zorro*. Kino International, 2002. DVD.

Donnie Darko. Directed by Richard Kelly. 2001. Prism, 2004. DVD.

Dracula. Directed by Tod Browning. 1931. *Dracula Triple*. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

Dracula. Directed by Terence Fisher. 1958. DVD. Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.

Dracula A.D. 1972. Directed by Alan Gibson. 1972. Warner Home Video, 2005. DVD.

Dracula Has Risen from the Grave. Directed by Freddie Francis. 1968. Warner Home Video, 2013. DVD.

Edge of Tomorrow. Directed by Doug Liman. 2014. Warner Home Video, 2014 DVD.

Enter the Matrix. Directed by The Wachowski Brothers. Atari. 2003. VG.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. Directed by Michel Gondry. 2004. Momentum Pictures, 2004. DVD.

Evil Dead, The. Directed by Sam Raimi. 1981. *The Evil Dead Trilogy*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

Exorcist III, The. Directed by William Peter Blatty. 1990. *The Exorcist: The Complete Anthology*. Warner Home Video, 2005. DVD.

Exorcist II: The Heretic. Directed by John Boorman. 1977. *The Exorcist: The Complete Anthology*. Warner Home Video, 2005. DVD.

Exploits of Elaine, The. Directed by Louis J. Gasnier, George B. Seitz, Leopold Wharton, and Theodore Wharton. 1914. [Unavailable]

Fanatic. Directed by Silvio Narrizzano. 1965. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Fight Club. Directed by David Fincher. 1996. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

First Blood. Directed by Ted Kotcheff. 1982. *Rambo Trilogy*. Momentum Pictures, 2005. DVD.

Four Daughters. Directed by Michael Curtiz., 1938. *Four Daughters Movie Series Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

Four Mothers. Directed by William Keighley. 1941. *Four Daughters Movie Series Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

Four Wives. Directed by Michael Curtiz. 1939. *Four Daughters Movie Series Collection*. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

Frankenstein. Directed by James Whale. 1931. *Frankenstein Triple*. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell. Directed by Terence Fisher. 1974. Simply Media, 2003. DVD.

Frankenstein Created Woman. Directed by Terence Fisher. 1967. *The Hammer Collection*. Optimum Releasing, 2006. DVD.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man. Directed by Roy William Neill. 1943. Universal Pictures UK, 2008. DVD.

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed. Directed by Terence Fisher. 1969. Warner Home Video, 2004. DVD.

Go. Directed by Doug Liman. 1999. UCA Catalogue, 2004. DVD.

Godfather, The. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. 1972. *The Godfather DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Godfather Part II, The. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. 1974. *The Godfather DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Godfather Part III, The. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. 1990. *The Godfather DVD Collection*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Golem, The. Directed by Paul Wegener and Henrik Galeen. 1915. [Lost]

Golem and the Dancing Girl, The. Directed by Paul Wegener. 1917. [Lost]

Gosford Park. Directed by Robert Altman. 2001. Entertainment in Video, 2002. DVD.

Groundhog Day. Directed by Harold Ramis. 1993. Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 2000. DVD.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Directed by Chris Columbus. 2001. *Harry Potter: 7-DVD Set*. Warner Home Video, 2011. DVD.

His Trust. Directed by D. W. Griffith. 1911. *The Birth of a Nation and the Civil War Films of D. W. Griffith*. Kino on Video, 2002. DVD.

His Trust Fulfilled. Directed by D. W. Griffith. 1911. *The Birth of a Nation and the Civil War Films of D. W. Griffith*. Kino on Video, 2002. DVD.

Horror of Frankenstein, The. Directed by Jimmy Sangster. 1970. *The Hammer Collection*. Optimum Releasing, 2006. DVD.

Hours, The. Directed by Stephen Daldry. 2002. Optimum Home Entertainment, 2011. DVD.

House of Dracula. Directed by Erle C. Kenton. 1945. *Dracula Triple*. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

House of Frankenstein. Directed by Erle C. Kenton. 1944. *Frankenstein Triple*. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

Inception. Directed by Christopher Nolan. 2010. Warner Home Video, 2010. DVD.

Identity. Directed by James Mangold. 2003. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Iron Mask, The. Directed by Allan Dwan. 1929. Elstree Hill, 2010. DVD.

Irréversible. Directed by Gaspar Noé. 2002. Tartan Video, 2003. DVD.

Jackie Brown. Directed by Quentin Tarantino. 1997. Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2001. DVD.

Jaws. Directed by *Steven Spielberg*. 1975. Universal Pictures UK, 2004. DVD.

Jaws 3-D. Directed by Joe Alves. 1983. *Jaws 2, 3, & The Revenge*. Universal Pictures UK, 2009. DVD.

Jaws: The Revenge. Directed by Joseph Sargent. 1987. *Jaws 2, 3, & The Revenge*. Universal Pictures UK, 2009. DVD.

Kalifornia. Directed by Dominic Sena. 1993. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002. DVD.

Karate Kid, The. Directed by John G. Avildsen. 1984. *The Karate Kid: The Movies*. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010. DVD.

Karate Kid Part II, The. Directed by John G. Avildsen. 1986. *The Karate Kid: The Movies*. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010. DVD.

Killers, The. Directed by Robert Siodmak. 1946. Universal Pictures UK, 2007. DVD.

Lady in the Lake. Directed by Robert Montgomery. 1947. Warner Home Video, 2006. DVD.

Last Days. Directed by Gus Van Sant. 2005. Optimum Releasing, 2006. DVD.

Last House on the Left, The. Directed by Wes Craven. 1972. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Laura. Directed by Otto Preminger. 1944. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2012. DVD.

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