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“IT HURTS ’CAUSE YOU’RE IN MY WORLD NOW, BITCH”: GOTHIC FEATURES IN THE 1984 AND 2010 VERSIONS OF A *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*

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Abstract

This article discusses the 1984 slasher film *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and its 2010 remake emphasizing the presence of recurrent tropes both in Gothic fiction and slasher film such as transgression, excess, disrupted family structures, the monster, the haunting return of the past, and the terrible place. A literature review for slasher film theory precedes a detailed analysis of the symbolic and thematic connections between the opening and closing sequences in each film. The conclusion highlights the remake’s resignification of the original movie’s Gothic legacy by updating its supernatural monster into an earthly threat and by endowing its heroine with the strength and proactivity necessary for the final confrontation with the monster.

Keywords: *A Nightmare on Elm Street*; Horror cinema; Slashers; Gothic fiction.

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Popular films, then, respond to interpretation as at once the personal dreams of their makers and the collective dreams of their audiences – the fusion made possible by the shared structures of a common ideology.

Robin Wood in *An Introduction to the American Horror Film*

Film audiences from the late 1970s-early 1980s witnessed a remarkable level of explicit violence due to the emergence of the slasher, a subset within horror cinema characterized by the presence of a psychotic killer responsible for multiple murders whose face is invariably covered, leaving victims and audience members alike in suspense regarding the murderer's identity and motivation. Attempts to identify the predecessors of the slasher have pointed to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Clover 23, Groom 135), Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (Carrera-Garrido 242), Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Christensen 29). Despite the different views, scholars identify John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) as the first exemplary of the genre, inasmuch as this is the first movie whose plot presents a mysterious serial killer who slays a group of teenagers, leaving behind one character with whom he has a supposedly definitive confrontation. This type of character became known as the *final girl*, a term coined by Carol J. Clover in *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, a 1992 seminal work for horror cinema studies, particularly for slashers and rape-revenge films.

The extensive list of movies that follow the slasher convention either to the letter or with variations includes *Prom Night* (1980), *Terror Train* (1980), *Happy Birthday to Me* (1981), *The Burning* (1981), *My Bloody Valentine* (1980), *Hell Night* (1981), *Sleepaway Camp* (1983), *The Slumber Party Massacre* (1982), *The House on Sorority Row* (1983) and *April Fool's Day* (1986). Nonetheless, the consolidation of the genre from the mid-1980s onwards occurred due to the rise of *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, franchises that form the 'Holy Trinity of the 1980s slasher' (Carrera-Garrido 243). Despite the formula's exhaustion, the slasher gained momentum in the 1990s and 2000s due to new franchises such as *Scream* (4 movies), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (3 movies), *Final Destination* (5), *Hatchet* (4) and *Wrong Turn* (6). Remakes and reboots have also played an important role in the perpetuation of the genre, as the releases of *Black Christmas* (2006), *Friday the 13th* (2009), *Halloween* (2007, 2018), *My Bloody Valentine* (2009), *Prom Night* (2008) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003) evidence, corroborating the notion that slasher film remains an attractive and profitable genre in the American movie industry.

Slashers have inspired interdisciplinary scholarship over the past four decades, including a few studies that draw on Gothic theoretical and critical perspectives. The Gothic and the slasher share some crucial features, insofar as both have been dismissed as superficial, formulaic narratives that underscore visual and metaphorical darkness often approached from a psychoanalytical perspective. The link is further corroborated by the slashers' exploitation of visually sensational aspects of the Gothic, such as seclusion, isolation, inexplicable violence and (predominantly female) sexual anxieties.

Many authors who have focused on slashers from a Gothic perspective have done so through *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984), the first film in a franchise that has yielded seven movies, an anthology television series titled *Freddy's Nightmares* (1988-1990), a crossover with the *Friday the 13th* universe (*Freddy vs Jason*, directed by Ronny Yu in 2003), and a remake directed by Samuel Bayer in 2010, in addition to fan-made movies and apparitions in video games (Hutchings 233-4). *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was an innovation in the slasher pantheon by adding an even more supernatural twist to the conventional plot structure: previous slasher killers such as Michael Myers and Jason Voorhees are flesh-and-blood threats in their diegetic worlds, whereas Freddy Krueger, the monstrous villain from *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, strikes in potentially lethal dreams. Thus, when placed alongside its siblings, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* stands out as a slasher franchise with unique Gothic qualities.

Two works that have exploited the Gothic features in Craven's film are Kendall R. Phillips' 'Craven's Gothic Form: Nightmares, Screams, and Monsters,' part of a 2012 study on the oeuvres of Craven, George Romero and John Carpenter, and David Kingsley's 2016 article 'Elm Street's Gothic Roots: Unearthing Incest in Wes Craven's 1984 Nightmare.' Even though both authors see Freddy's saga as a quintessentially Gothic narrative, they emphasize different points. Whereas Phillips stresses the most obvious Gothic tropes in the 1984 *Nightmare* and its 1985 sequel, such as the return of a past crime and the dangerous intersection of the world of day and the world of night, Kingsley relies on a psychoanalytical approach to defend the hypothesis that Nancy Thompson, *Nightmare's* final girl, and her father, Lieutenant Donald Thompson, nurture a mutual incestuous desire initiated in Nancy's childhood that the rise of Freddy Krueger materializes in the present.

This article intends to further the analysis of Gothic aspects in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* by comparing the 1984 original and its 2010 remake towards a fuller understanding of the Gothic and its resignification in slasher films. In order to do so, the reading presented here points out similarities and differences between the two films regarding their plots and visual, highlighting features, such as transgression, the presence of supernatural and natural forces, excesses of the imagination, religious and human evil, mental disintegration, the conflicting binaries dream versus reality and insanity versus reason, and the presence of the return of the past, the monstrous character and the *locus horribilis*, three elements that constitute the main convention in Gothic narratives when coordinated to produce fear and its variants as aesthetic effects (França 118). Methodological procedures include three steps: firstly, an analysis of the symbols and themes present in both opening sequences; secondly, how the final dream in each version comes full cycle with what the initial scenes suggest; finally, the treatment each movie gives to Freddy Krueger's background, seeing that in the first movie he is a novelty whereas in the remake he holds the status of a familiar pop icon.

Vera Dika's pioneer analysis of the slasher identifies narrative elements recurrent in films released between 1978 and 1981: the *depersonalization of the killer* due to his hidden face (the serial killer's predominant maleness is pivotal

for Dika and Clover alike), the *suggestion of his presence* through shadows, dark clothes and focalizations that barely reveal his body, and the *adoption of the I-camera*, simultaneously preventing us from seeing the killer and allowing us to see the world as he does. The *sexual tension* underpinning the typical slasher plot is also notable, and it involves a *heroine* who is not only "elevated from the rest of the young community because she can see and use violence, but also [because] she is less extensively held as the sexual object of the killer's gaze" (Dika 91). The *loss of power of traditional authority figures* such as parents, teachers, psychiatrists and policemen is also paramount, and so is the link between the heroine and the killer, who are always part of the same community. Finally, Dika divides the slasher into two parts, the first presenting a past event in which the killer is driven to madness or is seen as already mad because of an extreme traumatic experience, and the second taking place in the present and portraying the killer's return and pursuit for revenge.

While this scenario fits perfectly the plots of *Prom Night*, *Halloween*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Friday the 13th* and *Happy Birthday to Me* (although the killers in the two latter films are women), the 1984 *A Nightmare on Elm Street* perverts some of these elements, a fact James Kendrick relies on to describe the movie as an "interstitial text" between the slasher and demonic possession (cf Kingsley 145). Despite the blatant sexual tension, parental protective failures, and the past event/present event structure, Freddy's depersonalization is toned down by his (burnt) face, ability to speak and kinky sense of humor, elements unseen in slashers up to that point that bestow on the character an unprecedented individuality.

Dika also notes that "[t]he heroine is valued over the young community because she displays personal restraint not only in sexual matters but also in her family or professional relationships," (98) a notion Carol J. Clover capitalizes on in her own analysis of slashers. Clover turns Dika's 'heroine' into the *final girl*, the character who "encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger. Fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified" (Clover 35). This sequence is known among fans as the "body count", a device presented in the first *Halloween* film and expanded by the more abundant and creative killings in the *Friday the 13th* movies. This is not present in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* though, since the teenagers confront Freddy in their sleep, which makes death a more private experience. The only connection between the final girl and one of her dead friends in *Nightmare* is found in the sequence that describes Nancy falling asleep in class the day after her friend Tina's violent murder. In her nightmare, Nancy sees an invisible force dragging Tina's body in a plastic bag and leaving behind a trace of blood on the school corridor floor.

The juxtaposition of Nancy and Tina exemplifies Dika's and Clover's postulates about the heroine/final girl. Although both are facing the hardships entailed by the beginning of adulthood, especially the burden of a broken family (both girls are raised by single mothers) and latent sexual desire, there is a paramount difference between them: whereas Tina is sexually active, Nancy is

not. Clover claims that part of what entitles the final girl to ultimate survival is her sexual ambiguity, translated in her “smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance, [which] set her apart from the other girls” (40). The different attitudes both girls display towards sex is notable in a sequence that intertwines Tina and Rod’s sexual intercourse with Glen’s frustrated attempts of convincing Nancy to do the same.

The final girl has become such a remarkable horror trope that non-slashers have paid a parodic tribute to it, oftentimes relying on the *mise en abyme* technique. *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* (Scott Glosserman, 2006) is a false documentary depicting a young man’s efforts to become an actual slasher serial killer. In the movie’s diegetic world, Michael Myers, Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees are real-life people (and Vernon’s idols), and Camp Crystal Lake, Haddonfield and Springwood are actual places. Vernon is concerned that his practice will not be complete due to the absence of a final girl, a role that the female reporter making the documentary turns out to be fit to perform due to her virginity. *Diary of the Dead* (George Romero, 2007) is a found footage film in which a zombie outbreak is recorded by a group of cinema undergraduates whose end-of-course assignment is a horror movie. While shooting the film within the film, the director orders his lead actress to run in the forest while screaming and stumbling. She refuses to do so while she points out it is a combination of horror movie clichés, but in a later sequence, she runs, screams and stumbles “for real” while chased by zombies. The sixth movie in the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise, *New Nightmare* (Wes Craven, 1994), also extends the existence of the final girl to the “real world” through the premise that now Freddy Krueger is attacking no other than Heather Langenkamp, the actress who played the role of Nancy in the 1980s. Langenkamp plays herself in the film, and is given a fictional husband (who is visited by Freddy in a dream and dies) and a son. Finally, a movie aptly entitled *The Final Girls* (Todd Strauss-Schulson, 2015) tells the story of a contemporary group of teenagers who end up entering the 1980s slasher they are watching and only manage to survive due to their knowledge of the slasher conventions, which obviously includes the final girl and her survival techniques.

Clover’s work methodology initially includes a structural analysis of the slasher, in a fashion similar to Dika’s. Clover stresses the presence of the I-camera that allows the objectifying male gaze and the phallic character of the murderer’s weapon. The notion that “[k]nives and needles, like teeth, beaks, fangs and claws, are personal extensions of the body that bring attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace,” (Clover 32) is confirmed in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, seeing that the killer’s weapon is literally an extension of his body that may be used for sexually sadistic purposes prior to killing. This is best exemplified by an iconic scene present in both versions in which Nancy falls asleep in the bathtub and Freddy’s threatening glove emerges from the water between her spread legs.

Despite their similarities, the 1984 and the 2010 *Nightmares* are significantly different, as the comparative analysis of the two opening sequences will demonstrate from this point on. The initial sequence in the first *Nightmare*

is characterized by a highly supernatural and symbolic nature. The eye of the camera shows a mysterious man who pants heavily while building something that turns out to be a glove with razors for fingers. His hands are dirty, his face is not revealed, and he seems to be in a secluded, underground location where water drips from the ceiling and onto his working desk. Right afterwards a young blond girl covered in sweat and with a terrified look runs along a corridor wearing a white nightgown. The same male voice heard in the initial panting whispers the word "Tina", and as she turns around she sees a sheep.

The next frame shows Tina walking into a dark boiling room, where she is persecuted by the mysterious man. He corners her and raises his gloved right hand to attack her but seemingly fails to do so because she screams and wakes up, still sweating and still wearing her white nightgown. No details of her bedroom are visible at this point, other than a crucifix hanging on the wall above her bed. Tina's mother enters the room to check on the girl, followed by a nasty-looking man who asks the woman if she is "coming back to the sack". The mother points out four slashes on the girl's nightgown and leaves the room, at which point Tina grabs the crucifix from the wall, and the camera shifts to a morning scene showing a group of little girls wearing white dresses and jumping rope while singing a nursery rhyme whose lyrics say "one, two, Freddy's coming for you; three, four, better lock your door; five, six, grab your crucifix; seven, eight, gonna stay up late; nine, ten, never sleep again". The camera then shows a car, and we see Tina in it with her friends Nancy and Glen going to school.

The abundant metaphors of purity in this sequence include the whiteness of Tina's nightgown, the simple decoration in her bedroom, the sheep, and the ponytailed girls in white jumping rope. However, the virginal purity Tina seems to stand for is at risk in many instances: in her dreams she is chased by a phallic monster who wants to kill her, whereas at home she seems to be subjected to the predatory presence of unknown men her mother brings over to spend the night. In practical terms that purity no longer exists though, given that later in the film we learn that she and her boyfriend Rod are sexually active.

The sexuality both Tina and her mother display contribute toward establishing the typical slasher dynamic: the mother's pursuit for sex makes her unavailable to defend her child, reinforcing the notion that slasher parents are usually absent somehow, be it because they are dead, away on a trip, at work, divorced or simply alienated for some reason. In her turn, Tina takes advantage of her mother's lack of vigilance and pursues her own sexual satisfaction. Considering that "[k]illing those who engage in unauthorized sex amounts to a generic imperative of the slasher film" (Clover 34), Rod and Tina – a fifteen-year-old with an implied Catholic background having pre-marital sex – become ideal targets for Freddy.

Two moments of the sequence presented above – Tina being in Freddy's arms and waking up in bed right before dying, and the girls jumping rope – suggest a narrative device that became paramount for the entire *Nightmare* franchise: the shift from dream to reality through scenes which may take place in the real world in spite of their oneiric feel, or actions that unfold in the dreamworld despite their

initial realism. This echoes Judith Halberstam's claim that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* "not only exemplifies the ways in which horror film exploits the tension between representation and reality, it actually makes this tension into its primary theme" (145). The mother's remark about the slashes on the girl's nightgown – that Tina should either trim her nails or stop having such nightmares – sets the tone for the anguish the teenagers must endure deriving from the disbelief with which their claims are met by adults. Thus, when Tina eventually dies, no one believes Rod when he swears his innocence, for besides being the only other person in the room when the girl died, he was covered in blood when that happened.

Consonantly, Nancy's mother insists in a later scene that her daughter must go to sleep despite the girl's claim that doing so could result in her death. Mrs. Thompson's overall response to Nancy's pleas is heavy drinking, having the windows barred and locking the door to prevent the girl from escaping, which turns Nancy into a modern version of the heroine imprisoned in a haunted building, a Gothic trope present in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Stoker's *Dracula*, to mention a few. Another connection between Craven's slasher and Stoker's vampire novel is the crucifix hanging above Tina's bed. This detail may have been inserted to accentuate the morality in which slashers are embedded or simply to make a connection between the scene and the lyrics to the nursery rhyme. In any case, Tina's resorting to the crucifix as a protective device correlates Freddy and Dracula as two Gothic monsters who feed on vital energy and relish in their victims' suffering and guilt.

The sequence that opens the original *Nightmare* merely suggests Freddy's ominous presence through shadows of his body on the wall and the introduction of the fedora hat and the razor glove, elements that fulfill part of the slasher serial killer convention that includes a covered face and a phallic cold weapon. Suggesting Freddy as a novelty was not an option for the 2010 remake, seeing that by that point Freddy Krueger was a well-known character, and viewers of the original film – arguably a significant portion of the audience for the new version – would not accept meaningful characterization changes. However, the 2010 *Nightmare*'s first sequence, split here into two parts for the sake of analysis, is also built upon suggestions.

In the first half of this opening sequence, actors and crew members credits are shown as if chalk-written on the floor, displayed in a handwriting that resembles that of a child learning how to write. As the credits roll, there are scenes of children playing hopscotch and jumping rope, in one of the many clear references to *A Nightmare on Elm Street*'s legacy. Children are given faces, bodies, and voices. The credits intertwine with words formed with playing alphabet cubes such as "pain" and "stop" and children's stamps showing images of a unicorn, a sheep and a lamb, symbolic references to innocence that emulate the original film. The credits sequence also includes a yellowed, worn-out school photo in which a group of children is seen. They were all students at the same elementary group at Badham Pre-School, a name that allows the execution of yet another word game, as the phrase "bad school" is highlighted on screen.

Once the credits sequence is finished, the second half of the opening scene starts showing the Springwood diner in a rainy night. An aloof waitress walks by the only customer in the place, a young man who asks for more coffee. She does not respond and walks towards the kitchen. Upon being ignored twice, the teenager follows the waitress into the kitchen, where he finds greasy pans on the stove, disgusting pieces of meat (including a pig head), and eventually, Freddy Krueger. Just as in Tina's scene in the original *Nightmare*, he wakes up right before anything happens. He is still at the diner, and so are other teenagers. A waitress wearing a name tag that reads "Nancy" pours him more coffee, and a blond girl named Kris enters the diner and tells Nancy she is looking for Dean. Nancy points at the startled young man who had been dreaming, and subsequently waits on Quentin, Jesse and Paxton, three other boys at a different table. Dean and Kris have a conversation in which he tells her he has not had any sleep over the past three days. Sleep-deprived and exhausted, he spills coffee on Kris. The two of them stand up, at which point Dean grabs a knife from the table and slices his own throat under Freddy's command, which makes this another scene that takes place in a dream unbeknownst to the viewer.

The second half of the 2010 opening sequence is full of references to the entire franchise. A diner is one of the settings of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child* (Stephen Hopkins, 1989), where Alice, the protagonist, works as a waitress. Some character names are reminders of previous movies as well, such as "Nancy", "Jesse" (the protagonist of part 2, *Freddy's Revenge*) and "Kris", a nickname for both "Kristen" (the protagonist of part 3, *Dream Warriors*) and "Christina", the character who appears in the original opening sequence. In addition, certain dynamics that are already familiar to the *Nightmare* audience are also present, such as the teenager in dire need of coffee due to his struggle against sleep, and the establishment of two romantic couples – while Kris and Dean evoke Tina and Rod, Quentin's friends make fun of his inability of asking for Nancy's phone number, suggesting a repetition of the shyness and passivity in Glen's courtship towards Nancy in the original movie.

If the second half appeals to *A Nightmare on Elm Street's* consolidated legacy, the first part suggests a major change regarding the approach to the character Freddy Krueger. The remake's ending confirms that Freddy was a pedophile, and that Nancy was, as Freddy himself eventually puts it, "his favorite", directly addressing an aspect that is merely suggested in the 1984 *Nightmare*. As Kingsley notes,

Craven's earliest drafts characterize Krueger specifically as a child molester, but, following the McMartin Trial in 1984, *Nightmare's* cast and crew made the choice to "soft-pedal the sexuality" and emphasize the child murderer aspect ... The cast admits that the sexual component of Krueger's character remains as "subtext," and critics such as Kendrick have constructed arguments based on Krueger's implied molestation of the Elm Street Children ... Despite having been excised from the film almost entirely, then, it is still valid to interpret Krueger's character as having molested his victims. (153)

We are left to speculation as to whether Craven would have pursued the child abuse line in 1984 had it not been for the simultaneity with the McMartin Pre-School trial, a lawsuit against members of a family who ran a daycare in California and were accused of having molested over one hundred children during satanic rituals. The media coverage for the trial was extensive and caused national commotion in the United States. The National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse website has enlisted some notorious cases (including the McMartins'), all of which have either been discovered or gone to trial after the 1990s, which suggests that the case's notoriety allowed other abuse survivors to come forth. In addition to these, cases of child abuse have either been rumored or come to light in other public spheres, such as Hollywood (Roman Polanski and Woody Allen are arguably the most notorious examples) and branches of the Catholic Church all over the world.

Throughout the twenty-six-year gap between the two *Nightmares* changes have taken place in a way that made the early 2010s a fitter context for child abuse to be openly approached in a movie. Beyond the possibility of talking about child abuse now, there is the *need* to address such matter, a thesis that espouses the notion that Gothic fiction has always fed on the different quandaries, anxieties and desires each time and place provides. More than updating Freddy Krueger's monstrosity for contemporary audiences, the certainty that he is a pedophile increases his Gothic monstrosity in a paradoxical way, given that beyond being a supernatural epitome of evil, now his human side is more evident, which makes him all the more monstrous, and probably more coherently monstrous for a twenty-first century audience.

Fred Botting observes that in Gothic fiction "terror and horror have depended on things not being what they seem", and that in contemporary times "Gothic texts have always played along the boundaries between fictional forms and social rules" (170). That places an entire set of recurrent Gothic devices in *Nightmare* in a different perspective, inasmuch as the management of sex in adolescence has become not only an issue beyond the teenagers' control, but also a matter of public concern that must be debated. The interplay between reality and dream in the core of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* remains an important feature in the remake, where dreams are not just escapes from unresolved real tensions, but also the grounds where they face traumatic memories.

In both movies Nancy confronts her mother after she and her friends have dreamt about Freddy. The basic narrative remains: Fred Krueger – the endearing diminutive form is now gone – worked at the school Nancy and her friends attended as kids. Charged with child abuse and later released based on a technicality, Krueger becomes the target of a mob of angry parents, who set his body on fire and burn him to death. Thus, facing the truth and dreaming about Freddy becomes the Gothic return of the past for Nancy.

In the 1984 version (in which Freddy is initially presented as a merely supernatural evil force) the story is told in Nancy's house's basement, right next to the furnace where her parents had secretly kept Freddy's razor glove for over

ten years. By retrieving the glove from the furnace, Nancy's mother tries to prove that there is no way Freddy can come back, but in doing so she reifies his monstrosity before Nancy's eyes. Something similar happens in the 2010 remake, albeit with differences in setting (the living room), company (Quentin is present) and outcome, for this time Freddy's status as a molester is confirmed. The 2010 mother observes that "His name was Fred Krueger... he lived in the basement of the preschool, and you kids were his life", suggesting a closer relationship between Freddy and the children which, in Nancy's case, is further corroborated by flashbacks, photos of her as a child found in his former bedroom and, ultimately, by his appearance in her final nightmare, which goes as follows:

In the dream world, Nancy finds herself trapped in the nightmarish version of her own bedroom. Freddy appears standing in the doorway to the room and is able to use his psychic powers not only to pin Nancy down to her bed but also to transform her clothing. Nancy realizes that she is now wearing what looks like an oversized child's dress and patent leather shoes, resembling an outfit Nancy wore as a little girl, Freddy leers at Nancy as he walks into the room and says to her, "This dress was always one of my favorites." ... [after Nancy begs to be released] Freddy replies accordingly – "Your mouth says no, but your body says yes" – as he slides his glove of knives gingerly over Nancy's genital region. (Christensen 33)

The settings for confrontation between final girl and murderer come full cycle with the proposal established by each of the initial sequences. In 1984, Nancy falls asleep in her house, the infamous number 1428 on Elm Street. The windows are now barred, her mother is unavailable (drunk and sound asleep), and the final encounter takes place in different spaces inside the house, such as Nancy's bedroom and the basement. Besides being the "*dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (Bachelard 18), the basement is also where Freddy's glove had been stashed, and where Tina's initial nightmare takes place. The basement is thus a Terrible Place for both girls, who end up imprisoned and chased by a patriarchal, phallic, evil force in an allusion to the Gothic heroine-monster dynamic perceived in Dracula's pursuit of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, which, similarly to Freddy's pursuit of Tina and Nancy, culminates with the former meeting her demise and the latter surviving to confront the Gothic monster one last time.

Alternatively, the 2010 Nancy falls asleep in the ruins of Badham Pre-School. In her dream, she returns to her home bedroom, where she is wearing the "oversized child's dress" referred to by Christensen. However, when she wakes up and manages to drag Freddy out of dreamworld, the confrontation takes place in the ruins of Badham Pre-School, in adherence to what the opening sequence proposes: now the Terrible Place is the school where Quentin, Kris, Jesse, Dean, as well as Nancy herself, had been molested. The different final sleep settings corroborate Clover's idea that the Terrible Place is "not home" (23), a Gothic premise that both movies approach differently. For the 2010 Nancy the sleeping place and confrontation setting are a decadent reminder of trauma enhanced by

her falling asleep in Freddy's former quarters, on a bed that most likely used to be his sleeping place, thus symbolically strengthening the abusive sexual intimacy established between them years before.

The "not-homeliness" faced by the 1984 Nancy is more complex, seeing that she falls asleep in her house, a place that should indeed be "home". Nevertheless, the place she is in at this point has lost its homeliness both symbolically, for her family is broken after the divorce, and physically, as she cannot escape, and the basement contains a haunted object. The house on Elm Street from the original movie then becomes the Freudian *Unheimlich* par excellence, insofar as the recognizable house is full of new traps, which makes it simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. In Nancy's nightmare the stairs that lead to the upper floor become tar pits, while the basement becomes a rereading of the boiler room where Freddy committed his earthly crimes and where all teenagers end up eventually in their nightmares.

Despite the visual and thematic similarities, there are several differences between the two versions of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. The 1984 film could have been just another slasher film; due to Wes Craven's ability to twist and pervert the genre's convention, that was not the case. Freddy Krueger became a lot more than an oneiric demon conjured up by repressed teenagers: the subsequent films provide the audience with access to Freddy's defining elements, such as his being the bastard son of a raped nun and "one hundred maniacs", his time as an inhabitant of 1428 Elm Street alongside his family, and his demise through the unforgiving fire, which explains his disgusting appearance. The story told in the 1984 movie is Gothic in a *personal* sense: Nancy's struggles are mostly individual, and her development from a teenager with family issues to a young woman fighting for her life unfolds in-between many Gothic obstacles as losses, traumatic memories, incarceration, helplessness, and a supernatural powerful creature. Freddy can only be defeated when dragged into the real world – our world.

Remakes are essentially intertextual, and the 2010 *Nightmare* is no exception to this rule. It establishes connections to its original, to other movies in the franchise, other slashers and other remakes, in addition to non-filmic texts such as Johann Heinrich Füssli's 1781 painting *The Nightmare* and the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. The worlds depicted in both *Nightmares* enable and, to a certain extent, foster horrors such as isolation, injustice, gratuitous murder and child abuse. The main difference between these two worlds is the confirmation of Freddy Krueger's status as a pedophile in the 2010 movie, which was possible due to the suggestion of such element in the original and its development in later movies of the *Nightmare* franchise. If indeed "it is finally through trauma that we can best understand the contemporary Gothic and why we crave it" (Bruhm 268), then the certainty of Freddy's earthly abuses enhances the powerful role of trauma in his supernatural existence, updating both his villainy and his Gothic potential in contemporary times.

In comparison to the 1984 movie, the 2010 plot is Gothic in a *collective* sense: the teenagers share more openly their suffering with their peers, they seek for advice together, and when Nancy learns Freddy's story or when she falls asleep at

the end of the film Quentin keeps her company. This pursuit for communion and togetherness may be the result of an awareness of the "loss of human identity and the alienation of the self from both itself and the social bearings" (Botting 157) that characterizes the contemporary Gothic which the 2010 *A Nightmare on Elm Street* represents.

Just like its monsters, the Gothic feeds on our fears and dilemmas, both personal and collective. Since its fuels are endless and multiple, the Gothic becomes politically, socially and geographically fluid. Such adaptability and the essentially Gothic nature of the slasher combine to make *A Nightmare on Elm Street* an example of the contemporary Gothic on screen. The comparative analysis presented here between the 1984 and the 2010 movies reveals how the story of Freddy Krueger's existence as a dream monster is the result of the resignification of some classic Gothic tropes such as familial fragmentation, individual alienation, loneliness, fear before the unknown, helplessness and the crossing of boundaries – from childhood to adult life and from dream to reality, for instance.

The first *Nightmare* was released during the peak of the 1980s slasher wave. It is a unique film in the slasher pantheon because it maintains the formula while adding to it new elements from the Gothic tradition, such as the supernatural and deformed monster, the excesses of imagination that the portrayal of nightmares invites to, and the Freudian uncanniness represented in the seemingly familiar monster and the weirdly dangerous home. As its slasher predecessors and other horror movies such as *The Exorcist*, *Possession* and *Carrie* had done before, the original *Nightmare* approaches the threat of female sexuality, another significant Gothic trope, as the Nancy-Tina dichotomy discussed throughout this article exemplifies.

The Gothic has always been susceptible to parody and self-parody, which explains the slasher franchises, the serial killers' outrageous resurrections, the tributes to the final girl and the remake culture. The 2010 *Nightmare* reshaped the Gothic agenda present in the 1984 version by proposing variations on its two protagonists. The supernatural monster/Gothic villain becomes a child molester and is thus given a layer of humanity that enhances his evil, gruesome character. Analogously, the teenagers depicted in the 2010 film become young adults whose struggle to survive leads to an interplay between reality and appearance that is no longer based on apparent insanity or sexual repression, but on the management of emerging memories of abuse.

As for the final girl, the last words Nancy says to Freddy in 2010 are exemplary of how the character in the remake embraces and updates traces of both the classic Gothic heroine and the quintessential final girl in slashers. After dragging Freddy into the real world, she remarks, "It hurts, doesn't it? That's 'cause you're in my world now, bitch!" By using such derogatory term, Nancy reverts perspectives by objectifying the monster that once objectified her. Materialized in the remains of his former bedroom and standing before a young empowered woman, Freddy is no longer a physically stronger pedophile or a supernatural threat. He is an evil man who deserves punishment, and she provides that by slicing his throat, not

without cutting off his gloved hand when he is about to kill her boyfriend, in a symbolic castration of the murderer/rapist/child abuser and yet another reversal of the standard often found in the classic Gothic: this time the damsel is not in distress, the monster is – and precisely because of the damsel.

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