THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED SEXUALITY AND HORROR IN
STRANGER THINGS

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts
In
Cinema Studies

by
Melda Kocabal
San Francisco, California
Spring 2020

Copyright by
Melda Kocabal
2020

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *The Return of the Repressed Sexuality and Horror in Stranger Things* by Melda Kocabal, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University.

Aaron Michael Kerner, Ph.D.

Professor

Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Ph.D.

Professor

THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED SEXUALITY AND HORROR IN
STRANGER THINGS

Melda Kocabal
San Francisco, California
2020

Stranger Things (The Duffer Brothers, 2016-) is a still-running TV series which is about a group of adolescents that confront some terrifying supernatural circumstances in a small American town called Hawkins. Through its narrative elements *Stranger Things* is naturally a part of the Horror genre, more specifically a revival of the Teenage Slasher genre.

This thesis will aim to examine how Teenage Slasher conventions are represented in *Stranger Things* by analyzing the themes such as: the return of the repressed, primal scene, abject, and castration anxiety in terms of the Horror genre through the monster, the killer, final girl, terrible place, and possessions, etc. *Stranger Things* is going to be taken as a case study; however, it is going to involve some other Horror films (such as *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Halloween*, etc.) to make comparisons to explore the aforementioned topics. And, to do this, I may rely on some formal, structural, and ideological approaches since the topic of the paper rely on some of the genre conventions of the Horror genre. Lastly, I will explore how different—as compared to examples from the 80s—*Stranger Things* is to the Teenage Slashers as a rite of passage, how the series builds fear by making its characters to experience sexuality through violence, and as an approach to the evolution of the Horror genre itself.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis was written under the circumstances of shelter-in-place due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 which has been a very anxious period for me like the rest of the world. During the ongoing pandemic, struggling with multiple problems simultaneously made me lose my faith in completing this thesis many times. However, thanks to Professor Aaron Kerner, I could achieve completing this thesis under the guidance of him. I am obliged to Professor Kerner for all his support and teaching, the thesis couldn't be done without him. Likewise, Professor Celine Parreñas Shimizu, as the director of the School of Cinema, has honored me by accepting to be in my thesis committee and give her precious time to this work during this tough sledding. Thanks to both.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction: Re-imagining the Slasher in <i>Stranger Things</i>	1
The Terrible Place(s) of Hawkins.....	1
The Death of the Hawkins Heroes.....	5
The Monster(s).....	6
...and the Monstrous: “The Female Victim-Hero” in <i>Stranger Things</i>	10
Penetration and Possession.....	13
Female Cover and the Men in Crisis: The Castration Anxieties in Hawkins.....	16
Conclusion.....	24
Bibliography.....	25
Filmography.....	27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. The Demogorgon.....	6
2. The Shadow Monster.....	7
3. The Mind Flayer I.....	8
4. The Mind Flayer II.....	9
5. The Mind Flayer III.....	9
6. Apollo and Daphne.....	18
7. Will in the Upside Down.....	18

Introduction: Re-Imagining the Slasher in *Stranger Things*

Genres evolve. The Netflix original series *Stranger Things*, created by The Duffer Brothers, illustrates the evolution of the Horror genre—specifically the sub-genre of the Slasher. “We could note, for example,” Andrew Nelson observes, reflecting on the release of Slasher remakes, “how the current cycle of slasher remakes is part of a larger, late-2000s trend of Hollywood ‘looking back’ to 1970s American filmmaking, both in terms of remaking pictures from that era but also setting new films in the seventies (e.g., *Zodiac* [David Fincher, 2007], *American Gangster* [Ridley Scott, 2007])” (Nelson, 2010, 129). What Rob Zombie did with his remake of *Halloween* (2007), reimagining 1970s cinema, *Stranger Things* does for 1980s Horror. As well, Hernández-Santaolalla (2019) indicates to the intense tendency of “recycling, recovering, re-signifying” innovations of the cult Horror films into television (*The Exorcist* [2016-2018], *Bates Motel* [2013-2017], *Hannibal* [2013-2015], *The Walking Dead* [2010]) in recent years (84). And *Stranger Things*, as of a Netflix original series, is highly self-aware of cinematic history, which also became an important feature of late Slasher films: “the self-referential ‘rules’ expounded in Wes Craven’s *Scream* trilogy or the lesson-instilling ‘games’ orchestrated by the Jigsaw killer in the *Saw* franchise,” which references *Scream*, there is a sense that the genre is eating its own tail. But regardless of the self-referential element, which some critics dismissed as cheeky, the Slasher film has “been in the business of helping viewers reconcile themselves to some of life’s cold, hard facts” (Nelson, 2010, 119). All of this holds true in the *Stranger Things* series.

Robin Wood (2018) reveals a very known fact about our culture that women, children, bisexuality, homosexuality, sexuality in general, ethnic groups, in short, “the other,” are positioned as repressed elements of culture. The Horror film, as Wood situates it, typically gives voice to the repressed—or functions as “the return of the repressed.” I will explore the various Slasher/Horror tropes found in *Stranger Things*—the terrible place, death(s), monster(s), female characters (the final girl, the monstrous-feminine), penetration and possession, and the (in)stability of gender categories. In this way, I will analyze how various repressed “others” are represented in *Stranger Things*.

The Terrible Place(s) of Hawkins

The terrible place is one of the most important conventions which makes a horror film a horror, specifically in slashers. The terrible place is discussed meticulously by Clover (1992) in her study. According to Clover:

The Terrible Place, most often a house or [the killer's lair], in which victims sooner or later find themselves is a venerable element of horror ... [The Terrible Place] may at first seem a safe haven, but the same walls that promise to keep the killer out quickly become, once the killer penetrates them, the walls that hold the victim in. A phenomenally popular moment in ... slashers is the scene in which the victim locks herself in (a house, room, closet, car) and waits ... as the killer slashes, hacks, or drills his way in (1993, 30-31).

There are several terrible places throughout the three seasons of *Stranger Things*. However, the first one among them, is the Byers's House. The horror in Hawkins starts with "The Vanishing of Will Byers" which is also the name of the first episode. After hours of playing Dungeons & Dragons in Mike's house, the Party members go home. When Will arrives home, there is no one in the house and it's the moment that the Demogorgon comes and kidnaps Will to the Upside Down. The Demogorgon can walk through the walls of the house, it *penetrates* them. And when Will locks himself inside, just like Clover describes, the Demogorgon comes through the wall and catches him. Additionally, after his vanishing, when Joyce initially believes that she is paranoid, the lights in the house transmit Will's silent voice, he communicates with her through the lights. And where he points that he is inside the walls, we can see that there is something moving inside the walls but when Joyce breaks the wall there is nothing. Thus, the uncanny movement of the walls, the lights, the broken telephone, etc. makes the Byers's House of the terrible places of *Stranger Things*.

Apart from that, during the first and second seasons, the representative terrible place of *Stranger Thing* is The Hawkins National Laboratory, which is connected to the U.S. Department of Energy, because the entry to the Upside Down is there and everything starts in that laboratory. Finally, in season 1 episode 4, the scientists in the lab decide to send someone, Shepard, inside the Upside Down. Shepard's body is attached to a mechanism through a kind of rope to pull him back in case it is needed—the tether is just like an umbilical cord, in effect a life-line. Moreover, the entry itself looks very abject: it looks like it has a membrane-like a spider's web, like a hymen, a boundary or threshold between

inside/outside (the Upside Down). And the moment Shepard tries to get in he tears that membrane, and we hear a tearing sound (perhaps paper ripping in a Foley recording).

Similarly, Creed (1993) talks about the exploration of the wrecked alien vessel, and how the crew of the *Nostramo* enter it in *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979). “They enter through a ‘vaginal’ opening ... They travel along a corridor which seems to be made of a combination of inorganic and organic material—as if the inner space of this ship were alive” (18). And Creed describes this entry as a representation of the primal scene. According to that, there are clear affinities with *Alien* and the gate of the Upside Down, which is also like a vaginal opening. Both in terms of the historical precedent (set in *Alien*) and the audio-visual design found in *Stranger Things*, the penetration into the Upside Down finds affinities with the *deflowering* a vagina (discussed further below). Furthermore, the scientist characters, including Shepard, wear a protective hazmat suit near the gate of the Upside Down because they say the atmosphere is poisoned as we can see through the particles in the air too. In that sense, the hazmat suit functions as protection like a condom does.

The monster of *Stranger Things*, the Demogorgon, comes from another dimension called the Upside Down to our world through various gates, like the one in Hawkins Lab. In the first season, to save their friend, Mike, Dustin and Lucas try to figure out the structure of the Upside Down and how to get in there. To do that, they get help from the game Dungeons & Dragons and adapt the game to what they are dealing with in real life. According to that, they describe the Upside Down as akin to the place called the Vale of Shadows in Dungeons & Dragons. And Dustin says the Vale of Shadows is described as “a place of decay and death, a plane out of phase, and a place of monsters.” This, indeed, is what the Upside Down is. It is a place where monsters come out—to annihilate anyone in their world. Also, in terms of “a place of decay and death,” the Upside Down is very abject because inside the Upside Down the environment is very squishy, fleshy, and slimy. And the particles floating in the air of the Upside Down is what makes the atmosphere of the place poisonous and deadly for living-humans.

Apart from its physical abject look, and that it is a place of monsters, there is one more thing that makes the Upside Down fearful for the characters: the violation of boundaries. Creed, in her book *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) draws heavily from Julia Kristeva’s conception of abjection. As Kristeva says, “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that

causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). Creed also talks about the Freudian uncanny in horror movies, which works in a similar way with Kristeva's abjection. (Kristeva also positions abjection as similar to the uncanny—however, where the Freudian uncanny pertains to the economy of objects, abjection on the other hand is a non-object.) Creed says the dread in horror movies is about a “loss of clear boundaries.” On the one hand, castration anxiety causes a “collapse of gender boundaries,” and “the uncanny feeling associated with a familiar/unfamiliar place disturbs the boundary which marks out the known and the knowable. It would appear that the uncanny and the abject share common features for the uncanny also disturbs identity and order” (53-54). Thus, what Creed says about a place that is unfamiliar, but looks familiar, and this makes you feel uncomfortable. And this is exactly what happens in the Upside Down.

The Upside-Down works like a parallel universe, so when one is in there it looks like the world they already live in, it is just darker, has a different atmosphere, and everything looks sticky. Also, even though one can walk around the places they used to go to in the real world (e.g. when Will goes to his home, or the fort that he built with his brother) they cannot see the people in there. In that sense, the Upside Down is a place that is very familiar for the people inside it, since it looks like a different representation of their world. However, it is unfamiliar because it's not the place that they are thinking they are in and this makes the Upside Down a terrible place. For example, when Joyce figures out how to contact Will from the actual world, she asks him where he is and Will says, “home.” However, the audience, as does Joyce, knows that he is not at home, but there is no other way to describe it for Will, because where he is at that moment looks just like his home. Therefore, where he is (a place that is not home, but looks like home) is also important because it is the visual representation of the canonical Freudian term “uncanny” (unheimlich). Even though the English translation for the term is “uncanny,” in German “Heimlich” means “homely,” “belonging to the home.” So, “unheimlich” is “not belonging to the home.”

Lastly, a shopping center named Starcourt opens and threatens all the small businesses that exist in Hawkins, which becomes the main place of the monstrous happenings in the third season. Therefore, it's not a coincidence that the first episode of the third season starts with our protagonists going to watch George Romero's *Day of the Dead* (1985)—which is largely

set in a mall. Once again, premised on cinematic history and the narrative of *Stranger Things*, the mall is figured as one more iteration of the terrible place. After the *Day of the Dead* screening, Dustin, Steve, and Robin discover there is a secret group of Russians (reopening the gate to the Upside Down) in the shopping center. And finally, the last fight between the Shadow Monster and the kids and their alliance happens in the shopping center in the last episode of the season which is called “The Battle of Starcourt.”

The Death of the Hawkins Heroes

As it is known, what makes a horror film horror is watching people die onscreen, otherwise it becomes Gothic. And Slasher movies are one of those subgenres that we see the most violent death scenes in. About deaths in slasher films, Clover states:

Killing those who seek or engage in unauthorized sex amounts to a generic imperative of the slasher film. It is an imperative that crosses gender lines, affecting males as well as females ... in most slasher films after 1978 (following *Halloween*), men and boys who go after “wrong” sex also die. This is not the only way males die; they also die incidentally, as girls do, when they get in the killer’s way or try to stop him, or when they stray into proscribed territory (1992, 34).

What she explains above is what happens to the men in *Stranger Things* too. In the last episode of the second season, Bob Newby, who is portrayed as a superhero in Will’s drawings, tries to gain some time to save Joyce and the kids and he gets in the Demogorgons’ way and his body is torn apart by the monsters in front of their eyes. Likewise, at the end of season three, during the “Battle of Starcourt,” the kids and Eleven are fighting with the Shadow Monster while Joyce and Hopper are back in Hawkins Lab and trying to close the gate of the Upside Down reopened by Russians. Joyce is waiting for a sign from the kids to push the button to close the gate while Hopper is trying to stop the Russian killer. When it’s the right time, there was no way for Hopper to stop the man and get out of that place. Joyce, who tries to make a decision between waiting for Hopper to be safe and trying to save the kids, as a mother, of course, she closes the gate and Hopper, who is the police chief—the hero of the town—dies there (at least for now, if there will not be a surprise in the upcoming seasons). Lastly, Max’s brother Billy, who is possessed by the Shadow Monster and works as its agent to hunt other people to be possessed by the monster, resists to the monster inside

him, gets in the way of the Shadow Monster and sacrifices himself to save his sister and the rest of the kids. Again, he brutally dies just like Bob. However, unlike his antagonistic portrayal throughout the last two seasons, his death makes him seen heroic which makes Max forget about her hatred towards him.

Even though the death of males is conventional in slasher films, there is a difference in those deaths. According to Clover (1992), when a male character dies in slasher films, those scenes are mostly off-screen or not really viewable while the fatality of females are longer, more detailed, and made into a spectacle (35). However, this is not what happens in *Stranger Things*. As it is understood from the examples, I have given in the paragraph above, unlike what Clover says, we watch male characters die in a pretty bloody, brutal way which is even shown again through flashbacks. Thus, *Stranger Things* marks an evolution in the genre, and plays with the gender boundaries constructed in the horror genre with the deaths they show to the audience.

The Monster(s)...

Figure 1, The Demogorgon, *Stranger Things* (2016)

Figure 2, The Shadow Monster, *Stranger Things* (2019)

There are two supernatural creatures, in other words, monsters in *Stranger Things*. The monster that is referred as the Demogorgon is the one that kidnapped Will and Barbara to the Upside Down, and the kids are fighting against it throughout the first season. The kids named the monster the Demogorgon after the creature in the D&D game. About monsters, Creed says, “in some horror films the monstrous is produced at the border between human and inhuman” (1993, 10). The Demogorgon is an intelligent creature that grows and changes its shape pretty fast. (We see the rapid development of a baby Demogorgon into a mature one when Dustin is taking care of it without knowing it’s a Demogorgon in the second season). It looks like a mixture of a humanoid and a reptilian, so in-between human and nonhuman as Creed says, but its head also calls to mind the vagina-dentata (see figure 1) just like the Shadow Monster (see figure 2) and many other monsters in horror films. For example, in *Alien*:

The alien is a mysterious, terrifying creature that changes shape as it metamorphoses into a mature life form. Highly intelligent, secretive, sadistic, it is impossible to find or kill. Eventually Ripley, the only one left alive, prepares to do battle with the alien (Creed, 1993, 16).

What Creed says about the Xenomorph and the plot above is precisely what happens in the last episode of the first season. As the Final Girl, Ripley (in *Alien*), Eleven (in *Stranger Things*) has single combat with the Demogorgon and destroys it (at least, for a while). In her further analysis on the Xenomorph and the Mother Alien in *Alien*, Creed sees them as representatives of the phallic-mother and the archaic maternal figure:

Like Count Dracula, the monstrous creature of *Alien* is constructed as the agent of the archaic mother but in my view the mother's phallus-fetish covers over, not her lack—as Freud argues—but rather, her castrating *vagina dentata*. Mother Alien is primarily a terrifying figure not because she is castrated but because she castrates. Her all-consuming, incorporating powers are concretized in the figure of her alien offspring; the creature whose deadly mission is represented as the same as that of the archaic mother—to tear apart and reincorporate all life (Creed, 1993, 22).

The Demogorgon is only one in the first season, but it is multiplied and follows the instructions of the Shadow Monster (which I will be talking more about below), in the second and third seasons. So, I believe, the Demogorgon in *Stranger Things* represents the phallic-mother which works as an agent of the archaic maternal figure (the Shadow Monster) that Creed is talking about in the aforementioned quote.

In the second season of *Stranger Things*, the main monster that the kids are dealing with is the Shadow Monster. And, Will always uses the pronoun "him" to refer the Shadow Monster. Thus, considering everything I said above, I think, the monsters in *Stranger Things*, like many other monsters throughout the film history, are the representation of what the real monstrous is in the Horror genre: The loss of boundaries, in this case, in terms of gender.

Figure 3, *The Mind Flayer I*

Figure 4, The Mind Flayer II, *Stranger Things* (2017)

Figure 5, The Mind Flayer III, *Stranger Things* (2017)

Apart from that, Will refers to the Shadow Monster also as “the Mind Flayer,” which is another monster’s name in the game of D&D. In D&D, the Mind Flayers are telepathic creatures that take over humans’ minds and have a tentacled mouth (see figure 3). The Mind Flayer in *Stranger Things* is a pretty similar monster to that too. However, it does not only control people’s minds, but also physically can take over their body. Because the Shadow Monster figuratively penetrates inside Will by possessing him through his mouth, but it also literally penetrates the whole Hawkins through its tentacled and rhizomatic form (see figure 4,5). And when the characters discover the underground tunnels that the Shadow Monster uses to penetrate the town, we see that at the center of its tentacles takes the form of a vagina-dentata-like organ that spews out some kind of poisonous particles floating in the air. Also,

throughout the third season when it possesses someone's body, eventually it takes over their body and makes them become one with its actual form (I will be discussing this further in the following pages), which has a head like vagina-dentata similar to the Demogorgon.

Similar to the aforementioned quote of Creed regarding the monster—as an entity that is in-between human-nonhuman—Pinedo likewise references the fragility of borders. What the monster signifies, and Pinedo says, is that “the monster disrupts the social order by dissolving the basis of its signifying system, its network of differences: me/not me, animate/inanimate, human/nonhuman, life/death. The monster's body dissolves binary differences” (Pinedo, 1997, 21). In the third season of *Stranger Things*, we watch people who are possessed by the monster to start eating manure, and eventually their body turns into walking feces, to become one with the body of the Shadow Monster. Considering the abject qualities of feces, through showing the human body itself consuming it and turning into it make the characters become one with the monster's body. *Stranger Things* dissolves the boundaries between subject and the monster (which is in itself already by definition a composite entity).

...and the Monstrous: “The Female Victim-Hero” in *Stranger Things*

So far, I mentioned the Demogorgon(s) and the Shadow Monster as the monsters in *Stranger Things*. However, apart from them, there is one more monster, a “monstrous feminine”: Eleven. In her book, Creed criticizes Freud about him saying that woman is terrifying because they are castrated and she says, “such a position only serves to reinforce patriarchal definitions of woman which represent and reinforce the essentialist view that woman, *by nature*, is a victim” (Creed, 1993, 7). And I think, in her example about the titular character in *Carrie*, Clover (1992) goes further by stating that the Final Girl is not either the victim or the hero, she defines them as “the female victim-hero” (47). Because even though Carrie, “throughout most of the movie she is the victim ... but when, at the end, she turns the tables, she herself becomes a kind of monstrous hero—hero insofar as she has risen against and defeated the forces of monstrosity, monster insofar as she has herself become excessive, demonic (Clover, 1992, 4). As Clover mentions above, the Final Girl is even more than “the Female Victim-Hero,” she is also monstrous. However, before going further about the monstrosity of the Final Girl, I briefly want to talk about the boogeyman in slasher movies.

Unlike *Stranger Things*, there is usually a stalker with supernatural powers murdering the characters in the movie one by one (Freddy Krueger, Pennywise, Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, etc.). About slasher killers, Clover says Final Girls have so much in common with the monsters in horror films too (47). So, both the killer and the Final Girl have similarities with the horror-monster, which also makes them similar to each other. Moreover, in some slasher films, the killer and the Final Girl have more than a figurative similarity, but they are actually related to each other by blood. For example, in *Halloween II*, we realize that Laurie (the Final Girl) and Michael (the killer) are sister-brother. Likewise, “brother-sister relationships occur in *Scream 3*, *Prom Night*, ... and *Cherry Falls*. Parent-child links are also very common, Jason and Pamela Voorhees are the most famous example, although there are a number of others” (Harper, 2004, 45). Thus, it can be said that the slasher killer, the horror-monster, and the Final Girl are mirroring each other.

Moreover, if slasher sequels are watched to see the same killer, again and again, *Stranger Things* is watched to see and follow the adventures of Eleven. The character of Eleven follows the tradition established in the Slasher genre—complete with supernatural abilities associated with the slasher boogiemán. Notably, she is a girl in puberty. However, unlike the other female teen characters of the show, she was kept in a prison-like place all her life because of her powers (victim). When she finally runs away, she has been chased and hunted by countless people—like so many other monsters in cinematic history. And since people would treat her as to how they would treat a monster, she is forced to be hidden from society. Finally, when she finds Kali Prasad, someone like herself in the second season, the monstrosity perspective towards Eleven is underlined one more time through the dialogue. Eleven goes to Illinois to find Kali who she sees as a sister, and who has supernatural powers like Eleven, and who was also held in the Hawkins Lab for years. And when she finally finds Kali, she says: “We're always gonna be monsters to them ... they don't let you use your gifts.” Even though she mentions only themselves as people with supernatural powers, clearly this statement can be applied to men’s castration anxiety, and their fear of women’s sexuality and generative powers.

While Eleven figuratively represents the monstrous, there is a moment in *Stranger Things* that we see someone literally becomes monstrous, and it is not Eleven. Speaking of the killers in slashers, Byrant (2014) says, “this repression of normatized masculine behavior

relates directly to the theme by which slashers represent non-heterosexual or asexual natures outside of hegemonic norms” (5). Byrant explains how repressed homosexuality gives birth to a killer, and then the character becomes monstrous (5-6). In *Stranger Things*, we do not see him becoming a killer, but when Will’s mind is taken over by the Shadow Monster his possession causes him to be monstrous too. So, Eleven is not the only one in the show who is related to the slasher killer and the horror monster, Will becomes part of that too. Also, as I mentioned the family ties between the Final Girl and the slasher killer, at the end of the third season, Eleven becomes a part of the Byers family since there is nobody else to take care of her. So, Will and Eleven become step-siblings.

Apart from Freud, Creed also criticizes Clover because she does not see the Final Girl as castrating and argues that the slasher film phallicizes the heroine. “But because the heroine is represented as resourceful, intelligent and dangerous it does not follow that she should be seen as a pseudo man” (Creed, 1993, 127). As Creed explains Clover’s ideas of the Final Girl, in *Stranger Things*, I agree with both of them. Because throughout the first two seasons we are watching Eleven as a phallicized Final Girl. Her name, her shaved head, her boyish costumes, and the way she acts (she doesn’t really know what the society expects a girl or a woman to do and astonishes the kids when she tries to take her clothes off in front of them). However, she is also seen as a castrator by society because she is a woman with telekinetic powers and that’s the reason she is victimized too (as I explained above). However, she is also castrated too at the end of the third season, and she loses all her supernatural powers (discussed below).

In her essay, “The Slasher, the Final Girl and the Anti-Denouement,” Janet Staiger (2015) contests Clover’s conceptualization of the Final Girl. She says women can be the victim and the hero, but that does not make them the Final Girl as Clover insists. Staiger says that the Final Girls might not be boyish, and does not necessarily fight alone. “Boyfriends, fathers or father figures, even other women and children, often support and aid them. They learn from those people so that they do take control of their battle with the killer” (222). She adds, as a result of this, they are “rewarded” with heterosexual love. “The Final Girl learns much from masculine authority/parental figures, occasionally is saved by them and is often rewarded with apparently heterosexual coupling” (Staiger, 2015, 222). In *Stranger Things*, even though Eleven is a Final Girl, as Clover describes it, there are some changes in her

character in the third season. She starts to hang out with a female friend (Max) instead of spending time with boys all the time. She makes the cliché *womanish* experience come true by having her first shopping experience; Eleven has so much fun buying more feminine clothes and getting rid of her boyish outfits. Additionally, Eleven does not fight alone anymore, she is surrounded by friends and Hopper a father-figure. As a result, we watch her finally having a relationship with Mike and exploring her sexuality making-out with Mike, etc. However, when all these happen, at the end of the third season, she loses all her telekinetic powers after the battle with the monster as I mentioned above. So, when she tries to be a *normal* woman, her powers are taken from her to make her even more *normal*. Considering that Eleven's powers were the most important thing making her the heroine of the show, and since she was the one who opened the gate of the Upside Down and let the horror in Hawkins, we will see what will happen in the following seasons without her powers. Is she not going to be the heroine of the story anymore as a *normalized woman* or, as Mike believes, is she going to take her powers back? And if she regains her supernatural powers, will she have to sacrifice her sexuality?

Penetration and Possession

Although mainly because of its characters *Stranger Things* seems like a slasher, it is a combination of various horror subgenres such as zombie horror (the shopping center), supernatural horror (monsters and psychic powers), or possession narratives. Clover says, even though the difference between men and women is well-known in horror films “one that at the same time repeatedly contemplates mutations and slidings whereby women begin to look a lot like men (slasher films), men are pressured to become like women (possession films)” (Clover, 1992, 15). In *Stranger Things*, indeed, there is both a woman who “looks a lot like a man” (Eleven), and a man who is “pressured to become like a woman” (Will). As I said earlier, Eleven is a typical Final Girl and the heroic fighter of the show, which in conventional American narratives would be a white, Anglo-Saxon, male. Will, on the other hand, is the male character who becomes like a woman: through various types of possessions beginning from the first season, and he is always the one in trouble, who is waiting to be rescued by someone else. First of all, when Joyce and Hopper finally find Will in the Upside

Down, we see Will is connected to the Upside Down through something like an umbilical cord penetrating his mouth. About this kind of oral penetrations Clover says:

The idea of impregnation by the “pneuma” is ancient and widespread in both learned and popular beliefs, and it turns up repeatedly in occult films in connection with the reproduction/possession complex of ideas. It plays on an equally ancient and widespread association between the vagina and the throat—an association reflected in the fantasy of the vagina dentata, in the German word for the neck of the uterus, *Mutterhals* (“mother throat”) and in folk belief that the body is open to the devil both during sneezing (hence “God bless you”) or *Gesundheit* as preemptive formulas) and during orgasm (Clover, 1992, 79).

The *Mutterhals* that Clover states above can be represented as an actual throat in movies (p. 79). As in many horror movies, in *Stranger Things*, we watch a possession through the “mother throat” several times. Apart from the scene that they find Will in the Upside Down, the Shadow Monster possesses him through his mouth in the second season. Also, the Mind Flayer monster targets people's mouths to possess them in the third season. So, the devil comes in from the mouth. Besides, like vaginal penetration, there are consequences of penetration through the mother throat as well which is called a phallic penetration as Creed explains:

When male bodies become grotesque, they tend to take on characteristics associated with female bodies; in this instance, man's body becomes grotesque because it is capable of being penetrated. From this union, the monstrous creature is born ... The birth of the alien from Kane's stomach recalls Freud's description of a common misunderstanding that many children have about birth, that is, that the mother is somehow 'impregnated' through the mouth—she may eat a special food—and the baby grows in her stomach, from which it is also born. Here, we have a version of the primal scene in which the infant is conceived orally (1993, 19).

Like Creed's example from *Alien*, through the Shadow Monster's phallic penetration to Will, we witness a grotesque pregnancy of him since he *gives birth* to Dart (the baby Demogorgon) from his mouth in the second season. This oral birth is pretty abject because it looks like vomiting into the sink. So, the idea of making a man become more like a woman might be grotesque as is explained above. However, it also makes a man reproductive, which

man are biologically incapable of doing—and this penetration-reproduction turns Will into the monstrous-masculine (to turn Creed's phrase). So, even though it looks abject, it is an achievement for the male gender. On the other hand, making a woman become like a man causes a loss for the female gender.

Speaking of woman, Creed (1993) says the reason for the monstrous feminine representations in (especially) slasher films is male castration anxiety. Therefore, they might be seen as castrated "either literally or symbolically" (122). Because:

As well as its expression in surrealist art, the myth of the *vagina dentata* is extremely prevalent. Despite local variations, the myth generally states that women are terrifying because they have teeth in their vaginas and that the women must be tamed or the teeth somehow removed or softened—usually by a hero figure—before intercourse can safely take place (Creed, 1993, 1).

Thus, either way, we watch women to be castrated. By literal castration, Creed means woman to be slashed with a knife and bleed, and by symbolic means, "woman is transformed into a psychotic monster because she has been symbolically castrated, that is, she feels she has been robbed unjustly of her rightful destiny" (Creed, 1993, 122). In *Stranger Things*, the scene that Jonathan cuts Eleven's leg to take the monster's larva out of her is the representative first-sex scene of Eleven and also a literal and symbolic castration scene of her as Creed states. Either way, this is not an experience that one can get help from outside. One has to face it on their own. So, even though it is very violent, she runs the show and takes it out of her leg by herself. If she didn't, her situation could be like Will. However, it causes her to be *castrated* because she loses her telekinetic powers after this moment. About the telekinetic powers, Shelley Stamp (2015) discusses Carrie and her telekinesis powers in *Carrie*. "As Carrie's eroticism moves to objects outside her body, so do her acts of violence, as the aggressive nature of her sexuality is displaced onto destructive telekinetic acts" (335). Therefore, she says, Carrie's telekinesis powers make her monstrous, and since the female body is the abject and horror "the metaphor of telekinesis represents an attempt to deny the body and its actions. Presented as the ability to move objects with one's mind without physical intervention, telekinesis effectively circumvents the body's agency in the material world" (335). Thus, as a heroine with similar telekinetic powers as Carrie, Eleven is still being monstrous and *denies her body and its actions* even though she shows attempts to

change her boyish attitudes in the third season. So, she had to lose the powers in order to fit into what exactly the male-dominated society expects the feminine to be, a *normal* woman or a “docile body” as Foucault defines in *Discipline and Punish* (1995).

Female Covers and the Men in Crisis: The Castration Anxieties in Hawkins

In her book, Clover (1992) explains how “the most female” subgenre of the horror (slasher) is about stories of women or girls dealing with supernatural forces, “but behind the female ‘cover’ is always the story of a man in crisis” (65), because “that the slasher film speaks deeply and obsessively to male anxieties and desires” (61). And Creed (1993) discusses Steve Neale’s views on that there are two causes of the male anxieties/castration anxieties in horror films which causes females to be interpreted as monstrous: female sexuality and female reproductivity (5). Moreover, according to Creed, the castration anxiety is not only about that woman is terrifying because she is castrated as Freud suggests, but also because she can be the *castrator*. “Specifically, he fears that woman could castrate him both psychically, and in a sense, physically. He imagines the latter might take place during intercourse when the penis ‘disappears’ inside woman’s ‘devouring mouth’” (6). However, the fear of woman as castrator is more related to female sexuality rather than female reproductivity. And “the image of woman as castrator takes at least three forms: woman as the deadly *femme castratrice*, the castrating mother and the *vagina dentata*” (7).

Unlike many slasher stories, *Stranger Things* does not really cover the story of a man in crisis behind a female. On the contrary, it shows the crisis of Will *through* Eleven not covering his crisis *with* Eleven. In season 1 episode 5, When Nancy goes to the Upside Down through the tree hollow in the forest she is scared since she is trapped there and cannot go back for a while just like the fear of that the penis would be trapped inside the vagina—castration anxiety. In her descent into the Upside Down, Nancy is scared because she is not only trapped but also trapped in a forest with the Demogorgon (the phallic mother). In short, this situation of Nancy is Will’s crisis and what he has been through which was never shown to the audience in the beginning.

Even though there is no evidence for it, the hints of that Will might be gay are given to the audience in many ways: Through Joyce saying that she thinks he is homosexual, the way the bullies talk about him at school, and he is the only one who shows no interest in girls

unlike his friends in the following seasons. Thus, being trapped in the Upside Down, which represents figurative castration anxiety, is experienced by the person who might be scared of heterosexual sexual intercourse the most among the characters. After Will, Barbara—the person who avoids sex and warns her friend not to do it—also shares the same fate. However, Nancy, who has the sexual experience, is not dragged to the Upside Down by a Demogorgon. She willingly finds the gate and goes inside there, she is not just trapped there and waiting to be rescued by someone else. Similarly, Joyce and Hopper (who are known to have sexual experiences too, since they have kids) also had a successful experience in the Upside Down. Thus, the people who are experienced and are already faced with the anxieties, can be in the Upside Down and deal with the Demogorgon.

In the last episode of the first season of *Stranger Things*, Steve-Nancy-Jonathan are the ones who cope with the Demogorgon, not the kids' gang. Moreover, they handle the situation so well because they are well prepared to fight with the monster. They have all the equipment they need to fight, and they set several booby traps to catch and kill the Demogorgon. Because they are the experienced ones of the first season and the kids are not ready, *grown-up*, for this yet. On the other hand, Mike, Dustin, and Lucas's knees knock together when they see the Demogorgon. Therefore, even though Eleven destroys the Demogorgon at the end of the last episode of the first season through her supernatural powers and closes the gate of the Upside Down, their problems are not solved. The horror keeps coming back in the next seasons, because the castration anxieties they have to face are still there waiting for them.

The repressed anxieties return to Hawkins with the first episode of the second season. Because Will keeps having visions of the Upside Down, thus, everything is happening to Will—again. He is the only one who can see the danger coming up not just because he has been there before, but also that, we watched an intimacy building between Mike and Eleven throughout the first season. And, in the second season, a new female member, Max, joins their gang who causes competition between Lucas and Dustin. So, unlike Will, the other members start to *grow up* and show the indications of interest towards the opposite sex. Will, on the other hand, is the only one who is not willing to face what comes next, so, he still is the one who has more anxieties about adolescence. In Greek mythology, the story of Daphne shows similarities with Will's anxiety.

Figure 6, *Apollo and Daphne* (Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1622-25)

According to one of the many versions of the story, Daphne is a young, virgin nymph who is desired by the God of the Sun and knowledge (among many other things) Apollo. To avoid having sex with him and escape, Daphne invokes the Gods. And they turn her into a bay tree (which is named after her later on [Daphne]) (see figure 6). Even though it seems like rescuing her, considering a plant is motionless it's also a punishment because the situation she has been put into is almost like death (or a permanent *vegetative* state).

Figure 7, Will in the Upside Down, *Stranger Things* (2016)

Likewise, when Will (also Barbara) is finally found by Joyce and Hopper in the Upside Down, we can see how he looks like becoming one with the Upside Down and *taking*

root in there through his mouth (see figure 7). After all, he was not able to face his own anxieties in the Upside Down, and, probably, he would literally take root and die there without his mother's help to get out of the place. However, like Daphne's metamorphosis is not a rescue, for Will, Joyce's help is actually an issue too since his *crisis* is not only about *femme castratrice*, but also is deeply related to the castrating mother.

Speaking of the help of a parent, Pat Gill (2002) discusses the family structure in slasher movies. She says the teen characters of slashers who are in danger and dealing with monsters and killers do not get help from their parents because they are always too busy with their own lives. She adds, even though if they are concerned or trying to be caring they are still useless and cannot be helpful. Because most of the time they were the ones who got their children in trouble with their actions in the past so that children have to save everyone and play the adult role (17) like in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Since their parents killed Freddy in the past for his crimes, he comes back and hunts their children in their dreams for revenge. Likewise, in *Stranger Things*, the parents are absent, apart from Will's mother Joyce. The Final Girl, Eleven, does not even have parents, she is all alone in this world. About the rest of the characters, we barely see Dustin and Lucas's parents—once or twice; their children are not at home even after midnight most of the time and they do not care at all. Mike and Nancy's dad is always busy reading his newspaper or sleeping and not even listening to what they talk at dinner. Their mother, Mrs. Wheeler, looks more involved and caring about her kids but she is completely incapable of helping her kids in danger. This careless picture of American families in a small town looks worrisome, however, it's actually for the benefit of the children. Because in many teenage slashers, such as *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night*, "teenage protagonists must face their horrors alone or with their peers. As their fellow adolescents fall to one monstrous force or another, they must save themselves and their world on their own" (Gill, 2002, 18-19). Because otherwise, they would end up being like Will, being trapped in the Upside Down and waiting to be rescued.

Unlike the parents of other members of the Party, Will's mother Joyce is very involved in the story, she deals with the troubles along with the kids in order to rescue her son. Though, his father is absent like all other parents. Moreover, he is not even living in Hawkins, he is far away, thinks Will is gay, and the only thing he cares about is trying to prove that Will is dead by the negligence of a company. Will's father seems more interested in collecting some

money from the company, rather than his safety. Thus, Will is very attached to his mother, since she is more supportive and caring. Although this kind of parenting sounds more ideal and what a parent should be like it has some unpleasant consequences too, as Creed explains:

Once again we can see abjection at work in the horror text where the child struggles to break away from the mother, representative of the archaic maternal figure, in a context in which the father is invariably absent (*Psycho*, *Carrie*, *The Birds*). In these films the maternal figure is constructed as the monstrous-feminine (Creed, 1993, 12).

Will's situation is exactly what Creed says for some other slashers. As mentioned previously, while the other characters are capable of trying to face their anxieties and fight with the monstrous on their own, Will is the only one trapped in the Upside Down and cannot get out of it on his own. Again, in the second season, he is possessed by the Shadow Monster and should be rescued by someone else since his mind is taken over. In the absence of his father, his intimacy with his mother eventually becomes an obstacle because he *struggles to break away from the mother*. And then, the Upside Down and the Shadow Monster, the maternal figure that wants to become one with everything, becomes a bigger problem for Will than the others. This situation of Will might be what David Greven (2011) describes as "primary narcissism" (141). Greven says the horror film "expresses a powerful desire to return to the mother and to origins, to a state of total oneness with the world (the mother's body indistinguishable from the child's body) that psychoanalytic theory calls primary narcissism" (141).

Greven (2011) explains the situation of primary narcissism through the myth of Demeter and Persephone. As it is known, Persephone is the daughter of the Goddess Demeter and is kidnapped by Hades to be his wife and queen of the Underworld. Since she does not want to be separated from her daughter, Demeter starts a winter that does not end and all living things encounter starvation. Finally, God and the Goddess come to an agreement and half of the year Persephone lives on the Earth with Demeter and the other half in the Underworld with Hades. And Greven says there is a male version of the "Persephone complex" (142) in horror films. According to that, "the male still desires the mother and wants to stay with her, which has implications for the male's sexuality, since psychoanalysis, as does the horror film, types these males as queer" (Greven, 2011, 142). I believe, in

Stranger Things, we can see the Persephone complex that Greven talks about through Will and Joyce. Creed (2015) explains this situation in her essay too, she says:

By refusing to relinquish her hold on her child, she prevents it from taking up its proper place in relation to the Symbolic. Partly consumed by the desire to remain locked in a blissful relationship with the mother and partly terrified of separation, the child finds it easy to succumb to the comforting pleasure of the dyadic relationship. (Creed, 2015, 44).

In the myth, because the mother does not let the daughter go, Demeter obliges

Persephone to have the Katabasis, which is known to be the most dangerous journey of the world to reach the Underworld and figuratively represents the return of the repressed, two times every year. Similarly, unlike other characters' parents Joyce used to coddle Will, because of his suspected homosexuality and sensitive character, which causes him to find himself in the Upside Down. After she finds him there, she showers him with attention, which causes him to experience the monstrous take over him again and again. Thus, as Creed states in the aforementioned quote, Joyce delays Will's birth to the Symbolic by keeping him in the abject. However, Joyce is not the only force who causes that, for sure. Will himself is not eager to separate himself from the mother too. Through her example of Kane giving birth to the alien from his stomach in *Alien*, Creed (2015) explains Freudian "extreme primal-scene fantasy in which the subject imagines traveling back inside the womb to watch her or his parents having sexual intercourse, perhaps to watch her or his own conception" (51). When Joyce and Hopper find Will in the Upside Down with him attached to the place through his mouth, as I explained before, it created a kind of pregnancy. So that, we watch the baby Demogorgon come out of Will's mouth in the second season, which is a similar experience with the alien's birth from Kane's abdomen in *Alien*. Thus, I think, this extreme primal scene fantasy of Will also shows that his unwillingness about the separation from his mother which troubles him.

One can still ask, why among all the children and teenagers in Hawkins, who are also dealing with the same adolescent anxieties, Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Will are the ones that have to deal with all the monstrosity for years? Tracey Mollet gives more details about these characters below:

Mike is sensitive and physically weak, derided as “Frogface” (1.01) and threatened by knife-toting bullies (1.06), clearly positioned as an underdog (Chess 2018). Lucas is different by virtue of his race, the only African-American lead character in the series. Dustin plays the stereotypical role of the “fat boy” in childhood ensemble films and suffers from cleidocranial dysplasia, while Will is labelled as “gay” by bullies and even by his own father (1.04; 1.01). (Mollet, 2019, 6).

As it seems, these characters in *Stranger Things*, who they call themselves as the Party, are the “outsiders” of the town (McDaniel, 2019, 206). They are into geek culture; they are nerds and they have to deal with the anxieties that grow from each of their special situations as Mollet summarizes. Every new member they accept to their Party is also dealing with family issues and are outsiders like themselves. Eleven, the first person they accept, is an orphan boyish girl with her shaved hair, weird clothes, and who has run away from a laboratory where she spent her life as an experimental subject. McDaniel (2019) says, “Eleven brings attention to how horror and teen films have habitually connected gender and disability with monstrosity” (215). Through her “gender that conflict with cultural norms” (especially in the first two seasons), McDaniel says, she bears the “signs of monstrosity” (215). Also, she has telekinetic powers that makes her the most freakish one among the characters. In the second season, they accept Max to the Party because of Dustin and Lucas's romantic interest in the beginning. However, they were interested in her because of her freakiness too. Again, *conflicting with her gender norms*, Max plays video games using “Mad Max” as her name (for a top-score listing on a video game), that is how they discover her at first. She is another boyish skater girl; whose father is also absent, and has issues with her stepbrother.

Carol Clover (1992) notes that the Final Girl is virginal, which is seen as a convention in slasher movies. Arguing against Clover, Kyle Christensen (2011) states that in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* “the issue of what is or is not appropriate sexual behavior for women takes on a new form” (32). He adds:

The troubling factor is no longer a matter of willing penetration, but one of willing control. A woman can ethically choose to be sexual and embrace the companionship of male suitors, but only as long as she is freely choosing to do so. Those who submit to their male counterparts because they are too cowardly to stake a claim on their own

bodies or are too infatuated to realize their potential for independence are the ones who suffer. (Christensen, 2011, 32)

Christensen supports his arguments in a critical review of the couples in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. He says, Nancy's best friend (Tina) fails to resist her boyfriend (Rod) when she is not actually in a mood to see him or have sex with him, and she lets him dominate her. Christensen thinks this causes her to fail to resist the killer Freddy too. However, unlike Tina, Nancy does not let Glen control her, although he tries to get closer to her and puts a distance between them. "The film never goes out of its way to confirm if Nancy is or is not a virgin; what is relevant is that whatever Nancy is, it is by her own choice, not by the types of duress to which Tina is accustomed" (32-33).

In the third episode of the first season of *Stranger Things*, while Nancy Wheeler's best friend, Barbara, tries to stop her, she has sexual intercourse presumably for the first time with her boyfriend Steve. And then, Barbara becomes the one who is attacked by the Demogorgon, trapped in the Upside Down, and dies. In a typical slasher movie, we would expect the opposite to happen: Nancy, as a potential-Final Girl, would be the one who avoids sexual intercourse, and her friends who do have sex would be murdered by the killer one by one. On the contrary, in *Stranger Things*, we watch Nancy, Jonathan, Steve, and their friends from high school be sexually active and fight against the monster throughout three seasons. However, among them all, Barbara is the only person who dies instead of being the sole-virgin-survivor. So, while popular slasher movies of the 70s and 80s (*Halloween*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, or *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*) make the audience face with the anxieties in their unconscious for them to deal with it through showing them the worst thing that could happen and once they deal with it (having sex) everything's going to be fine. On the contrary, *Stranger Things* shows its audience what would happen if they refuse to grow up (not having sex) and encourage the audience to do it before all the horror happens. However, although I think *Stranger Things* is more encouraging about sexuality compared to examples in the past, it also equalizes the anxieties about sex with the fear of sex in various ways. For example, there is the cross-cutting between two scenes: Nancy and Steve's first sex and the Demogorgon's attack on Barbara. On the last shot of the sequence, we see Barbara's hand in close up desperately trying to grab the stair rail, while Nancy's hand in close-up shot holds Steve's.

In the second season of *Stranger Things*, Dustin-Max-Lucas replaces the Steve-Nancy-Jonathan trio. Because the love triangle/sexual intimacy happens among Dustin-Max-Lucas this time. First, we watch Dustin take care of Dart after its birth. And then, when they finally understand that Dart is actually a baby Demogorgon, Dustin-Max-Lucas trio become the ones who deal with the same trouble/experience that Steve-Nancy-Jonathan did in the previous season. Steve-Nancy-Jonathan are not even at the center of the horror case anymore, even, Nancy and Jonathan are not in Hawkins, they are busy playing detective, and also having sex outside of town.

When we come to the third season, we watch the Party members in various relationships and experiencing limited sexuality (making out, etc.), even Dustin has a girlfriend who his friends did not even believe until they hear him talking to her through the radio in the last episode of the third season. However, Will is still the only person who constantly restrains himself from any type of sexual experience. Also, we watch Steve, Nancy, and Jonathan's passage from teenagers to young adults; they start working and their attire makes them look more mature. Likewise, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin keep saying that they are grown up and do not want to play D&D anymore, unlike Will. So, on both sides, the characters keep reminding each other that they are *grown up*. In other words, they are not the men in crisis anymore, while Will is still dealing with his castration anxieties.

However, the situation of being grown-up comes with its troubles. Jonathan and Nancy keep being annoyed at work and Jonathan reminds her this is what real life and being an adult is: it is “shitty.” As a representation of it, we watch an adult's, Mrs. Wheeler, *shitty* life that she tries to escape. While the young adults are thinking about it, the Shadow Monster comes back to Hawkins and this time its target is the adults! The Shadow Monster possesses the adults in Hawkins and turns them into monsters through making them a part of itself. When the people lose their form and turn into what they are now (monster), it looks like a piece of *feces* crawling on the floor and they eat fertilizer. And thus, the figurative analogy becomes manifest, the adults (possessed by the Shadow Monster) are represented as “shitty.” And when all of them come together, they form the Shadow Monster, the gigantic Phallic Mother.

Conclusion

Stranger Things rehearses many of the tropes established in the Slasher genre, while at the same time exerting evolutionary pressure on many of its tropes. In a general sense *Stranger Things* retains the core elements of the Slasher genre. Over the course of the three seasons, we witness how *Stranger Things*, just as Greven (2011) notes about the Slasher genre, “makes mother-son bonds—so repudiated within patriarchy, which socializes both its male and female subjects to reject the mother and to identify with and emulate the father—particularly prominent” (146) and the expanding role of the Final Girl (Eleven) in the twenty-first century (171). We watch the maturation of the characters in *Stranger Things*, however, as Staiger observes, “slasher movies are not about growing up, but staying young; of not giving up the fantasies of Santa Claus, the bogeyman and the undead; of keeping the game in play; of never finally becoming the adult across the abyss who is subject to the final acts of, or effects of violence” (2015, 226). While on the one hand, the Party cling to childish ideas, they are also aware of the inevitable fact that they are growing up. Will, though, most of all remains stunted, perhaps growing up will force him to confront his own (presumed) homosexuality? I doubt that “these films reassure that we can walk through the nightmares of violence” (Staiger, 2015, 226). Because whatever the case might be, just as the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films did, which “make literal the adage that puberty and the concomitant exploration of sexuality can be painful” (DeGraffenreid, 2011, 956), so too does the *Stranger Things* series.

Bibliography

- Benshoff, H. M. (2015). The Monster and the Homosexual. In B. K. Grant (Ed.), *The Dread of Difference/Gender and the Horror Film* (2nd ed., pp. 116–144). Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- Butler, J. (2002). Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire. In *Gender Trouble* (10th anniversary ed., pp. 1-46). London: Routledge. Accessed April 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Butler, R. (2018). ‘Welcome to the Upside Down’: Nostalgia and Cultural Fears in *Stranger Things*. In L. Belau & K. Jackson (Eds.), *Horror Television in the Age of Consumption* (pp. 187–201). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Byrant, T. (2014) Horrifying Whiteness: Slasher Conduct, Masculinity, and the Cultural Politics of Halloween. *Offscreen*, 18(8) <http://jpllnet.sfsu.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.jpllnet.sfsu.edu/docview/2064738197?accountid=13802>.

- Christensen, K. (2011). The Final Girl versus Wes Craven's "A Nightmare on Elm Street": Proposing a Stronger Model of Feminism in Slasher Horror Cinema. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 34(1), 23-47.
- Clover, C. (1992). *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Creed, B. (1993). *The Monstrous Feminine*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- (2015). Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection. In B. K. Grant (Ed.), *The Dread of Difference/Gender and the Horror Film* (2nd ed., pp. 37–67). Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- DeGraffenreid, L. J. (2011). What Can You Do in Your Dreams? Slasher Cinema as Youth Empowerment. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 44(5), 954-969.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Second Vintage books ed.) New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Gill, P. (2002). The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family. *Journal of Film and Video*, 54(4), 16–30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20688391>.
- Greven, D. (2011). Demeter and Persephone in Space: Transformation, Femininity, and the Myth in the Alien Films. In *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema: The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (pp. 117-140). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Accessed April 30, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Freud and the Death Mother: Freud, the Woman's Film, and Modern Horror. In *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema: The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (pp. 11-28). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Accessed April 30, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Medusa in the Mirror: Brian de Palma's *Carrie*. In *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema: The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (pp. 91-116). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Accessed April 30, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- The Finalizing Woman: Horror, Femininity, and Queer Monsters. In *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema: The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (141-178). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Accessed April 30, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Harper, J. (2004). The Killer. *Legacy of Blood: A Comprehensive Guide to Slasher Movies* (pp. 39-48). Manchester, Great Britain: Headpress.
- Hernández-Santaolalla, V. (2019). Final Girls and Female Serial Killers: A Review of the Slasher Television Series from a Gender Perspective. In S. Gerrard, S. Holland, & R. Shail (Eds.) *Gender and Contemporary Horror in Television* (pp. 83-94). United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing.
- Hollinger, K. (2015). The Monster as Woman: Two Generations of Cat People. In B. K. Grant (Ed.), *The Dread of Difference/Gender and the Horror Film* (2nd ed., pp. 346–358). Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2015.
- Kristeva, J., (1982). L. S. Roudiez (Trans.) *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- McDaniel, J. (2019). Growing Up in the Upside Down: Youth Horror and Diversity in *Stranger Things*. In C. Hermansson & J. Zepernick (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television* (pp. 205-222). Pittsburg: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mollet, T. (2019). Demogorgons, Death Stars and Difference: Masculinity and Geek Culture in *Stranger Things*. *Refractory*, 31. ISSN 1447-4905
- Mulvey, L. (1999). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In S. Thornham (Ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (pp. 58-69). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Accessed May 3, 2020. doi: 10.3366/j.ctvxcrtm8.
- Nelson, A. P. (2010). Traumatic Childhood Now Included Todorov's Fantastic and the Uncanny Slasher Remake. In S. Hantke (Ed.), *American Horror Film: The Genre at the Turn of the Millennium* (pp. 119-132). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. Accessed April 25, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Pinedo, I. C. (1997). Recreational Terror and the Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film. In *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* (pp. 9-50). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- <http://search.ebscohost.com.jpllnet.sfsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,uid&db=e000xna&AN=7959&site=ehost-live>.
- Staiger, J. (2015). The Slasher, the Final Girl and the Anti-Denouement. In W. Clayton (Ed.), *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* (pp. 213-228). London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited. Accessed May 3, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Stamp, S. (2015). Horror, Femininity, and Carrie's Monstrous Puberty. In B. K. Grant (Ed.), *The Dread of Difference/Gender and the Horror Film* (2nd ed., pp. 329–345). Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- Wood, R. (1978). Return of the Repressed. *Film Comment*, 14(4), 25-32.
<http://jpllnet.sfsu.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest.com/jpllnet.sfsu.edu/docview/210234247?accountid=13802>.
- (2018). An Introduction to the American Horror Film. In R. Wood, R. Lippe, & B. K. Grant (Eds.), *Robin Wood on the Horror Film: Collected Essays and Reviews*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. muse.jhu.edu/book/62828.
- (2018) Brian De Palma. R. Wood, R. Lippe, & B. K. Grant (Eds.), *Robin Wood on the Horror Film: Collected Essays and Reviews*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. muse.jhu.edu/book/62828.

Filmography

- Cameron, J. (Director) & Hurd, G. A. (Producer). (1980). *Aliens* [Motion Picture]. United States: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Carpenter, J. (Director) & Hill, D. (Producer). (1978). *Halloween* [Motion Picture]. United States: Compass International Pictures.
- Cipriano, A., Cuse, C., Ehrin, K. (Creators) & Greene, J., Southam, T., Lipez, E. (Producers). *Bates Motel* [TV Series]. United States: American Genre Film Archive.
- Craven, W. (Director) & Shaye, R. (Producer). (1984). *A Nightmare on Elm Street* [Motion Picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.
- Konrad, C., Woods, C. (Producers). (1996). *Scream* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dimension Films.
- Konrad, C., Maddalena, M., Williamson, K. (Producers). (2003). *Scream 3* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dimension Films.
- Cunningham, S. S. (Director & Producer). (1980). *Friday the 13th* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.
- Darabont, F., Kang, A. (Creators) & Kim, S. K., Beattie, N., Agypt, C., DeGard, R., Gadd, P., Dale, J., Womble, C. (Producers). (2010- ...) *The Walking Dead* [TV Series]. United States: AMC.

- De Palma, B. (Director) & Monash, P. (Producer). (1976). *Carrie* [Motion Picture]. United States: Red Blank Films.
- Duffer, M., Duffer, R. (Creators), & Geiger, R., Doble, J. (Producers). (2016-...) *Stranger Things* [TV Series]. United States: 21 Laps Entertainment Monkey Massacre.
- Fincher, D. (Director) & Carroll, G., Giler, D., Hill, W. (Producers). (1992). *Alien 3* [Motion Picture]. United States: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Chaffin, C., Fischer, B. J., Medavoy, M., Vanderbilt, J. (Producers). (2007). *Zodiac* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.
- Friedkin, W. (Director) & Blatty, W. P. (Producer). (1973). *The Exorcist* [Motion Picture]. United States: Warner Bros.
- Fuller, B. (Creator) & Schuur, J., Trussell, C. D., Wray, M., Burnett, A., Mancini, D., Kussner, L., Moore, K. (Producers). (2013-2015). *Hannibal* [TV Series]. United States: Dino De Laurentiis Company.
- Hitchcock, A. (Director & Producer). (1960). *Psycho* [Motion Picture]. United States: Shamley Productions.
- (1963). *The Birds* [Motion Picture]. United States: Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions.
- Hooper, T. (Director & Producer). (1974). *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* [Motion Picture]. United States: Vortex.
- Lynch, P. (Director) & Simpson, P. R. (Producer). (1980). *Prom Night* [Motion Picture]. Canada: Guardian Trust Company.
- Muschiatti, A. (Director) & Smith, S. G., Katzenberg, D., Lee, R., Lin, D., Muschiatti, B. (Producers). (2017). *It* [Motion Picture]. Canada: New Line Cinema
- Romero, G. A. (Director) & Rubinstein, R. P. (Producer). (1978). *Dawn of the Dead* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dawn Associates.
- Rubinstein, R. P. (Producer). (1985). *Day of the Dead* [Motion Picture]. United States: UFDC.
- Rosenthal, R. (Director) & Carpenter, J., Hill, D. (Producers). (1981). *Halloween II* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dino De Laurentiis Company.
- Scott, R. (Director) & Carroll, G., Giler, D., Hill, W. (Producers). (1979) *Alien* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom: Brandywine Productions.

- (Director & Producer) & Grazer, B. (Producer). (2007). *American Gangster* [Motion Picture]. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Slater, J. (Creator) & Rea, J., Smith, C. C., Williams Jr., R. M. (Producers). (2016-2018). *The Exorcist* [TV Series]. United States: Morgan Creek Entertainment.
- Wan, J. (Director) & Burg, M., Hoffman, G., Koules, O. (Producers). (2004). *Saw* [Motion Picture]. United States: Evolution Entertainment.
- Wright, G. (Director) & Persinger, M., Selden, K. (Producers). (2000). *Cherry Falls* [Motion Picture]. United States: Rogue Pictures.
- Zombie, R. (Director & Producer) & Akkad, M., Gould, A. (Producers). (2007). *Halloween* [Motion Picture]. United States: Dimension Films.