Puritan Heritage in the American Horror Genre

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni diplomski studij

Anglistika; smjer: nastavnički

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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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1. Introduction

At first glance, the horror genre and religion seem to exist in two separate, opposing realms, with horror concerned with the elicitation of fear and terror from its viewers, and religion with providing moral and spiritual guidance to its practitioners. However, religion has influenced cinema horror since the inception of the genre and, in the words of Douglas E. Cowan, „cinema horror is replete with religion and always has been“ (58). The two remain inextricably linked, particularly within the American cultural context which has historically been shaped by religious narratives. Although many religious ideologies coexist in the U.S. today, the religious creed that has most profoundly influenced American cultural and national identity is undoubtedly Puritanism. Emerging in late 16th century Britain, Puritanism was a reform movement which aimed to restore the Church of England to its former 'purity'. When attempts at reform failed, a group of avid Puritans sailed to America and founded settlements, mostly in New England, which later grew into the nation we know today. Deeply rooted in Calvinist theology, Puritans' strict moral ethic and focus on notions of sin, divine punishment, moral chastity and predestination profoundly shaped American thought and national identity, with their influence spreading to American literature and film.

This thesis aims to explore the influence of Puritan morality and its legacy on the American horror genre, specifically within the subgenre of slasher horror. The first part of this paper will outline the historical development of the Puritan movement and the formation of New England colonies with emphasis on their role as founders of a new nation, as well as illuminate certain core principles of the Puritan faith. The Puritan beliefs in predestination and the inherent sinfulness of humanity that have shaped their strict worldview will be presented in order to examine their legacy on contemporary American culture and American thought in general. Furthermore, Puritan

influence on American literature will be explored through the analysis of three short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Descended from Massachussets Puritans, Hawthorne was deeply influenced by rigorous Puritan ideology and delved into the complexities and contradictions of Puritanism in his literary work, including his short stories “Young Goodman Brown“, “The Minister's Black Veil“ and “The Birth Mark“. Hawthorne's nuanced portrayal of themes of sin, guilt, divine punishment and human nature will provide a foundation to explore the continued relevance of Puritan ideals in American fiction, specifically in horror narratives.

The second part of this paper will explore the presence of Puritan legacy in three iconic slasher films: *Halloween* (1978), *Friday the 13th* (1980) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Slasher films are infamous for their repetitive and formulaic structure which allows for the exploration of the sociocultural context of the 1980s and the resurgence of conservative values during the Reagan era. Particular attention will be paid on the characters' transgressions, such as drug use or sexual promiscuity, and their subsequents punishments embodied in the films' villains. This narrative trope particular to the slasher horror echoes Puritan beliefs in inherent sinfulness and inevitability of punishment. Conversely, analysis will show that the morally superior “final girl“ who survives the killer can be viewed as paragon of Puritan virtue.

2. Puritan History and Legacy

The very foundation of the United States can be attributed to a group of religious reformers known as the Puritans who, since their arrival in the 17th century, have had an undeniably profound imapct on the American psyche, with their influence permeating philosophy, art, literature, film and social mores. The following chapter explores the origins of the Puritanism as well as their key tenets to

comprehend their lasting influence for American society. This will provide a framework for comprehending Puritan themes and motifs in American slasher horror films. Understanding the religious ideology that shaped early American society and continues to affect the horror genre will allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the tales of sin and punishment in slashers which evoke early Puritan teachings.

In the introduction to *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings,* one of the most extensive anthologies of Puritan writings and sermons, authors Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson highlight the dominant role of Puritanism in shaping American culture and thought and state:

> "Puritanism, furthermore, has been accentuated because it was the first of these traditions to be fully articulated, and because it has inspired certain traits which have persisted long after the vanishing of the original creed. Without some understanding of Puritanism, it may safely be said, there is no understanding of America" (1).

Since the inception of American studies as an academic discipline in the early 20th century, many scholars have expressed the same view on the role of Puritanism in shaping of American national and cultural identity. Bercovitch identifies Puritan legacy as "the rhetoric of American identity" (xlv), while Paul dubs them the "first Americans" who heavily contributed to the development of the myth of American exceptionalism (137). To understand the pivotal role Puritanism has had in shaping America, it is necessary to trace its origins and outline the historical development of early Puritan colonies. The movement emerged in the late 16th century as a reform movement within the Church of England. In the 1530s, when the Anglican church severed ties with Rome as a result of the Protestant Reformation, action was taken to reform the newly founded Church and abolish

previous Catholic practices, such as the disestablishment of monasteries. The Puritans, however, believed that the reform should be continued in order to restore the Church of England to the "purity of the first-century Church as established by Christ Himself" (Miller and Johnson 5-6). The Puritans and Anglicans shared many core beliefs – both groups subscribed to Calvinist theology, both believed in the inherent sinfulness of man and held that religion should be man's primary endeavor. Despite their similarities, the groups disagreed on the role of scripture. The Puritans considered the Bible as God's revealed word and viewed it as "a complete body of laws, and absolute code in everything it touched upon", which a learned man with proper education should be able to accurately interpret (ibid. 43). On the other hand, this view of scripture was excessively strict and dogmatic for the Anglicans, who considered the Bible as a text on the broad principles of the Christian religion, while the minor matters of life were up to the reason of men. Both groups accused each other of pride and arrogance, with their conflict escalating by the beginning of the 17th century when a group of reformers sailed to Massachusetts with the goal of evading prosecution and establishing a church of their own (ibid. 45). The first group of separatists known as the Pilgrims arrived to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 aboard the Mayflower and established a colony of 2500 inhabitants within the first few years. A decade later, having acquired the permission by king Charles I, the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts Bay under the guidance of John Winthrop and founded the city of Boston (Paul 138). An important aspect of their voyage to America is its religious motivation – the Puritans and Pilgrims considered America to be the Promised Land and compared their experience to the biblical story of the Hebrews' escape from Egypt, which Paul identifies as one of the most influential Judeo-Christian narratives. According to the author, rooting their story in a religious narrative led to the shaping of the core foundational myth of the United States as a Promised Land and religious utopia (ibid. 139) which is still

maintained by the Puritan religious rhetoric today. Moreover, John Winthrop famously called the Puritan community in America a “city upon a hill”, a new model colony which will realize God’s will (ibid. 151) and “fructify this new Canaan in the western wilderness” (ibid. 181). According to Tiryakian, the United States are the first Protestant nation and the only one which was not in conflict with or succeeded a previous non-Protestant establishment. While in Europe Protestant sects were considered dissenters and were part of a religious minority subverting the Catholic majority, in the United States they were the “founders and elites of the social system” (355). Although many other religious groups in Europe attempted to evade prosecution by emigrating to America in pursuit of religious liberty, some of which remain active today, none of them reached the level of influence as did the Puritans and Pilgrims. (Paul 142).

2.1. Puritan Morality

To understand this influence, it is crucial to understand the religious ideology the Puritans brought to the new colony. According to Miller and Johnson, Puritanism constituted not merely a religion, but a “philosophy and a metaphysic; it was an organization of man’s whole life, emotional and intellectual” (4). In essence, the Puritans were heavily influenced by Calvinist theology, specifically by ideas of humanity’s inherent sinfulness and predestination. In Miller’s and Johnson’s collection of Puritan sermons, reverend Thomas Hooker’s sermon titled *A True Sight of Sin* stands out as an exhaustive source on the Puritan perception of sin and sheds light on their belief in the inherent depravity of man. Hooker urges people to see sin clearly for what it is and states: “[…] we are all sinners; it is my infirmity, I cannot help it; my weakness, I cannot be rid of it; no man lives without faults and follies, the best have their failings” (ibid. 292). The notion that

all people are born sinful unsurprisingly stems from the biblical tale of Adam and Eve and the Christian doctrine of original sin, with this idea being instilled in Puritans from early childhood. The phrase "In Adam's Fall We Sinned All", which appears next to the first letter of the alphabet in the New England Primer, suggests that Puritan children were exposed to the world with an acute awareness of their sinful nature, prompting Anastasova to call the Puritans “experts at evoking guilt” (72). The author suggests that the implication of their inherent evil is further accentuated by their portrayal of God, who was far from a benevolent father figure – for the Puritans, God was a vengeful judge and inquisitor (ibid.). However, despite their belief in their own innate depravity, Puritans thought that God in his benevolence and wisdom had elected certain people for salvation through the Covenant of Grace, while others were damned for eternity. This fundamental Calvinist doctrine is called predestination, which lies on the assumption of God’s ultimate authority and wisdom. As Tiryakian points out, the two-tiered stratification system surely caused anxiety for the individual who had doubts as to which group they belonged to – the elect or the damned. According to the author, a unique aspect of American Puritan culture was their tendency of moralizing all aspects of life due to a distinctly Calvinist belief that salvation can be achieved through piety and asceticism (356). Despite not knowing whether they were part of the elect, all Puritans were obliged to follow a path of righteousness and strive for perfection in their daily life. However, Puritans believed that God was an active participant in their life and would intervene in the lives of individuals or groups to reward certain people or punish others, thus manifesting his choice. For instance, it was widely believed that venereal disease was God’s punishment for individuals who engaged in sinful sexual activities, while economic prosperity was viewed as a sign of being chosen by God for salvation. On a broader scale, this led Puritans to meticulously examine history as well as everyday events to detect potential messages from God. (Bremer 45). It also contributed to their

belief that particular groups were selected by God to play important historical roles – England was seen as an "elect nation" which was supposed to be a leader in defeating the papacy and "the forces of the Antichrist" (ibid. 47).

When discussing Puritan morality and its influence on American culture, it is important to examine the complex history of the use of persecution and violence as instruments of maintaining social order in early New England colonies. One of the most notable and gruesome examples is the Puritans' treatment of Native Americans. According to Buchanan, the New England Puritans took part in genocidal violence which enabled the destruction of numerous Native American communities across the Americas for more than a century after their settlement of Boston (205). The genocide and persecution were fueled by the belief that Native Americans were servants of the Devil instead of followers of God. As a result, Puritans sought to replace indigenous social structures which they believed to be satanic with those aligned with Puritanism, which they believed to be the only true and worthy ideology. The Puritans ardently believed that a new Israel they envisioned in the New World could be established only after the land was free of the native population and the Devil's influence (Wiancko 115). The communities they did not expunge from the territory they attempted to convert. But the practice of conversion included adopting the Puritan language and lifestyle, submission to Puritan political authority and separation of native children who were subsequently educated in Puritan religious customs (ibid. 120). While some missionaries attempted to convert the natives peacefully, others adopted violent methods and brutally slaughtered those who resisted coercion and annihilated entire tribes and villages, such as the Pequots (ibid. 123). But Puritan violence was not reserved solely for peoples outside their religious community – the New England Puritans also persecuted and slaughtered members of their own parishes who adopted Quakerism. The Quakers were a radical religious sect whose members

believed they were imbued with God's spirit and were known for their religious extremism. Following their persecution in England, the Quaker missionaries arrived in New England where they were met with quick retribution from the Puritans. The Puritans viewed the Quakers as "wild sectaries deluded by the devil" who were sent "to undermine their godly efforts" of establishing Christ's church in America (Pestana 442). This perception led to violent punishment and executions of Quakers in 1659 and 1661, further highlighting Puritan hypocrisy in their efforts to bring religious freedom into the New World. But the most notorious example of religiously justified violence committed by Puritans are surely the Salem Witch trials. The 1692 Salem witch trials were a result of the witchcraft hysteria imported to America from Britain and other parts of Europe by colonists in the 16th and 17th centuries. Although the persecution of witches occurred in various parts of Europe as well as Spanish and British America, the majority were held in Puritan New England, the reason for which remains unclear. Richard Godbeer assumes that it is related to the Puritan belief that "God and the Devil were constantly at work … in their day-to-day lives, testing and tempting, rewarding and punishing as each individual deserved" (qtd. in Le Beau 34). As a result, the Puritans "cultivated a harsh, unyielding righteousness that was quick to judge and condemn" (Armstrong, qtd. in Le Beau 34) which resulted in the execution of 20 people in Salem, Massachusetts, while over 150 were imprisoned.

Puritan influence began to wane during The Great Awakening – an era of Christian revivalism in the first part of the 18th century which permanently changed the social order in the colonies and laid the foundation of democratic pluralism. Despite this decline, it is evident that the Puritan religious rhetoric, although transformed and somewhat eradicated, fundamentally influenced the American psyche. The Puritans' emphasis on sin and violent punishments against perceived agents of the devil, justified by a belief in God's divine plan for humanity, left an indelible mark on

American collective consciousness. The following chapter aims to examine the portrayal of Puritanism in Nathaniel Hawthorne's literature. As a representative of the American Gothic as well as a descendant of the Massachusetts Puritans, Hawthorne's work is particularly suitable for the analysis of Puritan values and their reflection of American society. The author's nuanced portrayal of Puritan themes of sin, guilt and punishment within a Gothic framework sheds light on the overall influence of these values on the horror genre.

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne's Portrayal of Puritanism

Nathaniel Hawthorne's works have been praised by critics as comparable to those of European Gothic literary giants such as Walpole and Radcliffe, while others thought his work to be different and distinctly rooted in American history. This camp has hailed Hawthorne as being (alongside Edgar Allan Poe) a representative of a "New England renaissance" (Elbert iv) and a cornerstone of American Gothic tradition. Unlike their British antecedents who relied on their rich national past for inspiration, American Gothic writers had to adapt British genre conventions to their own national circumstances. According to Savoy, Hawthorne drew inspiration from America's colonial past, particularly in the country's Puritan origins (176). When analyzing Hawthorne's literature, it is impossible to consider it outside the context of the author's Puritan legacy. In *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography,* author Milton Meltzer states that Hawthorne's birth place of Salem, Massachusetts is one of the earliest Puritan settlements in America and traces the author's family origins back to the very founders of the infamous town. His ancestor William Hathorne immigrated to Salem in 1630 and became a prominent figure within the newly established theocratic community, known for his merciless treatment of Indians and Quakers. William's son John

Hathorne served as a judge during the notorious Salem witch trials which took place in 1692, also famous for his severe sentences for the often falsely accused (10). The judgements his ancestors passed on purported sinners soon became a prominent theme of Nathaniel's literature, who in his short stories often explored the "mystery of sin" (ibid. 37).

Although the significance of Puritanism in his work is undisputed, critical consensus has not been reached on Hawthorne's attitude towards it. Some view him as a proponent of Puritan values and Calvinist theology, some see in his literature a satire and critique of the creed, while others believe the truth is in the middle ground – Hawthorne neither idealized his Puritan ancestors, nor did he detach himself from them (Mills 78). Contemporary analysis views Hawthorne as both a critic and heir of Puritanism (Anastasova 73) which allowed him to provide valuable insight into Puritan morality through his literature. In the following chapters an analysis of three short stories by Hawthorne will be provided to spotlight the author's unique perspective on Puritan morality. Hawthorne's preoccupation with themes of sin, guilt and divine punishment uncovers the underbelly of Puritan ethics and will serve as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of these themes in the slasher horror format.

3.1. "Young Goodman Brown"

Among the numerous short stories Hawthorne has published during his career, "Young Goodman Brown" stands out as arguably the most widely interpreted. Taking place in 17th century New England, the story tells the tale of Goodman Brown and his journey into the forest that challenges his faith and moral judgement. The ambiguous nature of the story and the fine line between dream and reality is the reason it merited so many varying interpretations by critics. Whether Hawthorne

intended the story to be read as an allegory or reality, it is widely agreed by critics that the central theme of the story is the pervasiveness of sin and evil and the hypocrisy of Puritanism (McKeithan 93).

The story begins with the protagonist Goodman Brown exiting his house at sunset to the streets of Salem, and his troubled young wife Faith urging him to stay with her and abandon his plan to journey to the forest, the reason for which is undisclosed. Brown refuses his wife, but declares that after this night he will "cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven" (Hawthorne 44). Although the reason for his errand is unknown, only that it is for an evil purpose, Connolly interprets it as being a "deliberate quest of sin" (372). On his way, Brown encounters an older man bearing a striking resemblance to himself, who most likely represents the devil. As their journey progresses, Goodman Brown and his companion encounter several esteemed members of their pious community, including Deacon Gookin and Goody Cloyse, who taught Brown his catechism, on their way to take part in a satanic ritual. The story culminates when Brown hears his wife Faith in the forest, causing him to exclaim: "My Faith is gone! […] "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given" (Hawthorne 51). The narrator proceeds to describe a ritual wherein saints and sinners of Salem village gathered around a flaming rock in the forest present Brown and Faith as their newest converts. The devil delivers a speech in which he accuses seemingly virtuous people of sin and asserts that "evil is the nature of mankind" (ibid. 54). No sooner that they are initiated into a covenant of sin with their fellow townspeople, the scene shifts and Goodman Brown finds himself back in the streets of Salem, and the reader is left wondering whether the events of the previous night were real or merely Brown's dream. Whatever the truth may be, the protagonist's disposition is permanently changed – he grows disillusioned and distrustful of his Puritan community, including his wife Faith. The narrator concludes Brown's

life story by saying nothing hopeful was carved on his tombstone, “for his dying hour was gloom” (ibid. 56).

Hawthorne unveils and reflects on several key aspects of Puritan morality through Goodman Brown’s story. As mentioned above, several critics have identified sin as the central theme of this short story. Brown’s journey into the forest where he confronts the reality of his community, but also his own soul, reflects the Calvinist belief in humanity’s inherent depravity. According to McKeithan, the emphasis in this story is not on the sin itself, but rather its “blighting effects” (94) – the nature of the sin Brown committed is unimportant, but rather the fact that he knowingly and willingly indulged in it, further emphasizing the inherent evil that resides in every individual. The author suggests that his wife of three months represents religious faith, which Goodman Brown has lost as a consequence of his indulgence in sin. Connolly, however, provides a different analysis of the story – the author denies that Brown lost his faith, but realized its terrifying implications. At the beginning of their journey, Brown attempts to leave the forest and his companion, saying that he comes from a race of righteous Puritan men who would never embark on such an evil errand. The devil informs Brown that he is well acquainted with his ancestors and proceeds to list their sins, such as the public lashing of a Quaker woman and setting fire to an Indian village (Hawthorne 46). By presenting the wrongdoings of Brown’s supposedly honest Puritan ancestors, Hawthorne lays the foundation for the upcoming climax of the story – the satanic ritual with Salem’s Puritan community. Connolly argues that “Young Goodman Brown” is Hawthorne’s critique of Calvinist morality and the doctrine of predestination. At the beginning of the story, Brown believes that his Faith will lead him to heaven, which is why he decides to “cling to her skirts” once he is finished with his sinful errand. However, seeing that his Faith is already at the forest along with the rest of his Puritan community, he realizes faith will

lead him to hell like all the rest (Connolly 375). The realization that his faith will not bring salvation causes him to become disillusioned with Puritanism and die bitter and isolated, further highlighting the psychological impact preoccupation with sin and the belief in humanity's inherent depravity can have on the individual in the Puritan community.

3.2. "The Minister's Black Veil"

Similarly to "Young Goodman Brown", Hawthorne's 1836 short story titled "The Minister's Black Veil" has elicited a wide range of interpretations by readers and scholars. Several critics have attempted to uncover the secret meaning behind the black veil the protagonist minister Hooper suddenly decides to cover his face with one day. The story begins with Hooper's appearance in his congregation, donning a black veil, which immediately causes speculation and unrest among the parishioners. As the story progresses, the black veil becomes a source of unease and causes Hooper's Puritan community to perceive the veil as a dark and evil omen. Unable to understand or accept the ambiguity of the veil, they slowly ostracize the minister. The only person who attempts to decipher the meaning of the veil and persuade Hooper to abandon it is his fiance Elizabeth, but after his refusal she deserts him as well. Isolated and alone, sorrow envelops the minister while the veil "kept him in the saddest of all prisons, his own heart" (Hawthorne 93) until his death.

Edgar Allan Poe speculated that the veil is connected to Hooper's secret sin, perhaps the death of the young girl whose funeral Hooper conducted the day he first wore the veil. Hawthorne hints at this when he describes Hooper giving his last farewell to the young woman. As he stoops to the coffin, his veil hangs down from his forehead, but he quickly catches it and the narrator speculates whether Hooper is fearful of the dead woman's glance. This moment, however, remains

unresolved, which reflects Hawthorne's tendency to hide the true nature of his characters' transgressions. Numerous critics have agreed that the veil serves as a symbol of punishment for the reverand's unnamed sin, while others interpret his donning of the veil as an act of egoism (Voigt 338). However, much like in "Young Goodman Brown", it is likely that the nature of the sin is unimportant, but rather that Hawthorne is providing through this story a critique of the Puritan preoccupation with sin and the doctrine of predestination. Morsberger identifies "this kind of monomaniac obsession with sin" as the symbolism behind Hooper's veil (456). He argues that Hooper, like many 17th century Puritans, believed in his own inherent sinfulness and in the rigid dichotomy between perfection and aboslute corruption. Although Hooper has no reason to believe in his depravity since he has led an exemplary life, he chooses to spotlight his sinfulness in what Morsberger calls a "spiritual masochism" (458). The author suggests that, by wearing the veil, Hooper exhibits a form a spiritual extremism that borders on pride. On the other hand, publicly wearing the black veil serves as a reminder to his parishioners of their own sinful nature – he is not only accusing himself of sin, but everyone, causing them to shun him. This suggestion is exacerbated by Hooper's final words on his deathbed: "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? […] I look around me, and, lo! On every visage a Black Veil!" (Hawthorne 94). Hooper's final words are indicative of the veil's symbolism – it represents the universal nature of sin, an invisible black veil that all people wear. According to Morsberger, the story can be read as a story about "contagion of sin" – by obsessively wearing the black veil, Hooper himself becomes guilty of pushing away his parishioners. The veil thus becomes a "useless gesture" (461), similar to Hooper's own preoccupation with sin and depravity – a central characteristic of 17th century New England society. Like in "Young Goodman Brown", Hawthorne is presenting the dangers

associated with a society that is obsessed with moral absolutism and achieving moral perfection – a theme that will reappear in the 1980s with the advent of the slasher film.

3.3. “The Birthmark“

It is widely agreed by critics that most of Hawthorne's short stories merit an allegorical interpretation, and “The Birthmark“ is no exception. Similarly to “Young Goodman Brown“ and “The Minister's Black Veil“, in this story Hawthorne is exploring the Puritan ideal of achieving purity and its destructive consequences. The story about Aylmer, an idealistic scientist who grows obsessed with removing his wife Georgiana's crimson, hand-shaped birthmark, provides a great foundation for the exploration of Puritan theme of original sin. According to Zanger, most critics regard Georgiana's birthmark as a symbol of the imperfect human condition, while her husband's attempt to remove it is read as an idealistic striving for perfection (364). This speculation is confirmed by the tale's narrator, who describes Aylmer's thoughts on the mark:

> “The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife’s liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer’s somber imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana’s beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.” (Hawthorne 260)

The narrator proceeds to describe Aylmer's growing obsession with the removal of Georgiana's “symbol of imperfection“ (ibid.) which turns into the focal center of their existence. Georgiana herself soon changes her attitude towards the birthmark, which she previously regarded as

charming, and accepts her husband's view of it as an imperfection worthy of removal. Zanger suggests that her acceptance of her husband's will may be interpreted as a “mentality of submission“, typical for nineteenth century women (365). However, Georgiana's submission to her husband can also be read as an evocation of the position of women in Puritan communites, where they were often expected to submit to the authority of their husbands and the broader patriarchal order.

Aylmer soon retreats into his laboratory with his underworker Aminadab and conducts scientific experiments, confident that with his science he could help Georgiana and “draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude” (Hawthorne 264), further rooting the birthmark’s symbolism in sin. His hubris and belief in science reflects the main theme of the story, which Zanger identifies as “striving for perfection beyond human capabilities which proves to be fatal” (365). Georgiana herself confirms this interpretation – as Aylmer deals with his experiments, she stumbles upon a book containing records of his entire scientific career and concludes it is a record of his failures, a “sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man” (Hawthorne 268). As expected, Aylmer’s experiment result in Georgiana’s death, which further emphasizes the destructiveness of Aylmer’s desire to achieve perfection. His urge to conquer nature through science and technology may also reflect the author’s skepticism of America’s industrialization (Zanger 367). On a broader scale, “The Birthmark” represents Hawthorne’s critique of the Puritanical obsession with the eradication of sin and the unattainable ideal of perfection.

4. The Slasher Film

With its emergence in the 1970s and explosive rise in popularity in the 1980s, the slasher film became a major force within the horror genre. Since its inception, the horror genre has been defined by its marginal position in popular culture and subversive nature. Parallels have often been drawn between horror and pornography due to similar aesthetic criticism and requests for censorship on account of creating moral panic (Jancovich 1). This criticism is perhaps most applicable to slashers – despite producing numerous box office hits and several franchises with significant commercial success, this horror subgenre also received substantial criticism. Critics and viewers continue to condemn slashers for their gruesome and excessive depictions of violence, predictable formula and misogynistic undertones. Rockoff argues that slashers are loathed by individuals, power elites and horror scholars alike (16), while Clover places slashers "at the bottom of the horror heap" (21). Nevertheless, the slasher's cultural impact is undeniable, especially among young audiences, thus meriting closer inspection as a social and cultural phenomenon. How did the slasher manage to cause such an upheaval in American society? The answer may be found in *Projected Fears* – Kendall Phillips' brilliant study on horror films and American culture. In the introduction to the book, the author argues that the key to horror's popularity is its ability to capture collective cultural fears and anxieties and represent them on screen (3). He supports his claim with the rising popularity of horror films during periods of social upheaval and suggests that horror films have a unique ability to face the public with their fears, allowing people to reflect on their anxieties and cope with them more easily (ibid. 9). Slashers, particularly, reflect certain anxieties specific to the late 1970s and early 1980s America which are deeply rooted in Puritan values. To examine how these values manifest themselves in the slasher narrative, it is necessary to outline key characteristics of the genre.

As mentioned above, the slasher is a subgenre of horror, which traces its roots to early European gothic fiction. Although horror has developed significantly since Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, often considered the first gothic text, Gill argues that many of the elements that make up the gothic are echoed in contemporary horror films: helpless heroines, repressed emotions, unfathomable desires, terrifying interiors and landscapes, etc. (16). Films that are considered horror prototypes such as *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931) all feature these gothic elements (Jancovich 3). The first true "ancestor" of the slasher is considered to be Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), while Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) brought to the foreground certain elements which will become defining aspects of the genre (Clover 23-24). These specific slasher tropes include youthful, usually female characters who are targeted by a psychotic killer, a single location and the "final girl". However, it is widely agreed that the first true slasher film is John Carpenter's *Halloween*. Released in 1978, *Halloween* became "arguably, the most successful horror film in American history" and set the precedent for all American horror films in the following decade (Phillips 125). Most slashers released after 1978 reproduced the tropes presented in *Halloween*, thus establishing a distinctive, easily recognizable narrative formula.

Authors have written at length about the specific characteristics that differentiate the slasher from other films in the horror genre, including Carol Clover in *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, a study on the representation of gender in horror, and Adam Rockoff in *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film.* Both authors agree on several key tropes of the genre, the first of which is the killer. Clover argues that the slasher killer prototype is Hitchcock's Norman Bates – a killer motivated by "psychosexual fury", punishing his victim for sexual sins (27). These sexually disturbed killers seemingly possess supernatural abilities which allow them to survive several assaults that would be fatal for an ordinary human (ibid. 30). In *Anatomy of the Slasher,* Petridis

claims that the killer's virtual indestructability leaves "an open ending to the narrative with a sense of an invincible and all-powerful evil that exists in our society". Rockoff, in contrast, states that the slasher villain is often misrepresented as a "boogeyman" – he is almost always a human who has gone through trauma or humiliation in early childhood and seeks revenge for it (5). The killer's motivations for the killings are usually fueled by this past traumatic event which is often presented in the prologue of the film, the anniversary of which usually kickstarts the killing spree (ibid. 12). Slasher killers are notorious for their aversion to guns and other firearms – their weapon of choice is commonly some type of blade: knives, axes, razors, or chainsaws. Certain slasher franchises have become easily identifiable by their killer's weapons – Jason Vorhees in *Friday the 13th* sequels uses a machete, Michael Meyers in *Halloween* slays his victims with a knife, while the bladed leather glove has become synonymous with Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Petridis). According to Clover, the killer's weapon can be interpreted as a phallic symbol which penetrates the victim's flesh and brings "attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace" (32). The brutal and bloody method in which killers murder their victims is precisely what gives the genre its name. Another distinct feature of the slasher is its setting. When discussing slasher settings, it is important to note that these films have a predominantly teenage audience. For this reason, most slasher protagonists are young adolescents and the films take place in spaces associated with teenagers and young adults: high schools, colleges, summer camps, and suburbia. These places are similar in that they are isolated, which serves to separate the characters from society and potential rescue (Rockoff 10). Furthermore, these spaces seem to serve to separate the teenage slasher protagonists from adults since, as is well known, slashers are notorious for their absence of adults (ibid. 11). In her study on representation of family in slashers, Gill argues that the family structure of the slasher film is inherently an absent one – parents in slashers are

distracted and oblivious to the danger at hand, unable to protect their children from the killer. The author suggests these films both "mock and yearn for the middleclass American dream, the promised comfort and contentment of a loving, supportive bourgeois family" (17). The absence of reliable adults in slasher narratives further underscores the shift of narrative focus from adults to teenagers. Unlike previous horror films where adults were the primary protagonists, in slashers the victims are teenagers (Clover 32), which is why terms such as "teenie-kill pic" and "dead teenager" were coined to describe the genre (Kendrick 17). The victims are typically targeted because of their sexual transgressions – scenes in which young couples get brutally murdered after having sex under illicit circumstances have become a staple of the genre (ibid. 33). Although emphasis is placed on the victims' promiscuity as the reason for their downfall, other moral transgressions such as smoking, drinking or doing drugs merit punishment embodied in the slasher killer as well. The only character who is an exception to this rule is the "final girl". Coined by Carol Clover, the "final girl" is a term used to describe the only female character in a slasher film who is able to survive the killer. As stated by Clover, the final girl either delays the killer long enough to survive or she defeats him herself (35). Now established as the genre's most recognizable trope, the lone female survivor was introduced in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and was carried over in all notable slashers following it. Moreover, the final girl's encounter and clash with the psychotic killer at the end of the film is, according to Clover, the slasher's "emphatic climax" (36). She is the unequivocal main character since her perspective merges with that of the audience who experience terror in face of the killer through her eyes, as well as triumph when she defats him (ibid. 44). But the final girl's survival and triumph over the killer is not arbitrary. In slasher films, the characterization of the final girl remains consistent across franchises – Rockoff claims that "the final girl is defined by her toughness, resourcefulness, determination and perseverance" (13), while Clover emphasizes

her “sexual reluctance” as a defining trait that separates her from her peers (40). Her virginal and desexualized disposition is portrayed as a key factor in her survival, implying that her purity and moral virtue align with the underlying morality of the genre, which often punishes characters who deviate from these norms. In the world of the slasher, smoking, drinking and having premarital sex is punishable by death, while abstaining from morally deplorable behavior ensures survival. By adhering to this strict moral code, the final girl embodies the genre's underlying ethos which awards modesty, chastity, bravery and cautiousness.

Taking into consideration the narrative structure of the slasher film as well as key tropes of the genre, it is evident that at the center of these films lies a distinctive narrative formula which, deliberately or not, reflects moral concerns of Puritanism. The predictable slasher formula places emphasis on themes of sin, punishment and redemption which align with Puritan values that shaped the beliefs of early American society. Although American religious ideology has changed and diluted significantly since the arrival of the Puritans in the 17th century, remnants of it continued to shape and influence American national character as well as Americans’ political, cultural and moral values, with this being fairly noticeable during the 1980s. The following chapter aims to explore the reason and manner in which Puritan values reemerged in the slasher decade’s sociopolitical climate. The 1980s saw a rebirth of conservatism and traditional ideals reminiscent of the Puritan ethos as reaction to the hedonistic and morally lax climate of the 1960s and 1970s. Exploration of this cultural change will provide a better understanding of the slasher’s role in reflecting the ethical and moral climate of the time.

4.1. 1980s – Rise of Conservatism

By the time Carpenter's *Halloween* appeared in cinemas across America, the cultural climate began to evolve dramatically, ultimately resulting in a crucial cultural shift during the 1980s. Following the hedonistic and individualistic 1960s and early 1970s, "the seeds of a new, more conservative American culture were beginning to sprout" (Phillips 129). The subsequent era was defined by a return to deeply Puritanical ideals which emphasized traditional family values, community orientation and an aversion towards individualistic, self-indulgent practices. This decade also saw a rise in the activity of conservative religious parties on the political landscape that aimed to restore fundamentalist religious ideology and resist movements that focused on women's and LGBT rights. The ultimate goal of the newly active conservative movement was "to restore a world of simple virtues, an old America based on family, church and the work ethic" (ibid. 132). This new vision of American society is strongly reminiscent of the national ideals the Puritans brought to New England in the 17th century. The resurgence of Puritan values deeply influenced popular culture, with slasher films being the cinematic manifestation of the complex cultural dynamics that marked the decade.

Leading up to the conservative turn of the 1980s, the previous decades were marked by a general decline of strict 1950s morality that peaked during the late 1970s. Restrictions on sexuality and emphasis on the nuclear family were soon replaced by disco culture, which peaked in popularity in the 1970s. The influence of disco extended beyond the music scene, offering a lifestyle change which included sexual liberation, experimentation with substances as well as gender and style. Phillips point out that critics of the new cultural trend condemned "superficiality and narcissism" they believed disco culture promoted (130). However, the principal issue during

this period was, according to Phillips, the changing attitude towards sexuality. Apart from disco, liberal views on sexual morality were influenced by the rise in popularity of sexually explicit literature and films. Another crucial factor that impacted the sexual liberation movement was the increased political activity of the LGBT community and their growing presence in the cultural and political landscape of the time, thus transforming contemporary views on gender and sexuality. The sexual liberation movement mainly impacted and was directed at young women who were embracing sexual laxness as part of a broader feminist movement. But the movement's impact surpassed age boundaries – middle-aged and older adults adopted a fairly liberal attitude toward sex as well. The decade was dubbed the "swinging seventies" as the sexual revolution extended beyond young urban communities and entered the suburban home. As parents began experimenting with their sexuality, the image of the traditional nuclear family altered radically. The erosion of family values was perhaps most evident in increased divorce rates at the time. In *The Divorce Culture,* Barbara Dafoe Whitehead points out that divorce rates rose in the 1960s and continued to increase until their eventual stabilization in early 1980s. The author claims this is due to changed perception of the individual's responsibility towards the family unit. In other words, society began valuing individualism over familial obligations and placed emphasis on fulfilment of one's own needs above the needs of the family (qtd. in Gill 18). Phillips reinforces the idea that the values of hedonism and narcissism were prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, describing a period "where the pleasure of the individual took precedence over communal values" (131). Although the author recognizes some positive impacts of the sexual revolution, specifically on the gay and women's rights movement, he highlights the manner in which it led to a cultural shift towards a "self-serving American culture" (131).

The change of direction from hedonism to conservatism began in the late 1970s with the revival of 1950s imagery. Nostalgia for seemingly simpler times of the baby-boomer generation manifested itself through popular culture with television shows and films appearing that idealized this era. Shows such as *Happy Days* and films such as *Grease* featured the 1950s aesthetic and expressed a nostalgic longing for the values of the time (Phillips 132). The growing societal change was not limited to popular culture, but manifested itself in the political realm as well, setting the stage for a conservative revival in the United States. In collective American memory the eighties are often referred to as the Reagan era or the Reagan Revolution, a period defined by the presidency of Ronald Reagan, former governor of California and former president of the Screen Actors Guild. According to Phillips, Reagan's election "brought the permissive, aimless era of the 1970s to both a literal and a symbolic end" (142). After becoming governor in 1967, Reagan was elected president of the United States in 1980 and served two consecutive terms, during which he significantly transformed the American cultural and political landscape. Reagan's election campaign coincided with growing dissatisfaction among Americans with the perceived moral corruption of the sixties and seventies, as well as concerns about economic difficulties and terrorism in the Middle East. Reagan relied heavily on the discontent of American citizens to further his presidential campaign. During his 1979 announcement for presidential candidacy, Reagan began employing Puritan rhetoric, stating:

> "We who are privileged Americans have had a rendezvous with destiny since the moment in 1630 when John Winthrop, standing on the deck of the tiny Arbella off the coast of Massachusetts, told the little band of Pilgrims, "We shall be a city upon a hill (…)"

Reagan, referred to as "Great Communicator" by Rowland and Jones (640), continued to use Puritan rhetoric to convey his vision of America after his election, specifically the "city upon a

hill" metaphor. It became a hallmark of his speeches throughout his political career, up until his farewell address to the nation in 1989. In that final address, Reagan once again invoked the image of the "shining city upon a hill" to describe his vision of a free and prosperous United States. By using John Winthrop's metaphor, the president appealed to the ideal of exceptionalism, moral fortitude and the American Dream which resonated with many United States citizens. From the very beginning of his political career, Reagan expressed the view that the United States were God's elect nation which was has throughout history been sought out by people who valued freedom and courage. In Reagan's narrative, adhering to these core principles and values would ensure future prosperity for the United States, while deviation from them led to the nation's ruin (ibid. 644).

Throughout his presidency, Reagan strived to reaffirm what he considered core American values. According to Phillips, his political program was not dissimilar from the overall Republican agenda which focused on greater defense spending, tax cuts and reduced welfare spending. However, a culturally conservative stance would also become a crucial part of Reagan's conservative political agenda, deeply influencing and transforming the American psyche. Reagan primarily focused on the restoration of traditional family values. Ahead of Christmas in 1986, the president addressed the nation in a radio broadcast about family values. In it, he reaffirmed the idea of family as the "the nucleus of civilization" and asserted that "all those aspects of civilized life that we most deeply cherish -- freedom, the rule of law, economic prosperity and opportunity -- that all these depend upon the strength and integrity of the family" (Reagan). He proceeded to argue that while some people believed in the erosion of the traditional family in today's world, he disagreed, believing it more crucial than ever for families to uphold traditional values. Along with emphasizing the importance of restoring traditional family values, Reagan's rhetoric also highlighted religious faith as an important aspect of restoring America to its former greatness. As

mentioned above, during this period the Religious Right became more vocal and was committed to bringing America back to the "more holy" time of the 1950s and to resist the moral decline of previous decades (Phillips 142). Reagan's alignment with religious fundamentalists is not surprising given his own religious upbringing. As stated by Vaughn, the moral values that guided Reagan as president were acquired early in life and were influenced by his mother Nelle and Ben H. Cleaver, a minister of the First Christian Church in Illinois. The author argues that these two influences shaped the future president's beliefs in Providence, America's divine mission and his admiration of work ethic and progress, as well as his hostility towards communism and sexually explicit literature that he believed challenged the nuclear family (120).

The Puritan ideology the president preached during his time in office forever changed the American cultural fabric. Nostalgia for traditional family structures, moral discipline and stability quickly entered popular culture. As the American public grew more conservative and adapted to new ethical standards, the horror genre provided a cinematic expression for the moral dilemmas of the new decade. Although the slasher film received intense backlash from conservative audiences, they can also be viewed as the expression of those values. The slasher's narrative structure that focuses on themes of sinful behavior, retribution and consequences for moral transgressions can be seen as a reflection of the renewed Puritan ethos as well as a challenge of it. Much like Hawthorne's complex perspective on Puritanism, the slasher film neither upholds nor condemns this moral framework. Rather, it provides a portrait of a specific time in American cultural history and captures the complex and often contradictory values that defined it. In the following chapters, a detailed analysis of *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* will be conducted with the goal of providing a unique perspective on how Puritan values manifest themselves within a slasher narrative.

5. Puritan Morality in Slasher Films

5.1. Sin and Punishment

In *Anatomy of a Slasher,* Sotiris Petridis asserts that in the world of the slasher there exists a dichotomy between the survivors and the victims. The choice between who lives and who dies is far from arbitrary – the author argues that it is dependent on a specific set of rules which constitute Normality. Relying on theories by Robin Wood and Sophie Freud, Petridis presents Normality as a set of rules and conventions that align with societal standards. Not adhering to this set of socially accepted conventions is met with retribution or elimination from said society. The author argues that „horror films are based on Normality, which promotes the general perception of the period in which the film was produced, what is "right" and what is not", and slashers are not an exception. Taking into consideration Petridis's claim, it can be observed how slasher films use the concept of Normality to establish the moral landscape of the narrative and determine the fates of its characters, creating a clear opposition between survivors and victims. If Normality in the film can help viewers identify the social norms of the society it was created in, it can be argued that the moral framework of the film aligns with Puritanical values that dominated the 1980s. The narrative structure of *Halloween, Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* affirms this notion – characters who defy the rules of Normality and engage in behaviors that would be considered sinful are met with punishment for their sins, personified in the slasher villain. But what are the rules that constitute Normality in these films? According to Richard Fink, they are as follows: "Number one — you cannot have sex. Number two — you can never drink or do drugs for as the film explains it is an extension of number one and is specifically labeled the sin factor. Number three — never saying "I'll be right back". The slasher narrative thus reflects and perpetuates the conservative values of

the era by swiftly punishing behaviors that are reminiscent of the "morally corrupt" sixties and seventies, such as premarital sex, substance abuse or defiance of authority.

The most glaringly obvious example of punishing what is considered morally deviant behavior is retribution for sexual transgressions. According to Clover, killing sexually active teenagers became "a generic imperative of the slasher film" that "crosses gender lines" (34). Petridis argues that the sexual conduct of characters is inextricably linked to the concept of Normality. In other words, characters who have sex defy the norms represented in the slasher, while survivors are described as virginal and sometimes asexual. This aligns with Puritan views on sexuality – although it is a misconception that Puritans did not engage in or enjoy sex, they had far from a liberal idea of what constitutes appropriate sexual conduct. Sex was a practice reserved for a husband and wife, while extramarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and other types of sexual indulgence were severely condemned (Bremer 54). This conservative attitude toward sex reemerged during the Reagan era due to increased activity of religious political parties and as a reaction to the sexual liberation movement, and found its expression in slasher films. The pattern of punishing sexually active adolescents became a narrative device that reinforces Normality in the slasher world and reminds the audience of the consequences of immoral behavior.

Carpenter's *Halloween,* regarded as the first classical slasher, opens with this type of scene. The film begins on Halloween night 1963 with six-year-old Michael Meyers voyeuristically observing his sister Judith walking upstairs to the bedroom to have sex with her boyfriend while she is supposed to be watching Michael. Through Michael's point of view, the audience watches the boy grab a butcher's knife from the kitchen and head upstairs to the bedroom where, among scattered clothes, his sister is brushing her hair, wearing nothing but her underwear. He brutally stabs her and leaves her naked body on the ground which is soon discovered by Michael and

Judith's parents who send their son to a sanatorium in the aftermath of the murder (*Halloween* 0:02:35-0:07:00). By opening the film with Judith's murder, Carpenter introduces the moral framework under which the world of *Halloween* operates and sets the tone for the rest of the narrative. Judith being murdered nude immediately after having sex establishes the first sin of the film and suggests a cause-and-effect relationship between sexual sin and subsequent punishment. This logic is later reinforced when Michael returns to Haddonfield in 1978 and begins his killing spree. It is hardly a coincidence that Annie is Michael's first victim after Judith considering the circumstances of her murder. Shortly before she is caught by Meyers, Annie is babysitting little Lyndsey Wallace across the street from the Doyle house, where *Halloween's* final girl Laurie Strode is babysitting little Tommy. After receiving a phone call from her boyfriend Paul, who informs her that his parents have left, Annie decides to leave Lyndsey with Laurie while she goes to pick up Paul and sleep with him. Her plan, however, is interrupted by Michael who waits for her in the car and strangles her from the backseat (0:49:20-0:54:11). Annie's storyline is eerily reminiscent of Judith's who is also killed for choosing sexual indulgence over honoring her responsibilities. Two other transgressors soon meet their end at the hands of Michael – Laurie and Annie's friend Lynda and her boyfriend Bob. After having made an arrangement with Annie to come to the Wallace home and use one of their bedrooms, they enter the house but are surprised to find it empty. But the realization that neither Annie nor Lyndsey are home does not deter them from following through on their plan – they begin kissing on the couch under the watchful eye of Michael Myers. Following their sexual encounter, Bob goes downstairs and is met with Michael who stabs him with a butcher's knife. Michael then heads upstairs and strangles Lynda with the telephone cord while she is on the phone with Laurie (0:59:58-1:08:05). All of these sequences emphasize the recurring theme in *Halloween* – sexual sins are to be met with quick retribution.

Sean Cunningham *Friday the 13th* follows a similar logic and narrative structure as *Halloween.* Like Carpenter, Cunningham decides to establish the first sin in the prologue of the film as well. Set in 1958 at Camp Crystal Lake, the film begins with two camp counselors leaving a campfire gathering to a nearby cabin. As they begin to undress, the focus shifts to the point of view of the killer who catches them in the act and brutally murders them (*Friday the 13th* 0:00:30-0:05:10). The killer is later revealed to be Pamela Vorhees, mother of young Jason Vorhees who lost his life at Crystal Lake the previous year due to negligence of two camp counselors. Twenty-two years later, a group of camp counselors arrives to Camp Crystal Lake to prepare it for its reopening. The motif of punishment for sexual sins is most prominent in the murder scene of Jack and Marcie. Like the two camp counselors in 1958, Jack and Marcie separate from the group in a nearby cabin for a sexual encounter. They are too distracted to notice that their friend Ned's lifeless body is in the bunk bed above them and that Pamela is watching them from the shadows. After Marcie leaves to go to the toilet, Pamela attacks Jack and pierces his throat with an arrow while he is lying in bed. Soon after, she finds Marcie in the shower and kills her with an axe to the head (0:36:40-0:46:53).

Unlike *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, which fit neatly into the slasher category from a structural and ideological perspective, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is more challenging to categorize due to its surrealist elements and use of special effects. Nonetheless, critics such as Vincent Canby have classified it as a slasher film due to the exceptionally high "mortality rate among sexually active teenagers" (qtd. in Kendricks 18). Indeed, the film's portrayal of sexual sins and their repercussions aligns with the resurgence of Puritan values in 1980s America, thus paralleling the morality presented in *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. While Wes Craven does not establish the sexual sin in the prologue of *A Nightmare on Elm Street,* the film reiterates the same

moralistic logic of its predecessors which becomes the central driving force of the narrative. The story is centered around the film's villain Freddy Krueger – a "filthy child murderer" who was released because "somebody forgot to sign the search warrant in the right place" (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 0:57:42). After his release due to a minor technicality, the aggravated parents of his victims tracked him down in a boiler room where he used to bring the children he murdered and burned him alive. Now existing only in the spirit realm and in "the collective subconscious" (Kendricks 23) of the film's protagonists, Krueger targets his victims in their dreams and kills them using his signature bladed gloves. Several scenes in the film underscore the notion that sexual transgressions merit violent punishment. In the film's opening credits, Freddy Krueger has entered the dream world of Tina Gray – his first victim in the film. In her nightmare, Freddy chases Tina through a boiler room and attempts to kill her by slashing her nightgown. After she wakes up, she is left shaken, afraid and with a torn nightgown. Tina's subsequent death mirrors the deaths of Annie, Lynda and Marcie. Afraid of the figure from her nightmare, Tina asks her friend Nancy and Nancy's boyfriend Glen to stay with her while her mother is away. Tina's love interest in the film, Rod Lane, soon joins the group in Tina's house and they leave Nancy and Glen to go to the bedroom. As the pair falls asleep, Freddy enters Tina's nightmare once again and murders her by slashing her with razors while Rod helplessly observes (0:14:50-0:18:01). Another crucial scene which reinforces the film's moral framework is the death of Nancy's boyfriend Glen. Although he is not explicitly targeted for sexual transgressions, he has exhibited behavior that would characterize him as morally loose in the context of conservative values. Most notably, when Glen and Nancy are left alone in Tina's house, he makes sexual advances on Nancy, which she refuses. She justifies her rejection by stating that they are there to help Tina, to which Glen replies: "Morality sucks!" (0:11:25) after hearing Rod and Tina in the room next door. Although Glen has

not explicitly committed any perceived sexual transgressions in the film, he, along with the remaining protagonists, stand in stark contrast with the film's final girl Nancy who is the sole embodiment of virtue.

Although sexual sins are the most recurring and recognizable sin in slasher films, other moral transgressions committed by the characters defy the rules of Normality presented in the films. Alcohol and substance abuse occur in all three films and are depicted as sinful and deserving of punishment. Furthermore, characters who partake in drinking, smoking or drugs are often portrayed as rebellious, reckless or morally weak, further underscoring their sinful nature. In *Halloween,* Annie is portrayed as reckless and irresponsible in her duties toward Lyndsey, the little girl who she is supposed to babysit. Additionally, Annie and Laurie smoke marijuana in the car on their way to their respective babysitting jobs (0:31:02-0:32:51). Although this presents a deviation from Laurie's character arc since she is the morally superior final girl, she is portrayed as more innocent and inexperienced than Annie in this sequence. Furthermore, Lynda and Bob are drinking and smoking in the car immediately before entering the Wallace house, a practice they continue once inside. In fact, going to get beer for Lynda leads to Bob's fatal encounter with Michael in the kitchen (1:05:15). In *Friday the 13th,* the camp counselors are portrayed as reckless and irresponsible as well. The film features heavy alcohol consumption among the protagonists as well as smoking marijuana. Bill, Brenda and Alice smoke Marcie's marijuana and drink beer in the strip monopoly sequence (0:40:26-0:40:43), while Jack smokes immediately before he discovers Ned's body above him and Pamela kills him (0:42:28). The characters also display defiance of adult authority throughout the film. Pamela's first victim Annie disregards and mocks warnings from the locals about Crystal Lake, while the other characters are fairly disrespectful towards the police officer who arrives at the camp searching for Ralph, another local who warns the camp

counselors about the dangers of the camp. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the teenage protagonists are not explicitly shown breaking the rules of Normality through alcohol or substance abuse, but the police officer who arrests Rod for Tina's murder describes him as "the musician type" and points out his previous arrests for drugs and brawling (0:18:50). However, Nancy's mother Marge, who is eventually targeted by Freddy as well, is portrayed as an alcoholic throughout the film. Although her involvement in Freddy's murder can also be interpreted as the reason for Freddy's attack, her weak morality and addiction to alcohol is unlikely to be coincidental.

In all three slasher films, the dichotomy between victims and survivors rests on a deeply Puritanical idea of Normality. By depicting characters engaging in socially deviant behavior immediately before they are killed, these films send a clear message. These sequences primarily serve to depict these actions as sinful and morally reprehensible, but also to reinforce the idea that defying social conventions of appropriate behavior should be met with punishment, which is in accordance with Puritan ideology. As mentioned before in this paper, Puritans believed that leading a pious, ascetic and disciplined life was the only way to honor God and escape eternal damnation. By punishing perceived moral transgressions with death (like the Puritans have been known to do throughout history), the slasher genre reinforces the idea that morally righteous individuals are the only ones worthy of salvation, while those stepping out of the boundaries of social order are to be met with dire consequences.

5.2. Monsters as Enforcers of Morality

Ever since the horror genre's Gothic beginnings, the monster has served as a crucial character and powerful symbol of the repressed fears and desires of a given society or group of people. The

monster in horror is closely intertwined with the concept of otherness. While several different scholars, philosophers and theorists have written about and interpreted the concept of otherness from various perspectives, in this paper Robin Wood's interpretation of "the Other" will be used. When analyzing "the Other", Wood relies on psychoanalytic theory of repression and differentiates between basic and surplus repression. Basic repression is ubiquitous and impossible to avoid as it differentiates humans from animals and is tied to our ability for self-control, cognition, empathy, etc. (63). Conversely, surplus repression is unique to a given culture and refers to the process by which humans are socialized from an early age to assume predetermined societal roles. Wood argues that, while basic repression is universal and necessary, surplus repression "makes us into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists" (64). The author asserts that our culture operates under extreme levels of surplus repression, particularly when it comes to human sexuality. For Wood, "the Other" is closely related to surplus repression because it embodies "that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with" (ibid. 65). In other words, otherness represents something that is not external to society, but rather what "is repressed (though never destroyed) in the self and projected outward in order to be hated and disowned" (ibid. 66). The author offers a particularly apt example of the Puritans' violent treatment of Native Americans. Wood claims that the Puritans' viewed the natives as sexually promiscuous and uncivilized due to associating them with the Devil, who they related to sexual energy. Demonizing the Native Americans' sexual liberation and freedom offers a glimpse into the strict morality that caused Puritans to repress their own sexuality. This perception illustrates how repression within the self and the projection of repressed desires onto the Other can lead to violent annihilation of the Other.

In the context of the horror genre, the dynamic of repression and otherness is reinterpreted through the relationship between Normality and the Monster. The author offers a fairly simple formula: Normality (defined as conformity to the dominant social norms) is threatened by the Monster. While social institutions such as the marriage, the family, church, and police are representative of Normality, the Monster is adaptable and takes form of a given society's current fundamental fears (ibid. 71). Following this logic, it is not surprising that the representation of the Monster has varied significantly through different cultural and historical contexts. In the cinematic beginnings of the genre, horror was always something external to American audiences – horror films from the 1930s such as *Dracula, King Kong* or *Frankenstein* were always set in remote lands, implying that if Americans were physically attacked by the monster, they would still remain morally uncompromised. The tone shifts in the 1960s with the release of slasher's progenitor – Hitchcock's *Psycho.* Following its release, the representation of the monster changed, thus taking the form of a human psychotic, the Antichrist, a vengeful natural force, a terrible child or cannibal (ibid. 75). Wood argues that, as opposed to something external, the locus of horror becomes something intrinsic to American culture – the family unit. This change is unsurprising given the cultural crisis that began in the sixties and continued until the conservative shift of the Reagan era.

The representation of the Monster underwent significant change in the decade of the slasher which coincided with a return to conservative values in America. According to Wood, earlier horror films portrayed the Monster as a manifestation of the id, a materialization of the repressed desires and urges deemed unacceptable by the norms of Normality. This representation of the Monster allows the viewer to interpret it as the embodiment of a darker aspect of human nature or "the Other". As the genre evolved, particularly following the release of *Halloween*, so did the representation of the Monster. Following the conservative resurgence, the slasher emerged along

with a new type of Monster – a new "Other", one that not only produces horror through extreme violence, but enforces a strict moral order. The Monster now became "a superego figure, avenging itself on liberated female sexuality or the sexual freedom of the young" (ibid. 173). In a chapter titled "Others—The "Monsters" of Slasher Films", Petridis asserts that in the slasher subgenre, the portrayal of the Monster or the Other typically follows a unique and consistent pattern which has been developed throughout the classical cycle.[1] This pattern has been discussed by Carol Clover and Adam Rockoff as well and includes killers who are usually male, white, asexual or sexually disturbed, traumatized by a past event and murder teenagers who rebel against the moral conventions of the period. Killers discussed in this paper fit well into the proposed pattern. Michael Meyers is traumatized by the perceived negligence of his sister due to her 'promiscuity' and punishes those who engage in similar behavior such as premarital sex and substance abuse. Freddy Krueger, however, is seeking revenge for his own murder and attempting to exact it on the children of the parents that killed him. Although no childhood trauma or sexual confusion is mentioned in the film, Freddy being a child murderer (which suggests child molestation as well) is enough for Clover to characterize him as "sexually disturbed" (28). The first installment of *Friday the 13th* presents somewhat of an anomaly to the pattern – the murderer is a middle-aged woman who is neither sexually disturbed nor traumatized from her childhood, but exacting revenge for the death of her son which occurred due to the negligence of camp counselors. However, the following sequels with Jason in the role of the killer fit into the pattern well. At the end of the first film, it is revealed that Jason is not dead and in the films that followed he seeks vengeance for his mother's

[1] The classic cycle of slasher films, as defined by Petridis in *Anatomy of a Slasher*, includes films released 1974-1993.

death, whose severed head he enshrines, hinting at his excessive and potentially disturbed connection to her (ibid.)

Slasher killers are typically imbued with supernatural abilities. As mentioned previously, Clover and Petridis both highlighted the killer's supposed indestructability and supernatural abilities that transcend human limitations as key aspects of the killer's characterization which contribute to the sense of an omnipresent evil within each film. In *Halloween,* Dr. Loomis, the psychiatrist who treated Michael Myers following the murder of his sister, refers to Michael as "it" instead of "him" (0:08:20) and as "the evil" (0:10:59). In several instances during the film, Michael appears and seemingly disappears into thin air, he miraculously knows how to drive a car despite being institutionalized his entire life, while his mask further highlights his lack of humanity. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street,* Freddy Krueger's supernatural abilities are perhaps most prominent – he exists in the spirit plane and has a unique ability of killing victims in their dreams, defying all physical laws. While in the first *Friday the 13th* Pamela Vorhees does not exhibit any supernatural abilities, Jason's ability to resurrect after his drowning in the beginning of the first film portrays him as a mythical avenger. Richard Fink suggests that these villains' supernatural attributes have a religious connection, which is further explored in some sequels of the films. This adds a layer of subversion and ambiguity to the slasher killers who are presented as both agents of divine retribution as well as "weapons of a darker force at play".

This characterization of the Other in the slasher genre is in line with the subversive and reactionary nature of the genre as a whole. According to Robin Wood, although repression theory allows for a political categorization of horror films, such classifications are never unambiguous or straightforward. While horror narratives carry potential to challenge traditional and patriarchal norms, the option of taking on a more conservative and reactionary tone exists as well. The author

highlights the existence of a reactionary tradition of horror which under certain social circumstances becomes the dominant one (170). This ambiguity within the genre allows slashers to both uphold and critique the values that dominated the Reagan era, with the slasher villain being the personification of this contradiction. While these killers initially appear to enforce a strict morality by punishing those who deviate from it, the brutal and violent manner in which they enforce said morality subverts the values they seem to uphold and undermines their moral authority.

5.3. The Final Girl – A Paragon of Puritan Virtue

The "Final Girl" trope has become a central part of all slasher narratives from the classical cycle and is today the most recognizable element of the genre. Coined by Carol Clover in her seminal work *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, the term is used to refer to the final female survivor of every slasher narrative. As was already noted, final girls across different franchises share fairly similar traits and embody both modesty and vulnerability as well as bravery and resourcefulness when faced with the killer. These traits serve to easily distinguish her from the rest of the characters who are marked for death early on in the story. As stated by Jamie Lee Curtis, who Rockoff refers to as "Final Girl par excellence", the underlying principle of slasher narratives involves a sexual factor since "they kill the loose girls and save the virgins" (14). This characterization of final girls perfectly summarizes the moral implications these characters have for the narrative. By punishing other characters for supposedly sinful behaviour

and rewarding the final girl for her piety and virtue, the final girl becomes a symbol of the slasher's underlying conservative message.

The final girl is introduced in the beginning of each film and occupies the most screen time since she is the only one of her peers to survive until the end of the film. But perhaps more significant, the final girl is the only character (besides the killer) who is psychologically developed, allowing the audience to understand and resonate with her. According to Clover, she is "intelligent, watchful, levelheaded" (44), but also practical and virginal. The archetype of the female final survivor was introduced in 1974 in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, but was developed and solidified after the release of *Halloween*, making Laurie Strode the quintessential final girl. Carpenter signals Laurie's virtue to the viewers in almost every frame she occupies. From the first moment she is introduced it is obvious she fits the final girl pattern – she is seen exiting her house carrying a stack of thick books, promising her father to complete an errand before school. On her way to the Myers house where she is supposed to leave the key, she has a sweet interaction with young Tommy Doyle who she babysits. Even though Laurie is only seventeen in the film, her behavior towards Tommy is nurturing and motherly. However, her role within the narrative is fully revealed only after the introduction of her friends Annie and Lynda, who stand in direct opposition to Laurie. In their first scene together, Lynda is complaining about her numerous errands before the upcoming school dance such as learning the new cheerleading choreography and going to the hairdresser, while Laurie responds that she has nothing to do, as usual (*Halloween* 0:20:30). While Annie complains about her boyfriend being grounded and not being able to come over that night, Laurie innocently remembers she forgot her chemistry book in school, to which Lynda replies that she always forgets all her books because she does not need them (0:21:05-0:21:35). Furthermore, Annie and Lynda share a cigarette in the scene, while Laurie abstains. Even the characters' clothes

imply a contrast between them – while Annie and Lynda are wearing colorful clothes in line with the trends of the era, Laurie is dressed in drab, modest and evidently outdated clothing. If the implications of her virtue are not enough for the viewer to deduce Laurie's character, Annie's commentary certainly solidifies it. In several instances in the film, she scolds Laurie for being too conservative, telling her how tragic it is that she never goes out (0:24:37) and commenting how she would make "an excellent Girl Scout" (0:31:29). Annie and Laurie are opposed when it comes to sexual freedom as well. Annie is sexually active and attempts several times to persuade Laurie to talk to boys, while Laurie is apprehensive and clearly coded as a virgin. This theme is most clearly expressed when Annie informs Laurie that she asked a boy from their school to the dance in Laurie's name, which causes Laurie extreme embarrassment (0:41:50). The only instance in which Laurie does not adhere to the underlying moral code of the narrative is when she smokes marijuana with Annie. But, as mentioned previously, it is implied that she is more inexperienced in the practice than Annie, evident in her constant coughing and paranoia when they are met with Annie's father (0:33:50). Through her innocence, obedience and sexual reluctance, Laurie Strode perfectly encapsulates the final girl archetype, thus reflecting the conservative attitudes of the time.

Although Alice Hardy is not portrayed as virginal and conservative as Laurie, her characterization still reflects many conservative attitudes that shaped the final girl trope. Unlike Laurie's first appearance where her modesty and caring nature are highlighted, in Alice's first scene her ability, resourcefulness and responsibility are highlighted. She is seen leading the new camp counselors and helping the new owner rebuild and repair the old camp facilities (*Friday the 13th* 0:15:01). Although she is not depicted as explicitly virginal and sexually inexperienced as Laurie, she rejects the advances of Crystal Lake's owner Steve, highlighting her focus and moral fortitude. This sequence becomes specifically relevant following the deaths of Jack and Marcie

immediately after a sexual encounter. The fact that Alice is the only one who remains clothed during the strip monopoly sequence is hardly a coincidence as well. But above all, Alice's behavior after she realizes there is a danger present is most indicative of her special role within the story. In the climax of the film, immediately before and during her violent encounter with Mrs. Vorhees, Alice is shown to be practical and brave despite her fear, which ultimately leads to the killer's defeat and her survival.

If Alice Hardy presents a more evolved iteration of the final girl as presented by Laurie Strode, Nancy Thompson from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is certainly the "grittiest" (Clover 38) and most developed of the three. While she shares some characteristics with Laurie and Alice that allow for her categorization as a final girl, Nancy is further defined by her proactive and strategic thinking that allows her to defeat Freddy and sets her apart from other final girls. Like her counterparts, Nancy is also defined by sexual reluctance, which is contrasted with the sexually expressive nature of her friends who are murdered because of it. This is highlighted when she rejects Glen because she feels an obligation to keep Tina safe and honor her commitment to her. Her rejection of Glen is not an arbitrary personal choice – her decision to prioritize her responsibility to her friend underscores her purity as well as her moral integrity which firmly positions her into the final girl category. However, her proactive and intelligent approach to survival is what sets her apart from her friends and other final girls discussed in this paper. While Laurie and Alice react to the killer only when the danger is imminent, Nancy actively attempts to deal with Freddy. She takes medication (1:01:27) and consumes copious amounts of coffee to stay awake (0:51:50) and confronts authority figures such as her mother who attempt to undermine the gravity of the situation (0:52:58). Once she understands that she must face Freddy to overcome him, she devises a plan that includes setting up booby traps to defeat him (0:55:27). When the time

comes for their final confrontation, Nancy defeats Freddy not by killing him, but by taking away his power – she simply turns her back to him, refusing to show him fear. Although Nancy can be characterized as a final girl typical of the classical slasher cycle, her ingenuity and tactical thinking foreshadow a shift towards a new final girl typical of the 1990s self-referential slasher cycle.

When examining the role of the final girl in reflecting conservative values of the period, it is impossible to shy away from gender-based analysis employed by Carol Clover since it allows a better understanding of the character's overall significance. Clover describes the final girl as "boyish" and "not fully feminine" since she is imbued with traits typically reserved for male characters that alienate her from her female counterparts (40). The unique blend of feminine and masculine traits make the final girl an ambiguous character who subverts femininity and gender roles. Sally, the final girl of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* survives torture and mutilation primarily due to an astounding will to live, but she does not actively confront or defeat the killer. The slasher final girl presents a radical shift and departure from this model – Laurie Strode is the first final girl who, despite her screaming and crying, fights back and subdues the killer without outside help (ibid. 37). This shift is further exemplified in the characters of Alice and Nancy who adhere to this trend – despite their overt femininity, the final girls of the classical cycle quickly turn to agression to ensure their survival, further blurring gender lines in the story. Clover argues that by killing the killer the final girl symbollically emasculates him, while symultaneously appropriating masculine traits in herself. Her transformation is evident by her use of weapons which carry clear phallic symbolism (49). This shift in the characterization of the final girl makes sense taking into consideration the broader societal and economic context of the late seventies and early eighties. According to film critic Vera Dika, the underlying theme of slasher films is that ideals of pacifism and unrestricted inidividual freedom associated with previous decades have become antiquated in

light of new social issues. In her analysis of the slasher genre, the author concluded that new values such as self-awareness, a conservative approach to sexuality and, most importantly, a willingness to use violence when necessary, were required to survive in the new world and were promoted in slasher films (qtd. in Kvaran 955). Although ambiguous at first glance, the final girl perfectly embodies the spirit of the age. Laurie's, Alice's and Nancy's unique combination of femininity and readiness for violence and retaliation aligns with the demands of the new era proposed by Dika. Furthermore, the process of masculanization of the final girl can be viewed as a reflection of the conservative revival of Puritan values which are deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology. By embodying both feminine and masculine qualities, the final girl serves as a cultural mirror of a period marked by an adaption to a new prevailing ethos.

The complex and often contradictory portrayal of the final girl is not only reflective of the sociocultural context of the era, but also of the intricate dynamic between the final girl and the killer. Petridis aptly describes the final girl as the killer's "other half" and identifies the relationship between the Monster and the Final Survivor as the dominant binary distinction of the genre. Their interdepence highlights the significance of both characters, since one can only be understood in relation to the other. Carol Clover, who adopts a gender-based analysis of the genre, asserts that the final girl "enacts in the present, and successfully, the parenticidal struggle that the killer himself enacted unsuccessfully in his own past" (50), making her the successful iteration of the killer himself. Although not all killers in the genre are propelled by a psychosexual rage against the mother as Clover suggests (such as Freddy Krueger), most of them use violence to deal with unresolved trauma from the past and to enforce their own twisted morality. Conversely, the final girl resolves the trauma in the narrative present without compromising her morality in the process. The final girl's victory over the killer thus becomes symbolic of the triumph of the values proposed

in the narrative's underlying moral code. While the killer is seemingly presented as a moral arbiter who punishes deviant and morally unacceptable behavior, his use of extreme violence to enact personal vendettas undermine his role. Taking the killer's corrupted nature into consideration as well as the broader sociocultural context of the era, the final girl emerges as the true hero of the slasher narrative, one who is both a product of the conservative morality of the genre but also its enforcer.

6. Conclusion

The horror genre has always functioned as a mirror to a given society's fears and anxieties, including the slasher. The slasher's ability to cause strong emotional reactions – ranging from disgust to high praise – further emphasizes its profound cultural impact. Like most horror films, slasher offer more than mere jump scares – they offer a lens through which the cultural climate of a specific period may be observed. More specifically, slashers allow audiences to observe the conservative resurgence during the 1980s in the United States under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. The conservative shift that occured in the eighties can be interpreted as a reaction to the liberalism of the sixties and seventies, but traces its roots back to the nation's early Puritan beginnings. Puritan religious ideology profoundly shaped the American values and national identity which have found their expression in both literature and film. Puritan strict religious ideology emphasized humanity's inherent depravity and punishment for sinful behaviour, which often turned quite violent.

An author who was famously concerned with Puritan ideology, specifically with themes of sin and punishment is Nathaniel Hawthorne. Descended from Puritans himself, Nathaniel

Hawthorne offered a nuanced portrayal of Puritan values in his literature. The three short stories examined in this paper, *Young Goodman Brown, The Birthmark* and *The Minister's Black Veil,* all explore themes of Puritan preoccupation with sin and divine retribution which continue to permeate the American psyche and are expressed in literature and film, specifically in the horror genre.

Although the slasher is often dismissed for being too simple, gory, repetitive or exploitative, it is a perfect medium to explore and understand the revival of Puritan values during the 1980s. *Halloween, Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* depict characters, typically teenagers, being punished for supposedly deviant behavior such as having sex, drinking, smoking or doing drugs. The punishment for these transgressions comes embodied in the slasher villain – a killer who serves both as a violent monster and an enforcer of the film's underlying moral code. In contrast with both the victims and the villain stands the final girl – the lone female survivor in slasher films. Unlike her peers, the final girl is defined by her sexual reluctance, purity, restraint and discipline. Nonetheless, she is able to display intelligence, resourcefulness, bravery and aggression when faced with the killer. Her survival depends not only on her virtue but also on her readiness to use violence when necessary. At the end of every slasher narrative, the final girl defeats the killer by adopting both 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics, thus reaffirming the film's morality which is based on conservative, Puritan values.

By exploring instances of sin and punishment in slasher narratives and examining the roles of the killer and the final girl, this paper illustrates the remnants of Puritan ideology which has profoundly shaped American culture, particularly in the 1980s. Despite their questionable aesthetic quality, these films offer a nuanced portrayal of the values and anxieties that continue to influence life in contemporary America.

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8. Abstract

Puritan Heritage in the American Horror Genre

This paper aims to unveil the underlying religious morality rooted in Puritan ideology as one of the main drivers of the slasher horror narrative. The analysis of iconic slasher films such as *Halloween* (1978), *Friday the 13th* (1980) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) demonstrates how these films, often dismissed as simplistic and exploitative, reflect deepseated fears and anxieties which are firmly rooted in the nation's Puritan past. This paper demonstrates how rigid Puritan morality and their conception of sin and punishment are reflected in the slasher horror narrative. Furthermore, these films can be viewed as a reflection of and commentary on the conservative resurgence which occured under the Reagan administration in the 1980s. The analysis highligths the role of the slasher villain who punishes the characters for transgressing moral boundaries, thus enforcing a strict moral code through violence. Conversely, the final girl embodies both purity and resilience, thus emerging as the hero of the slasher narrative; both and adherent to and a true enforcer of the Puritan morality underlying the slasher narrative.

Key words: horror genre, slasher horror, final girl, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Puritanism

9. Sažetak

Puritanska baština u američkom žanru horora

Cilj ovog rada je razotkriti temeljni religiozni moral ukorijenjen u puritanskoj ideologiji kao glavnog pokretača *slasher* narativa. Analiza kultnih *slasher* filmova kao što su *Noć vještica* (1978), *Petak trinaesti* (1980) i *Noćna mora u Ulici brijestova* (1984) pokazuje da ovi filmovi, često odbacivani kao jednostavni i eksploatativni, odražavaju duboke strahove i tjeskobe čvrsto utemeljene u puritanskoj baštini Sjedinjenih Američkih Država. Ov aj rad pokazuje kako se strogi puritanski moral i njihov koncept grijeha i kazne odražava u narativu *slasher* horor filmova. Nadalje, ovi se filmovi mogu promatrati kao odraz i komentar na konzervativni preporod koji se dogodio za vrijeme predsjedništva Ronalda Reagana 1980-ih. Analiza naglašava ulogu ubojice u *slasherima* koji kažnjava likove koji prelaze granice morala te nasiljem promiče strogi moralni kodeks. Suprotno tome, posljednja djevojka istrovremeno utjelovljuje čistoću i otpornost te je heroj *slasher* narativa, istovremeno sljedbenik i istinski provoditelj puritanskog morala koji prožima narativ *slashera.*

Ključne riječi: horor žanr, slasher horor, posljednja djevojka, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Puritanstvo