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“Morality Sucks”: The Final Generation in 1980s Horror

Cinema By

Lily Bruscini

An Honors Project Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors

in the Department of

English Rhode Island

College

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2/19/2023

Honors Committee Chair

Date



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I. Introduction

In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Carol Clover explains how American horror cinema reflects the social and political fears of sexual freedom and corruption through the “Final Girl” trope: an admirable and virtuous “young, female... victim-hero” (Clover 4). Promiscuous teens, drug users, and non-conservative figures are almost always targeted with violence, which we often see through the perspective of the antagonist. The Final Girl is distinguishable from the rest of the victims: she is watchful, and her paranoia allows her to be resourceful (Clover 25). Clover’s definition of the Final Girl offered a new framework for analyzing and interpreting horror cinema, changing the conception of gender in horror.

Clover’s theoretical framework also isolates the common denominators amongst these films. She noticed that killers were predominantly male, as “the functions of monster and hero are far more frequently represented by male and the function of victim far more garishly by females” (Clover 12). In fact, Clover hyper-focuses on the gendered implications of characters’ actions, the scenery and even weaponry, describing its yonic or phallic nature to support her Final Girl definition. For example, she claims that phallic weapons are one’s “personal extension of the body that bring the attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace” (Clover 32). She describes the Final Girl as literally and symbolically “mann(ing) herself” (Clover 49) to overcome and emasculate the antagonist. In the end, Clover finds that the Final Girl is figuratively male (Clover 55), undergoing a transformation by becoming more masculine and therefore more capable (Clover 90).

If the Final Girl is chaste and good, she has earned her life. Laurie Strode from *Halloween* (1978) is the one of the best examples of a Final Girl, representing a traditional,

studious, and pious girl. Laurie is also a babysitter, representing a motherly instinct as she later defends the children with her life, which also represents her exemplary moral behaviors. She is shy about sex, unlike her friends, and is terrorized by the Shape until she is ultimately “saved” by Dr. Loomis. Clover’s slasher formula and definition of the Final Girl are consistently referred to and acknowledged not only in film scholarship but in many slasher films themselves. Clover’s definition is undeniably relevant to many slasher films, it’s centered on gender as the Final Girls’ triumph is in overcoming the antagonist, which in effect feminizes the killer and masculinizes the protagonist. However, how do we approach a slasher flick in which the hero is not female? Or in which multiple heroes emerge who stray from Clover’s model in that they are not chaste and reserved? Can a female hero maintain her femininity and still prevail over the monster? This thesis will try to expand upon Clover’s formula and broaden the Final Girl trope into a more inclusive Final Generation. In this new lens, having explored her definition of the Final Girl, our hero in slasher films is often less a Final Girl than a Final Generation that must overcome a generational conflict between adults and authority, rendered incompetent and often absent. In facing this obstacle brought by the previous generation, overcoming the Bogeyman is a necessary step to reaching maturity. The diversity of the 1980s horror films and the Final Generation of adolescents cannot be contained by Clover’s original formula, but can be explored in a more inclusive manner.

The Final Generation offers an apt trope common to these 1980s slasher films, with the protagonist (often, but not exclusively, female) with a group of adolescents that are targeted for transgressing cultural boundaries whether through promiscuity or drug use. The final hero—let’s regard them as the Final Gen—must overcome the killer and empower themselves through self-reliance and resourcefulness, without the aid of incompetent and often absent parents and

authority figures, as they mature into adulthood to triumph over past generations' faults. My focus for this exploration of generational conflict in 1980s horror cinema will center within three films: *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *Pieces* (1982), and *The Slumber Party Massacre* (1982). This thesis will use Lee Edelman's reproductive futurism theory to unravel the generational conflict represented in 1980s horror cinema. These films reflect a generation severing ties from a corrupt past generation in order to pursue its own self definition.

Each of the three 1980s horror films I've selected deviates from Clover's formula in some way, whether in the gender or number of the protagonists, or in the character of the female protagonist. In the film, *Pieces*, we follow two main characters on a college campus—one a younger male student named Kendall, and the other an older undercover police officer named Mary Riggs. Our killer is introduced to us in the opening of the film, having killed his mother as a child due to her finding his pornography. Here, we not only follow two heroes, as well as an entire police force as they come up on the murders a moment too late, but we follow our male protagonist Kendall, who is sexually active, male and the oldest of the youth in these three films, having no kindred parental figures: a male hero of the Final Generation.

In the film, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Nancy, while not overtly cliché feminine in nature, is not your standard Final Girl, though she is moral, studious, and resourceful. Freddy Kreuger is a dream demon, tormenting the children of the parents who had set him ablaze years before. What separates Nancy from Clover's definition of the Final Girl is that she is "not afraid of men (as evidenced by her romance with her boyfriend, Glen, and her love for her father, Donald Thompson), but she is also not smitten with them that she loses her selfhood" (Christensen 30-31). Nancy is not controlled by the men in her life; her survival doesn't come

from her purity but more from her paranoia and resourcefulness. Nancy overcomes him mentally by not fearing him anymore, taking away his power.

In the same vein of another suburban neighborhood being terrorized, from the outside in comes *The Slumber Party Massacre*. We meet our mass-murderer with a fondness for power drills, Russell Thorn, prowling around the high school until he finds a girl to menace in the locker room. Thorn has escaped from prison after having been convicted of murdering five people in 1969 and is on the prowl. We follow several girls of the Final Generation that end up surviving including Trisha and Valerie. Valerie and Courtney are two sisters who live next door, with Valerie babysitting her little sister while her parents are out. Valerie is the quieter, more studious type, similar to Laurie Strode's character in *Halloween*. Her opposites are Trisha and her friends. Trisha is one of our Final Generation, clearly flirting with some of the boys throughout the film, and acting just as provocatively as her friends. Here, we have three figures of the Final Generation, expanding Clover's definition of the slasher genre by having sexually expressive and active teenagers as their surviving cast.

To explain the intergenerational conflict present in these films, Edelman's theory of reproductive futurism from *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, offers tools to analyze why the Final Gen must overcome the killer. The concept of reproductive futurism expresses the ideology where the future is personified by the Child through the self-preservation of values from the past generation to the upcoming generation. The Child is a figure of the future which is used to motivate politics and police any "queer" behavior straying from normalcy (St-Georges 562). The term "queer," that Edelman uses in this specific context, refers to any stray from heteronormativity or any rejection of future-oriented values and politics (Edelman 27). The figure of the Child is fetishized as a way to the future and immortality: "If there is a baby, there

is a future, there is redemption” (Edelman 12-13). The Child has become a fetishized and romanticized fixation of heteronormativity (Edelman 21), and as the generations of reproductive futurism try to keep their memories alive, they rely on the new generations to mimic the old.

Parents feel they can live on and the next generations can live in a safer and better world:

Futurism thus generates generational succession, temporarily, and narrative sequence, not toward the end of enabling change, but, instead of perpetuating sameness, of turning back time to assure repetition-or to assure a logic of resemblance. (Edelman 60)

The figure of the Child is exemplified to moralize the future; people are told to “Do it for the children” and that they are to be invested in, just as a commodity. The Child is a political and social representation of an idyllic moral future that affirms the social order. The future is made through the figural child as an agent of reproductive futurism, in a sense redeeming the adults in “regeneration of a future that needs to be saved” (St-Georges 565), expectedly doomed for failure.

The Final Generation in slasher films are youth that avert from reproductive futurism, as they are more culturally and socially progressive than their parents’ generation. They are queer, - not in sexual orientation, but in their refusal to perpetuate the linear future of their parents. Instead, they participate in nonreproductive and liberal sexuality, subduing the generations before them. The Final Gen are seen as stripping apart the normative social order institutionalized by their parents' generation, enforced by the Bogeymen who tries to secure his ideals in the future. Throughout the 1980s, “understandings of childhood were increasingly mediated by advertising and consumer culture as the specific targeting of their desires positioned the child as an active force of consumption” (Balanzategui 42). This in turn makes the child become empowered as the “patriarchal head of the traditional household” (Balanzategui 42),

who gains more social agency while being tasked with unifying the family. The Bogeymen/killers we often face in 80s slasher films have a profoundly close ideology to reproductive futurism. These killers stand as a manifestation of the prior generations/punishing figure in place of the absent authority and adults, embodying “the chaos that exists on the other side of these cultural boundaries” (Phillips 133). It’s in the Bogeymen’s hands to remove the queer values in the newer generation and enforce the previous generation’s morality in the youth; “that figural Child alone embodies the citizen as an ideal...social order exists to preserve for this universalized subject, this fantasmic Child” (Edelman 11). The Child itself is seen to be a promise to transcend the limits of nature itself by perpetuating their values through the next generations (Edelman 12). The Bogeyman then punishes the wicked (Phillips 135) and polices their behavior (St-Georges 561). This explains the mysterious revivals of seemingly indestructible slasher villains as they are in a way immortal themselves and immune to death as they enforce their values of reproductive futurism through the removal of the Other/the queer/the youth.

The Final Generation in these three films overcome opposing forces and mature towards adulthood. The majority of our Final Generation range from 12 to 20 years old, that awkward age of adolescence, puberty, turning 18 and finally achieving adulthood but still feeling fearful for the future. In each of these aforementioned films, the Final Generation must conquer the repressive and regressive killer, each overtly linked to the past through violent histories shared with the spectator. These killers then try to punish the younger generation—represented by Nancy, Kendall, Trisha, Valerie, and Courtney--for their transgressive behaviors. However, the Final Gen will not let their actions be dictated by a previous generation’s damnable Bogeyman. Foley, Thorn, and Kreuger all represent this figure that punishes transgressive, nonreproductive

sexuality. The younger generation is being forced to navigate their transition to adulthood alone, as the authorities in their life fail them or are altogether absent. The Final Gen dictate their own fate through their actions, and even through their illicit or sexual behaviors, they remain alive. They are punished through trauma by the Bogeyman rather than with their lives.

II. Incompetent/Absent Authorities & Adults in the Films and in Reality

As these films explore the struggle of a current generation trying to sever its relations to the past, the first hurdle it has to navigate is the lack of guidance they receive from the prior generation. In the void created by their absence, we see or hear the monster in these three films before we see authority or parental figures. The youth have to endure their challenges alone, relying on themselves and the other queer youth figures to conquer their tormentors. There are strong anti-authority themes in these films as well as the lack of trust in parents and police, reflecting a deep distrust of traditional patriarchal structures, family, military, and government. The authorities of these films—the prison systems, medical science centers, parents, and police—are seen as corrupted and are viewed with suspicion or skepticism. The adults and authority seem disconnected from reality, either entirely absent, distracted from the concerns of their children, or sabotaging them. Not only is the Final Gen left to fend for themselves, but the adults obligated to protect the youth inadvertently put them directly in harm's way.

The murders in these films occur through a lack of parental attentiveness, yet the parents trust the Final Gen to be alone and not transgress boundaries. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Nancy and Tina are from broken families with lazy parenting. Nancy's parents are divorced and unhappy, her mother suffering alcoholism and her father being too busy with work to directly care for her. Tina's mother is neglectful and entirely unhelpful to Tina. In *Pieces*, Tim Foley

causes his mother's absence by killing her, having already lost his father, and manipulates the police into telling him all the information on the murderer cases. He orphans himself, knowing they cannot protect him. Finally, in the opening moments of *The Slumber Party Massacre*, Trisha's parents quickly leave for a trip, and Valerie's parents have already left for a date, entrusting her with babysitting for the night, never on screen. The Final Generation recognizes the disconnect between themselves and their supposed authority figures, with some respecting normalcy and others taking the opportunity to make hasty decisions and live their youth to the fullest. The ones who live in the film end up as the resourceful few who have proven themselves worthy through their tenacity, tactfulness, and quick thinking in the face of danger.

In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, we see the themes of absentee authority, lack of ability in authority, and the generational conflict in Nancy's parents' direct involvement in the current terrors she and her friends face and are punished for. Tina, Nancy's friend and our first victim, is shown in scenes with her inattentive mother and her mother's boyfriend. We learn that Tina's father had left their family years ago, so she likely lives in a single-parent household with little consequence to action. After her mother checks in on her after having a nightmare, her mother's boyfriend grossly asks if she's ready for "the sack," with sexual connotations. Her mother leaves, telling Tina to "cut your fingernails or stop that kind of dreaming," after seeing her ripped dress from Freddy's knife-claw. The level of ignorance is phenomenal in how Tina's mother ignored Tina's distress and cut dress, as she chooses to chastise her instead. This is the expectation of horror film/slasher film parents/authorities towards the Final Generation. When Tina dies from her next nightmare, her mother has left town with her boyfriend to go to Vegas, leaving her underage daughter with the house. Tina dies in her mother's room, as she chose to have sex in her mother's bed in her absence, reflecting the mother's neglectful attitude and Tina's sexual

liberation in her own mother's bed. The room is covered ceiling to floor in ruby red blood for her mother to return to. The police pin the murders on Rod, Tina's boyfriend, who was with her when she was killed, whom they capture later.

In *Nightmare on Elm Street*, the past of the Final Gen's parents' generation, comes back to haunt them in their dreams...literally. The parents themselves represent a type of vigilante justice that exists out of the failure of the government, the aftermath being left to punish the defenseless youth. Marge's violence, along with the other parents of the victims, have not solved their problem of Kreuger but made it staggeringly worse. It is up to the Final Generation to pay their price, almost as a form of parental vengeance. Nancy's father fails her as both a father figure and as a lieutenant, in crucially not believing her word and in failing to protect her. He uses Nancy as bait to catch Rod when they believe him to be Tina's killer. She states, "Daddy? You used me." She tries to convince her father that Rod is innocent, to which he responds that Rod is a delinquent.

Nancy clearly explains to her parents twice about her nightmares and their direct relation to the killer on the loose, but they ignore her. Nancy describes Freddy to her parents as an unhinged man who's burnt, wearing a fedora, red and green striped sweater, and having fingers like knives. While originally ignoring her pleas, they are visibly afraid and aware of the situation but continue to hide the truth of their involvement in Freddy's murder. They bury their dirty little secret and choose to keep the kids in harm rather than help them defeat the Bogeyman. They know from Nancy's careful description of who Freddy is, yet they say nothing and continue to gaslight her. Nancy begs her parents to believe her and understand her, describing Kreuger in detail, while her parents only brush her off and bring her into medical institutions to "protect" her, but they are unable to identify what's wrong. She is brought to the Study of Sleep Disorders

Institute and put through body scanners while Marge and the doctor speak. In another room, Marge tells the doctor that “now she thinks her dreams are real,” and the doctor responds saying no one knows what dreams truly are.

When she leaves, her mother and father barely believe her although they know it has some connection to Freddy Kreuger and their supposedly buried past. In every way they turn, neither medicine nor psychosis are able to explain Nancy’s condition; only Nancy herself can explain it. As she suffers from a sleep affliction, they give her the diagnosis of narcolepsy, but we, the spectators, know the truth. She is forcing herself to stay awake to avoid sleeping and being in Freddy Kreuger’s dream realm where he has the control over her reality. Nancy is having nightmares during classes where she wakes herself by burning herself on a pipe inside the dream to end it, waking while screaming in class. She is changing mentally and physically, appearing more drained but accepting the challenge at its face value. Without the support of her family or any other institutions in her life, she reads how to turn her home into a “‘war zone’ to battle Freddy...[and] uses the powers of her alert, paranoid mind and will (not violence) to defeat Freddy” (Christensen 31).

To her parents, “it’s just a nightmare,” but to Nancy, it is life or death. Marge bars the windows that Glen has been using to get in to help Nancy, saying she’s trying to protect her from the outside with “security,” but instead she is making the home into a prison. Finally, Marge tells Nancy the truth about Freddy Kreuger, calling him a “filthy child murderer who killed at least twenty children in the neighborhood.” He was able to walk away freely from court as she described the lawyers as getting fat and famous, corrupting the system, so they overlooked signing the search warrant. As we know, it was Nancy’s parents and other parents of their generation who had killed Freddy Kreuger, burning him in the abandoned boiler room where he

took his children. Marge tells Nancy not to fear and that “Mommy killed him,” but in reality, she made him into an unstoppable force.

At Nancy’s most vulnerable, her mother bars her windows to keep her in and “safe,” and her father entirely ignores helping her after reassuring her on the phone he would save her from Kreuger while he was across the street. When Nancy’s home begins to burn down, these barred windows keep her in danger of the flames engulfing the house, unable to escape. Marge has only helped Freddy in victimizing Nancy further, locking Nancy inside with him. Nancy calls and gives her father detailed instructions of how to protect her and capture Kreuger. She tells him to be in her room and ready for when she awakes, as she’ll have Kreuger in the real-world, ready to be subdued. Her father haphazardly agrees to console her, assuring her he’ll be there and tells her to get some rest. He hangs up, then asks a colleague to visit their home, and by the time they notice the flames, it’s too late. Once the house is set ablaze, the police and firefighters finally arrive to help. While on fire and dodging Nancy’s traps, Krueger is able to get upstairs and attack Marge in her bed. Nancy and her father come to the room, discovering that Kreuger has claimed Marge’s life, absorbing her burnt body and soul down beneath the bed until they disappear. Finally, her father witnesses some of the supernatural events; her mother’s body sinks within the bed and disappears from reality. Her father now believes her, though he may not be able to share this knowledge with his force or anyone else.

Nancy comes from a broken family, as her parents rarely interact with one another, with her mother resorting to alcoholism and her father representing a dual authority role as both the parent and the lieutenant, creating an emotional gap. Nancy, in the lack of parental authority and protection, takes the motherly role upon herself, which will be touched on further in the next section, caring for her mother, putting her to bed, and reassuring her. In the times her mother

does try to act motherly or concerned towards Nancy, Nancy often rejects it. After Glen's death, Marge tells Nancy that she was trying to protect her by hiding who Kreuger was, but didn't see how much she needed to know; "You face things, that's your nature, but sometimes you have to turn away too." Marge gives Nancy a nugget of wisdom here, as Nancy ultimately overcomes Freddy Kreuger by saying, "I know the secret now. This is just a dream, you're not alive." She tells him she takes back every bit of energy that she has fueled him with, until he is nothing. The parents, the police, the medical, and the prison system have failed to protect everyone.

Throughout the terror, Nancy has survived because she actively used her paranoia to monitor her environment for threats, set up traps in her own home, and used her willpower to rise over Freddy. This paranoia is used as her means of self-defense and becomes a self-preserving paranoia. It saved Nancy as she took all the right precautions to save herself (Christensen 39).

In what Edelman calls reproductive futurism, Nancy is queer in obscuring the traditions of the previous generation as she overcomes the perpetual repetition of primordial values. Nancy does not try to defeat Freddy through her parents' violent means. She rejects their vigilante assassination of Freddy and instead outsmarts him to render him obsolete. She is able to conquer her fear over Freddy, knowing that the more attention and fear he has, the stronger he grows. Nancy doesn't become a masculine killer like her foe, so she fails to embody the traditional Final Girl trope. Her weapons are words. By denying him fear, she denies him of sustenance, leaving him irreparable. The institution and the police keep failing the young generation, and here, Nancy is the one left to correct the damage left over from her parents.

Inefficient police and authority provide a consistent motif throughout *Pieces*: a perfect example of frivolous institutions that are always there a heartbeat too late to the action. As mentioned previously, Tim Foley murders his mother in the first scene, hacking away at her with

an axe and then a chainsaw. He hid in the closet before police entered, covered in blood and crying for his mother. The police took pity on him and did not associate Tim with his mother's murder. We can assume he was questioned but played the role of the victim and grieving child. Though Foley is very manipulative, this is the first institutional failure to not catch his actions. When we go years in the future to where he is now the dean of the campus, we see students brazenly flirting with professors in the hallways. This is straight disrespect to the establishment and within earshot of an onlooking professor. The first death includes two students openly having sex on the lawn, as this generation is clearly more liberal and less careful about their own sexual tendencies and promiscuity. To this point, the audience is unaware of the killer's identity. Killers like Foley "embody chaotic destructive forces that from the perspectives of everyday life, strike seemingly at random" (Pinedo 105). Foley pretends to be a victim when he is a child, hiding in the closet after killing his mother. Throughout the film, he is hiding behind his desk, under a mask of his title as the Dean of the college. In what he says, it seems he is just trying to protect the college's interest but his true intention is manipulating them into doing what he wants and in putting police where he will not be. Foley is the ultimate unreliable authority: a serial killer masked as caretaker of an entire campus.

After the first death, Lieutenant Bracken and Sergeant Holden come to the dean's office. The dean wants to hide the first death as an accident to the staff and students, appearing to be calm and decisive. The Sergeant suggests that it might be someone on campus, to which the dean deflects saying he couldn't think it to be a member of the staff: "But surely you don't suspect one of my faculty members, Lieutenant?" The police want to tell the public so they are able to get an investigation going and stop any more murders. The dean is reluctant to agree and tells them, "I only ask one thing, that you keep all this as quiet as possible. Think what would happen to the

university if this were leaked to the media,” seemingly concerned with his own and the college’s public appearance. They agree as the dean insists, that “our version here, amongst the alumni and staff, will be that it was an unfortunate accident.” The police stay in touch with the dean consistently throughout the film, aiding the killer and giving him every bit of knowledge he needs to stay ahead of the investigation. The dean later even asks Mary Riggs about the groundskeeper Willard whom he framed for one of the victim’s deaths. He fishes information out of her to find out they had to release him due to lack of evidence. In this film, the police (past and present) and Dean Foley provide powerful examples of the corruption and ineptitude of authorities.

The police are inherently useless and decide that student Kendall, who had received a note from one of the victims before her death, could aid them in catching the killer. As this is set on a college campus, Kendall is on his own, and the Lieutenant and Sergeant act more like his incompetent parental figures. The murders on campus are being held secret by the police and the dean; however, they decide to share the details of the investigation with the random student. The police continue to make questionable decisions throughout the film. After Kendall is introduced to Mary Riggs, the Lieutenant tells her, “I’d trust him. I’d stake my life on him.” This is a student aspiring to be a police officer but one who has no skills helpful to the police, this trust comes from nothing justifiable.

While Mary Riggs is put undercover as a tennis instructor, the Lieutenant tells Kendall to “watch out for Mary if she needs any help,” insinuating that Kendall is her backup but it seems more like he’s her superior. Though she is technically a police officer, he’s making more decisions and finding more evidence in the case than she is. At the end of the film, the Sergeant quickly tells Kendall and the viewer that “the dean’s the one. Apparently his mother was

chopped up when he was a kid. It must've affected his mind." There is no more context to how the police discovered the killer to be the dean, but they don't try to inquire or understand any more of his inner workings. Dean Foley has already drugged the supposed authority, Mary Riggs, and was prepared to kill her before other officers arrive. The police finally have a victory as they are the ones who shoot and kill Tim Foley. Incompetent and irresponsible authorities didn't catch Tim Foley as a boy, and they didn't catch him until he had gotten what he needed. Tim Foley uses the system to his benefit, working directly with the police as head of the school, pretending to have the best interest of the students and staff in mind. He is secretly planning around their investigation. It takes until the very end of the film, which is told to the audience and Kendall very suddenly, to learn that the dean has been the killer. The police never acknowledge their accountability and never take responsibility for their contribution to the killings.

In *The Slumber Party Massacre*, we hear about Russell Thorn's prison escape over the radio in Trisha's bedroom and newspapers thrown on their doorsteps, as Trisha haphazardly walks out of the room and does not notice. This is the first institutional failure of the film, as the prison has failed to contain this violent criminal. In the next scene we have Trisha's parents leaving for a trip. Her father is impatient as they have plane tickets booked and he wants to leave on time. Her mother gives Trisha food and their number to their hotel, showing that while she is a caring parent, she will still be absent. Her mother tells her to "lock all the doors and windows," and tells her that "you will always be my baby." As her mother calls Trisha her baby, she makes Trisha the figural Child of reproductive futurism, trying to direct her destiny. While it is possible that the parents have not yet heard the news of the deranged killer on the loose in their

community, they still neglect the responsibility of keeping their children safe. They remain blissfully ignorant of the monsters lurking around their bushes.

Before Trisha's mother leaves, she tells Trisha that Mr. Constant, their neighbor, will be around to ensure her safety while they're gone. They are outsourcing their responsibilities to a neighbor to take care of their child while they are away, which demonstrates a lack of parental accountability. Next door, Valerie is babysitting her sister Courtney, with yet another teenage girl taking over the maternal role. The two parental figures we have throughout the film are Mr. Constant and the girls' basketball coach, Coach Jana, with whom the girls have a good relationship. Mr. Constant does check up on the girls, scaring Trisha in two instances. Mr. Constant is in the room when the girls come over for the sleepover, loudly declaring, "we're here for the orgy!" They bring beer and alcohol, and one of her friends flashes a bag of marijuana, clearly queer figures who defy the order of Edelman's reproductive futurism. Mr. Constant is nonchalant and lenient, reminding them he'll be next door if they need help and telling the girls to go easy on the weed and drinking. Later in the film, the girls call the coach and ask about scores for a match, but soon the coach overhears the girls screaming on the phone line and heads over to help. She doesn't call the police first, unaware of the situation. In this film, it's not so much that the adults are corrupt or negligent, as they are unequipped to help the Final Generation. Mr. Constant, Coach Jana, and Trisha's mom all seem to care about these girls, but they do not have the skills to parent or to protect.

In the end, the Final Generation of three girls together has to overcome the killer, Russell Thorn, without the aid of adults. Coach Jana gave her life to save the girls, attacking the killer with a firepick but ultimately being cut at the stomach by his drill. The girls begin to cry after killing Russell Thorn, all sobbing together, as in the distance we finally hear police sirens, but it

is all too late for their help. There had been no police in the entire film, unlike *Pieces* where we got to see the police being useless and their thoughts of the killer's next actions. Here, it's all up to the Final Gen to save themselves. The queer youth have to make it on their own. We don't have information on how Russell Thorn escaped prison, though we don't see any people or police patrolling neighborhoods trying to catch the mass murderer. The police are entirely absent, besides the original report of Thorn's escape from prison. The system failed here as it did in *Pieces* and with Nancy's dad in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, even if we don't watch their failings on the screen. They are truly absent in this film—absent even from the camera and from the spectator. The past generation of parents and authority are unhelpful in dealing with their own demons, and the Final Generation must emerge to be their savior.

In *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, we see the failings of the previous generation and come back to haunt the next generation. In *The Slumber Party Massacre* and *Pieces*, we see failure and corruption in the police and prison system to keep the community safe, as they must rely on the youth to save them from the killers. In all three, we find absent parents who fail to protect their children. Authority figures fail the youth, who are then left to repair the damage. However, in these films, the Final Generation gets to survive due to their self-reliance and ability to overcome the Bogeyman.

III. Bogeymen As Castigators of the Final Generation

In the absence of incompetent authorities and parents of the Final Generation, the shadows of the past come in to destroy the queer figures who challenge the values of reproductive futurism. With no parental framework or anything to keep the Final Generation in line to perpetuate reproductive futurism, the Bogeyman steps up to enforce it. The Bogeyman is

the punisher, watching, judging, gazing at unsuspecting youth, waiting for them to push the cultural boundaries. Young adults pose more of a threat to existing power structures, “precisely because of their potential to question the political paradigms” (St-Georges 561). In the absence of authorities and adult figures in the Final Generation’s lives, the Bogeyman takes their place in order to punish those who have drifted. The term bogeyman derives from “The ‘bogey’ or ‘boggle’ which was a generic term for some form of devil, ogre, or spirit that came to torment...its victims” (Phillips 132). Phillips explains their presence as representing “the loss of order that might come from transgression” (Phillips 133). The Bogeyman's body themselves have suffered through the physical body/deformity, metaphysical body, or psychological state which led them to becoming the “threatening punisher” (Phillips 134). Freddy Krueger would fit this image best, being a dream demon meant to torment the dreams of the youth. The Bogeyman stands in for the parents of the uncooperative children, forcing them to “conform to proper behavior or be menaced” (Phillips 134).

Phillips illustrates the figure of the Bogeyman as one meant to bring a return to cultural values in its punishment of the wicked:

The bogeyman embodies the chaos that exists on the other side of these cultural boundaries. The chaotic force of unleashed desire and wickedness waits at the edge of the systems of order and reminds us of the importance of these systems of restrictions...The bogeyman’s very body displays the transgression of boundaries. (Phillips 133)

A future with no next generation is no future at all, which is something that the Bogeyman cannot allow; “blame must fall on the fatal lure of...narcissistic enjoyment, understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and inevitable life itself” (Edelman 13). This explains that the

new generation of the children may cause their own demise due to their “destructive” behaviors, in effect being punished by the Bogeyman for their nonconformity. These destructive behaviors can be found in the youth who are liberating themselves from the repetitive civil order they are found in. The Bogeyman is “enacting a logic of repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of social order” (Edelman 27), continuing to ensure those youth who are disturbing the social order of reproductive futurism are punished for the “spirit of futurity” (Edelman 27). Edelman identifies the queer as a “culture of death” (Edelman 47), and that “queerness can never define an identity, it can only disturb one” (Edleman 17). If the figure of the Child is fragmented in its nonlinear, non-reproductive trajectory, the Bogeyman is there to fix it and ensure their return to the societal standards.

What we can see from our Bogeymen/killers in these films is a common trope of targeting youth who indulge in delinquent behavior under the permissiveness of the absent or incompetent authority and adults around them. This delinquent behavior is, according to Edelman’s model, queer: they engage in liberal and nonreproductive sexuality, and they reject their parents’ values and refuse to perpetuate them. The Bogeymen step in where the parents fail. They take the role of judge and executioner to kill off the unscrupulous younger generation who reject reproductive futurism's social order, their parents absent or unwilling to defend them. The monsters from the past continue to try and enforce their social order and values, a drive for self-preservation and immortality through the next generation. It is important to note that the Bogeyman in these horror films is the only active figure to follow the model of reproductive futurism: the parents, in their absence or incompetence, refuse to enforce their ideology, and the children, in turn, do not adhere to the previous generations’ values. The Bogeyman corrects the queer youth as he sees fit to achieve his own immortality.

The Bogeymen we will be focusing on are Freddy Kreuger, Dean Tim Foley, and Russell Thorn of their respective films: *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Pieces*, and *The Slumber Party Massacre*. The Bogeyman is both a figure of chaos and of morality, a “vision of evil as a force of fate” (Phillips 136). As mentioned previously, Freddy Kreuger was a child serial killer in his human life, and in his death, a dream demon of imagination where he has created a rubber reality. The more fear the Final Gen has for him, the more energy he drains and control he gains in the real world through exhaustion, ultimately overcoming victims in their sleep. Kreuger is the most like the traditional definition of bogeyman, being a name used to frighten children into behaving. Throughout the film, we hear Freddy Kreuger’s nursery rhyme, an adaptation of “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe.” This rhyme is used as a foreshadowing or an omen for Kreuger’s imminent arrival, signaling his immortality as he lives on through song long after his original death. In the beginning of the film, as Nancy and her friends are walking to school, we see several young girls, dressed in white and playing jump rope. Their identities are never revealed, but we can assume they are past victims of Freddy, accepting their fate and singing the song as follows: “One, two, Freddy’s coming for you. Three, four, better lock your door. Five, six, grab a crucifix. Seven, eight, gonna stay up late. Nine, ten, never sleep again.” Later, Nancy hums the song to herself as she is in the bathtub, soon after being attacked by Kreuger and dragged deep into the water.

Kreuger has been born the child of a mystery maniac, one of many who raped his mother, leading him to live in an abusive household. Kreuger was a blue-collar janitor working at a power plant in Spingrood, a child serial killer, though written in the original screenplay to be a child rapist and killer. His weapon of choice is a homemade knife-glove. Kreuger himself is “the bastard son of 100 maniacs,” his mother a nun raped after being accidentally locked inside an

insane asylum. After Kreuger was set free due to the improper signing by police on a search warrant, the parents of Springwood decided they would take justice into their own hands, burning Kreuger alive inside his boiler room. Years later, Kreuger comes back to haunt the dreams of the children of his killers, when they are at their most vulnerable.

Freddy Kreuger is masked in scars covering his body, remnants of the fire that took his mortal life. Kruger would have died in his mid-forties, his body disfigured from being burnt years ago by the parents of his victims. He wears a red-and-green striped sweater, a brown fedora, and a glove with a claw of blades on his right hand. Wes Craven, the director, said he had made the sweater red and green because of an article by the *Scientific American* that stated that “the pairing of red and green is the most difficult for the human eye to perceive correctly” (“Why Freddy Krueger's Iconic Sweater Is Red & Green”), the hardest colors for the retina to see side-by-side. Craven was trying to unsettle the eye of the victim and the viewer. These three films all have killers without masks, Freddy’s mask only being the scars upon his face. His choice of weapon is the most primal weapon in the modern age; a glove combining his hand with blades for fingers, as claws. This mixes the ancient and the new into an even more threatening and frightening weapon. By manipulating the hand, it would make him more powerful. Freddy is extremely aggressive, a vengeful spirit that requires fear and recognition to live. Freddy Kreuger is a Bogeyman directly related to the previous generation, as his existence was created by the protagonists’ parent’s bloody actions.

Kreuger is punishing the youth due to his repressed trauma since childhood and his conception itself. Kruger’s bid for immortality seems to begin with a legacy that lives on in song and memory. To truly secure his immortality, he must eliminate the next generation that threatens to forget him. His ultimate fear is fading away into irrelevance, so he continues to

mock his victims and parade his sadism through his supernatural abilities in cutting his skin open, to cutting off his fingers, to ripping off his face. The same night Tina was amorous with her boyfriend, she had a nightmare, with Freddy first appearing as a shadow at the end of a long alleyway. When Tina is screaming “Please God,” in her nightmare, Kreuger pulls out his blades and refers to them saying, “This is God,” a nod to the immortal power that he seeks. Kreuger punishes his own killers through torturing their children through their dreamscapes, beyond their control in physical reality. This is his own form of retribution for his “unjustly” death, ensuring the youth are never to deviate from the social order, as their parents had done to him, thus serving as his own justice. Kreuger is amused while he torments Nancy. We often hear him laughing and using other voices to torment her in a later nightmare to break her psyche and further break her spirit.

In the film, *Pieces*, most of the deaths take place in the perspective of the killer, both to hide the identity of our killer and to continue the cinematic focus on the tormented body of the youth. The story of our Bogeyman, Timmy Foley, begins when is only a child, putting a puzzle together of a nude woman, her genitals being one of the few missing pieces left. His mother enters the room, slapping him, and demanding to know where he got it, berating him that he is a “dirty minded little brat!” She chastises him further by telling him he will end up like his father, about whom we have no further information, only to assume he is out of the picture or dead. In this moment, she hits and shatters his bedside mirror, forever changing him. His mother claims she will burn his pornography, and in his sexual frustration, he takes an axe and kills her, then uses a chainsaw to cut up her body further. In his budding sexuality, his mother disrupts him and thus stunts his sexual development. This later attributes to his desire to recreate his mother through the dismembered limbs of his female victims to reassemble and resemble his mother, as

he kept her old dress, knowing this day would come. Here, Kreuger and Foley share traumatic pasts that partially created the monster they are. Freddy Kreuger was born from a traumatizing incident of his mother being raped by maniacs and being born into a monster after being burned alive by towns people. Foley's violent tendencies were unearthed from the event of killing his mother in a rage after she hit him, chided him, and threatened to remove all his pornography. In both cases, the killers are linked overtly to the past; they are monsters of a past generation who have now resurfaced to torment the youth of a subsequent generation.

Dean Foley's trauma resurfaces when he is on campus and witnesses a girl on a skateboard crashing into a mirror, triggering him to return to his more carnal urges. He begins killing the young girls around campus, remaining the Dean and complying with police and inside forces of Mary Riggs, undercover cop, and Kendall, a college student they used for insight. Timothy Foley is a middle-aged British man with receding black hair. He always appears disgruntled, quick to end time with people in meetings and always ready to deny service. He wears a light gray suit with a red tie, appearing like a professional businessman. This is only him playing the part of being a wolf among sheep's clothing. He fooled the police into thinking he was a victim, and years later has suddenly resurfaced in a dangerous state of mind to put together literal limbs and pieces of girls from his campus into a replica of his mother, so he is quite literally trying to resurrect a past generation. He is honoring his mother's immortal values through the recreation of her body. The Bogeyman will not accept the indifference of queer figures/the youth, as their noncompliance is thought to lead to "society's destruction by allowing civil order to be redefined...plummeting ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, into an age of godlessness" (Edelman 16). On this campus, the students are liberally sexual and seem to possess none of the sexual shame that young Foley was punished and shamed for. Their queer,

unbound ways seem to be as much a trigger for him as the shattering glass that sets him off. What triggers him initially is literally fragmenting, and his aim is to achieve a “wholeness” through reassembling a version of his dead mother through pieces of dead female students.

Russell Thorn from *The Slumber Party Massacre* shows tendencies of Clover’s psychosexual killer. Russell Thorn also appears to be around fifty years old, bald with brown and graying hair along the sides of his head. We know he has been locked away for nearly two - _ decades, being around other criminals. He doesn’t know how to act around people, quiet and creepily smiling. He is wearing a jean jacket with a red shirt underneath and jeans to match. His attack stance is often hunched over and close to his weapon, almost like a defense technique as well. Russell Thorn acts and never speaks besides one very sexually threatening line to Trisha at the end of the film. He is clearly mentally ill and sexually violent.

He seems delusional and thrives on committing sexual violence, being the mass murderer of five in 1969 and newly escaped from his institution. Once again, we find a killer directly linked to a previous generation. Our killer is now on the loose but we know very little about his motivations from start to finish. Thorn creeps around a high school and ends up focusing his attention on a slumber party at Trisha’s house with neighbors Valerie and Courtney later investigating. His goal is to terrorize and disturb the Final Generation. Due to his past, this appears to be repetitive behavior for him. Russell Thorn seems to be enacting out precisely what he wants: however, it does align with the concept of reproductive futurism that he is targeting

Russell Thorn is taken down ultimately by Trisha, Courtney, and Valerie at the pool. Valerie corners the Bogeyman by the pool and slices his drill with her machete. Valerie chops away at his arm, severs his hand, and splices his stomach. The Bogeyman comes back again after seemingly being dead, lunging at the three girls of the Final Generation. He causes his own

death, leaping straight on the machete Valerie is holding up from her stomach as she lies on the ground. While our killers' physical bodies are ultimately defeated, their immortality is through the reflective trauma of their acts on the youth they have victimized. The Bogeymen need to manifest their values in the generation through fear, their own fear of aging and change motivating them in their punishments. They represent the immortality of the reproductive futurism concept, of a moral and traditional reality with no queer figures straying from their own version of normalcy. The Final Gen are stripping apart the normative social order institutionalized by their parents' generation due to their negligence, enforced by the Bogeymen/the Other who tries to secure his immortality in the future, leaving the Final Generation to overcome them and ascend to adulthood.

IV. Children/Adolescents Facing Fears & Growing Up Too Fast

As the Final Generation are being condemned for their queer tendencies, the Bogeyman represents their obstacle into adulthood. Without the aid of authority figures and parental figures, these adolescents find the strength in themselves to resist these outside forces. The Final Generation represents a threat to the unwritten rules of society's normality and focuses on the "Child as the image of the future it intends" (Edelman 3). The older generation fetishize the figure of the Child as it functions in reproductive futurism as the center and as the catalyst of the future; "The Child, that is, marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity: erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity" (Edelman 21). With Edelman's theory, the Child/Final Gen are prophesied to repeat the values of the past generations in an eternal cycle to the continuing generations. The Child is the "very figure of politics" (Edelman 10) and "embodiment of futurity collapsing" (Edelman 10), when straying from expected conventions.

Their decisions dictate everyone's future. The Child is a fetishized symbol of the future and the reproduction of the parents; the older generation has an ego-driven motive to protect the child so that the child can go on to perpetuate the older generation's values. Edelman's theory relies on the child recycling values so that the parents never die and the ideology becomes immortal. If the Child refuses to conform to the parents' value systems, they represent a threat to normality and have to be punished for their independence. The Final Gen must overcome and destroy the Bogeymen that must punish them.

Our Final Generation carry the trauma and the pain caused from the generations before them, including their own parents. The new generation has to destroy the past to establish themselves without letting any fragments of the past destroy them. That sense of otherness disconnects our Final Generation from the world and brings identification of the audience with the youth and struggling figures of the film. The youth are queer figures and are stigmatized because they are unable to perpetuate the future. The Bogeyman ultimately fears the Final Generation because they have no boundaries, which is why they must be annihilated.

Our Final Generation of youth mature and transition into maturity and adulthood through overcoming their terrors and releasing the burden of the past's trauma. The Child is positioned both as an "innocent external to the adult protagonist and as a threatening symbol of the adults' past trauma and inner psychic tensions" (Balanzategui 53). The younger generations must face the horrors of the past and grow from these experiences. Due to their lack of faith in their parents' generation and lack of trust in the authorities to protect them, they must take their challenges upon themselves and thus transcend into adulthood. Their lack of protection and help then figures the parents and authorities as secondary antagonists through the films, always sabotaging them, making their struggles progressively more difficult. Valerie is babysitting her

sister Courtney, being the stand-in maternal figure and operating as her protector, similar to Nancy caring for and protecting her mother, which is also similar to Kendall protecting Mary Riggs. The Final Gen then grow into adulthood and have overcome the cultural horrors left behind by the prior generations of sexual repression in the image of the monster for them to fight.

Building on Clover's theorized transition of the feminine hero into being masculinized in triumph over the killer, our Final Generation similarly transforms, but from childhood into adulthood through their developing maturity in the film, as they ultimately overcome the killer. In each of these films, we follow a group of adolescents or young adults facing the problems and/or negligence left by prior generations and institutions, requiring children to grow up too quickly. The past of the previous generations, their parents' generation, comes back to haunt them in the form of murderous Bogeymen. In these films, the children/Final Generation have to take on adult and maternal roles, switching between the roles of parent and child.

In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Nancy has to fight Freddy, her parents, and society, overcoming and, in turn, transitioning into adulthood/motherhood. After the nightmares started, Nancy hid a coffee pot in her room and indulged in "Stay Awake Fast Acting Pills" to keep herself awake. As she continues to be drained from lack of sleep and Freddy's torture, her hair begins to whiten as she seems to age; "God, I look 20 years old," she exclaims in the mirror. Nancy begins to mentally and physically mature through the film. She's seen reading about and later setting up household booby-traps for Krueger to fall into when she drags him into the real world from her dream. Nancy and her mother's relationship represents a reversed mother-infantile relationship in the ways Marge indulges in her alcoholism in front of Nancy and cradles her bottle just as one would cradle an infant as she rests on the couch. Nancy mocks her mother

when she is trying to keep Nancy from going to school after Tina's murder and jokes she should take her mother's action of drinking. There are several moments where Nancy is clearly refusing Marge's motherly advances; for example, when Nancy is in the tub, Marge goes to her door with warm milk and tells her not to fall asleep in the tub, and Nancy simply replies, "gross."

Marge has told Nancy and everyone around her that the dreams are not real, diminishing the trust and resolve between them. Nancy even finds Marge in the hallway, pulling a hidden bottle of liquor out of a blanket from the closet, like a mother catching her daughter sneaking around. Nancy, in the lack of parental authority and protection, cares for her in a motherly sense by putting her to bed and reassuring her. While she rejects her mother's advances, Nancy inevitably takes over the motherly role for Marge in trying to save her from her own damnation. It's also worth mentioning that Freddy Kreuger was a child mass murderer, preserving the image of the Child in death. Since they can not immortalize the future in their repetition of values, their death contributes to the essence of reproductive futurism and the importance of the next generation in continuing those beliefs. The function of the Child represents a "hope for posterity" (Edelman 12), the "prop of the secular theology" (Edelman 12), and physical embodiment of the future. The children's deaths leave their bodies in an unaging state, unable to grow and mature into adulthood. This symbolizes for the parents a perpetual mourning for a child and a future that never happened. This could explain Nancy's parents trying to prevent her acting on her own accord, trying to preserve a lost childhood.

In Nancy's triumph over Kreuger, he has taken all of her friends and her mother, and is in the process of burning her home. In burning her home, he liberates Nancy from the emotional burdens in her past so that she can defeat the monster. However, Nancy has grown and understands that in order to overcome the trauma of the past generations and in order to break the

chain in the future, she can't be afraid anymore. Nancy refuses to let him have any more power over her, and it starts mentally, as she controls her impulses, in order to rise over Freddy. While her mother regresses and her father puts his head deeper into his work, Nancy proves herself a survivor by "monitoring her environment for threats and using her mind and willpower to rise over Freddy rather than violence" (Christensen 38). Nancy maintains her humanity and denies Freddy what he wants: her attention. She turns her back from him and takes his energy away and is no longer intimidated by his facade of control.

In *The Slumber Party Massacre*, one of the opening scenes features Trisha, a member of our Final Gen, waking up in her bedroom. We see her in a white nightgown, symbolizing purity and innocence, and learn that she has recently turned 18. Trisha begins throwing away her childhood toys, reflecting on her childhood, and ends up keeping a stuffed dog, showing us that she isn't quite ready to let go. Trisha then goes outside to wish her parents goodbye for a trip, who seem very rushed in leaving but tell her to be careful and lock her doors. Trisha is the prime age for the Final Generation, out of adolescence but not entirely an adult. Trisha is one of our surviving few Final Generation, the host of the invaded slumber party. Trisha hosts the party for the three other girls at her sleepover that are all punished for their sinful temptations, impulses, and recreational indulgences such as the girls drinking and smoking marijuana. However, not all the girls get punished.

When the lights go out, Trisha is the first to lead them to the garage to inspect the fuse box, taking the initiative. She is also the first to grab and pass out weapons to arm the girls. Unlike some of the other victims, Trisha doesn't make any short or quick decisions that might lead to her death. Like Nancy, she makes her home a battlefield. Close by, Trisha's neighbor Valerie is babysitting her younger sister Courtney, while their parents are out on a date. Valerie

playfully teases Courtney about not stealing pictures out of her *PlayGirl* magazine. Valerie also represents a maternal figure towards Courtney, babysitting her and being the domestic stand-in for a mother figure, while she attempts to put herself first for Courtney's safety. The girls come together in the end to help one another defeat Russell Thorn, throwing themselves at him in order to save each other. When they have overcome the Bogeyman, the girls all sit and cry at their forced loss of innocence and assertion into adulthood. There are two instances where Valerie's boldness is challenged, hearing something outside their home and going to investigate. She carries a flashlight with her the first time and a weapon the second, ready to engage with the pursuer. She is nervous but ready for action to defend her sister and her home.

Like Nancy, in *Pieces*, Kendall is tasked with solving the unsolvable. It is absurd to think that out of all the police we see in the film, the random college student they asked for help would be the saving grace of their case. Kendall James is our oldest in the Final Generation; his age is not determined but he appears to be an undergraduate college student, living on campus. The first time we meet Kendall he is being given a sexually explicit note by one of the female victims of the dean, and he is later recruited by the detectives for "information." Kendall has no connection to law enforcement or to the victims besides being given the note by the deceased student, but he begins to help them uncover the identity of the murderer. The college student is tasked with helping the detectives and has to assist the undercover Detective Riggs, keeping her identity a secret. With all the manpower they had, they needed Kendall's youthful mind as he's transitioning into adulthood, similar to how he continuously is the one to care for and watch over the school and the undercover Mary. After having sex with another student, he sees Mary investigating from his dorm room and goes out to help her, to the dismay of the young girl in his bed. Kendall has no real attachment or commitment to this case, but he keeps investigating and

putting his mind up to the challenge. In the end, it's the police who discover that Dean Tim Foley has been the killer this entire time, quickly filling Kendall in as they head over to save Mary Riggs. Though Kendall does not directly overcome the killer in the end, he sacrifices his life to help the police find the killer. He protects Mary and defends himself from getting stabbed by the blade, putting his life on the line for the police and the defenseless Mary. Like Nancy, Kendall is role-reversing with Mary, as he becomes the more dominant and leading figure while she is in the dark and in need of guidance.

Our Final Generation must acknowledge the end of their youth and the dangerous remnants of the past left scattered from the inadequacy of the previous generation. It is through reproductive futurism we are able to understand why the Bogeyman punishes the Final Generation and as to how they can overcome that struggle. This achievement of adulthood comes from the Final Generation's resourcefulness and capability of defeating the Bogeyman which tries to punish them for their queer tendencies. The youth have been hardened through the neglect of the parents and through the trauma they suffer through the Bogeymen and watching their friends die. The Final Gen must react in their own, controlled way to protect themselves as no one else is there to protect them. The parents and the authorities are tarnishing the youth's childhood and their ability at a better future for themselves that isn't geared or led by previous victims and demons, something that they have made their own. The Final Generation are trying to correct the sins of the past generation and trying to correct the injustice. It is the previous generations' jealousy and inability to fix their own past that puts the pressure on the next generation to be their savior. They are everything that the previous generation is not – resourceful, clever, and ready for action. They must overcome the burdens of the past and be their own saviors. In the end, they vanquish the traumas of the past and will not be punished for their independence and

free will. The liberated youth choose to act on their own, overcoming the ideals of reproductive futurism; the generational curse will end.

V. The Vitality of the Final Generation

The Final Generation suffer a generational conflict where the parents and authorities are absent/competent, the Bogeyman steps in to make the Final Gen complicit, and the Final Gen has to defeat the Bogeyman to rid themselves of the past. The Other/the Bogeymen fill in for the parents who are absent and/or who sabotage their children in attempts to protect them. These films reflect a society with false security where the police and authorities are distrusted and prove to be useless. The Bogeymen sees the new, Final Generation as a threat to the social order and a threat to the immortality of the previous generation, so he punishes them in order to restore the order that will allow his now obsolete generation to continue to live on. Edelman's theory of reproductive futurism only expands the exploration of the Final Generation by explaining how the Child has become a fetishized figure. That Child's function in the theory and in modern horror films is to immortalize their values, and if not, the Bogeyman will instill moral values of the prior generations into the Final Generation. By using Edelman's theory of reproductive futurism, there is an association with the terms of the Other and queer as representations of the Final Generation, respectively as a figure of the Child. In order for the older generation to achieve immortality, they strive for self-preservation in their values and pass on the trauma from previous generations to the youth. In order to "preserve" social order, the younger generation shapes the world for our future, that being emblemized by the Child. The older generation are "fighting for our children" (Edelman 3), unless they become a queer figure that strays from the

heteronormative culture. The previous generations fear the Final Gens' deterrence to normality and the Bogeyman/antagonist through their enforcement of social order onto them.

The Final Gen are tasked to clean up the mistakes of the past, there is a generational curse they must destroy. The Bogeymen are the castigators of the Final Generation, patiently waiting for them to transgress the cultural norms of a previous generation. The Bogeyman are not the only ones on the hunt. The Final Generation draws the audience into their cycle of sin and punishment that drives the murderous acts of the modern bogeyman (Phillips 142). This cycle of punishment of the Final Generation obscures the moral and virtuous expectations of the youth.

They discipline themselves in a way to purge themselves of their own guilt. They're mentally and physically preparing for the inevitable punishment and discipline that comes from their rebellious actions and attitudes. The Bogeyman remains an abject lesson in morality, a deathless executioner, in honor of moralizing the future through the formal repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of the social order (Edelman 25).

The Final Generation are maturing through the films, overcoming the cultural horrors left behind by the prior generations of sexual repression in the image of the monster for them to fight and briefly defeat. They are left to fight for themselves, as their parents, the government, and institutions play as antagonists and showcase that sentiment in these films through their lack of awareness and their treatment of the Final Generation. They try to ignore or even put the blame on the youth; never believing their stories, like *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, being on the campus while murders are happening around them, like *Pieces*, or being absent the entire film, like *The Slumber Party Massacre*. The youth are isolated from help or outside resources, having to set up traps and rely on themselves to fight their punishers. The Bogeyman thrive on the youths' transgression; all three of our Bogeymen have physical bodies, but the fear they instill and the

message they taunt and chastise our Final Generation with are reminders that in death, they will still live on. The Final Generation survived because of their resourcefulness, their ability to adapt and meet their killers head on. The generations before have created these monsters through strong emotions that have only fueled the embodiment of the Bogeyman. The past generations of their parents have manifested the Bogeyman. The Final Generation has been fooled with a false sense of security from their past generation and institutions, responsible for protecting them but in fact, putting them in danger.

By combining the two theories of Clover's Final Girl and Lee Edelman's reproductive futurism, we have created the Final Generation who can be represented generously and accurately throughout 1980s horror cinema and onwards. In these films, our Final Gen knows their conventional expectations from society and their parents, some going out of their way to deny those identities and values. They begin to have a more thorough understanding that they grow past these ideals and have to acknowledge them, they have to face them prepared to fight for their life. They are accepting reality and truth at face value, now having to live with the trauma of the Bogeyman's terrorization in their lives. As they continue to live with the trauma, they continue to perpetuate the Bogeyman by keeping the idea of them alive, as immortalized by Edleman's reproductive futurism. Either they, or their children, will one day be afflicted again by their monsters. A future that the Final Generation can shape and mend at their own will is gone, their future suffering has been decided. This can be seen through the dozens of 1980s horror franchises; *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise with seven films, *Halloween* franchise with thirteen films, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise with ten films, and *Friday the 13th* franchise with twelve films. The killer returns again and again, only to be stopped by the Final Generation for a short period until they regain their power in fear or in the youth, obscuring normative

boundaries in social order. In the words of Glen in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, listening to Tina and Rod have sex in the room above him after Nancy has chosen loyalty to Tina over promiscuity with Glen: “Morality sucks!”

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