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Article

“Experiencing Trauma”: Aesthetical, Sensational and Narratological Issues of Traumatic Representations in Slasher Horror Cinema

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Abstract: In the field of horror film studies, the question of trauma is generally related to the spectator’s experience. The trauma of images occurs in the context of socio-cultural actualization. The degree of violence involved in the images, either graphic or symbolic, implies an experience that marks the viewer. Trauma, in this way, acts as a sensitive degree of perception, the image being an event. We start from this theoretical point but decide to take as our object of study only films where the horrific experience is based on a figurative representation of trauma. Therefore, we want to detach ourselves from a symbolic reading of the horrific image, leaving aside the psychological implications of the image’s effect. We decide to adopt a phenomenological and enactive reading of the image in order to include our spectatorial sensations in the narrative and aesthetic analysis of the representations issues of trauma as a horrific experience. Thus, in our corpus, trauma does not intervene in the cognitive formation of the spectator but is built into the experience of the filmic corpse according to a visual and narrative continuity specific to the films. We designate two types of traumatic events that occur in the corpus films: *Halloween II*; *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*. We try to understand the emergence of the traumatic feeling within the spectator and demonstrate that the trauma experienced by the viewer arises from the horrific experience specific to the aesthetic and narrative aims of the films, mirroring the symptoms and the wounds of the characters.

Keywords: trauma; horror film; cognition; phenomenology; wounds; slasher



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1. Introduction: Methods and Theory Field’s

Many examples place traumatic events at the heart of the slasher horror sub-genre narrative. These events can be experienced as a resurgence involved in a new slasher film type, such as the character of Andy Barclay in the *Child Play* saga, the character of Sidney Prescott in the *Scream* saga, the character of Valerie Bates in *The Slumber Party Massacre II* (Brock 1987), or the characters in the *Sleepaway Camp* saga. They can serve also as an introduction, such as in *Eyes of a Stranger* (Wiederhorn 1981), *Humongous* (Lynch 1982), *Mortuary* (Avedis 1983), *Evil Laugh* (Brascia 1986), *Blood Hook* (Mallon 1986), or *Return to Horror High* (Froehlich 1987). Events can also lead to the emergence of death impulses and killer act justification, as in *Prom Night* (Lynch 1980), *The House on Sorority Row* (Rosman 1982), *The Burning* (Maylam 1982), *The Mutilator* (Cooper 1984), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Gillepsie 1997), or, more recently, in the spin-off series *Scream* (2015–2019).

The slasher bases its horrific figuration on a reaction to lived violence. Its experiential principle is based on event experience, as the horror experienced is a horror of the killing. Derived from the verb “to slash” (Dufour 2019), for the action of penetrating a body with a knife blade, the slasher builds its experience around the phantasmatic corporalization of a murderous ordeal (Clover 2015). The sensory ordeal is organic. The iconographic composition tends to frame the gaze to a microscopic degree on the body under destruction. This gaze not only participates but engages in the destruction of the body (Williams 1991). This approximation causes its pornographic fragmentation, which inscribes the act of violence into a sensory codification of proximity, external pouring out of internal fluid,

orgasmic expression, and visual penetration (Clover 2015; McRoy 2010; Williams 1991). The horrific stakes of slasher films are based on a feeling of proximity. This proximity, rhythmic and figurative, composes the pornographic essence of visual *slasher* horror (Freeland 2000). This also removes any traumatic component that would mark the horrific experience in time.

This study follows on from the major theories on the slasher typology (Clover 2015), based on a semiological reading of narrative and figurative symbolism. The slasher builds its symbolism on an eroticization of violence. This eroticization takes place through a narrative dynamic that places adolescent relationships at the heart of active heteronormative sexuality. This sexuality is symbolically repressed in the co-existence of sexual practices and the teenagers' killings. Only the "Final Girl", with her virginal attributes, can defeat the "Monster" (a white, heterosexual man) by actively assuming the role of a surviving male. Here, semiology joins a psychoanalytical reading to which we turn a critical eye. The underlying aim of this study is to question this narrative typology with a sensory experience that tries to overcome any theoretical bias. In this way, we take these narrative readings as a starting point and construct a hypothesis of a second possible experience field that goes beyond the specific erotic male experience.

Our hypothesis is, if proximity is pornographic, it is because the horrific experience of the killer's presence threat is induced as a phantasmatic tension towards the killing, involved in a figurative experience that induces narrative symbolism but does not embody it (Freeland 2000). In other words, with the use of symbolic narrative typology (Clover 2015), we try to understand the horrific experience of the slasher through the figurative–narrative complex that makes up the filmic corpse. If this proximity depends on a general entry into the filmic corpse, then this raises the question of a second type of experience, which would bring the slasher closer to a survival projection and would pose the horrific stake of the killer's presence threat and proximity as a disruptive and non-phantasmatic trial. We then choose to integrate the question of a second possible experience through the prism of a look at the figurative use of a trauma representation.

The horror experience itself provokes a feeling of sensitive disengagement that comes close to a traumatic sensation. We may be confronted with a fiction that shocks us. This shock is socio-cultural (Lowenstein 2005), so the horrific experience is a memorial experience that instills the image of a traumatic survival. These traumas can be linked to a cultural and political event, but also have a philosophical dimension (Powell 2005). The themes, staged in a particular filmic entity, generate an experimental image where bodies intersect with surreal places and engage viewers in an individual or individuating sensation limit. In this sense, horror fiction appeals to a sense of the "sublime" that frames all cognitive sensations (Freeland 2000).

The traumatic relationship is between the image and the viewer's historical experience (Elm and Kabalek 2014). Our hypothesis, which is based on the organization of our method, is that the traumatic nature of the experience, in the case of the slasher film, initially intervenes narratively, before tuning into its *mise-en-scène* and making the traumatic experience felt in the spectator's behavior. The nature of the experience, through its narrative emergence, then induces a traumatic nature of the cinematic space-time. Trauma is introduced as a horrific issue through the emotional engagement it evokes. The slasher film can particularly develop this type of experience, insofar as it can narratively engage a survival projection in the attachment to the pursuit and killing.

The films in our corpus are based on this narrative representation of trauma. In *Halloween II* (Zombie 2009) and *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* (Steinmann 1985), the characters Laurie Strode and Tommy Jarvis suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and auditory and cognitive hallucinations that lead them to relive the same event of an encounter with serial killers Michael Myers and Jason Voorhees. They also undergo hallucinations, hysterical attacks, sensory disorganization, and spatial confusion. However, our aim is not to list the symptoms that are present and symbolically composed in the narrative; we wish to observe these representations in the light of their figurative stakes. In

other words, we try to understand how these narrative representations fit into the concerns of horrific experiences and offer a traumatic ordeal to the audience. Our point of view is not symbolic, but phenomenological: we take as data for analysis our sensations and emotions in the face of the narrative and visual organization of trauma in films. What interests us is, therefore, the imagespectator relationship as an essential inter-relationship. Through these analyses, we will try to answer the problem of the construction of trauma as a horrific experience that creates a second *slasher* type.

In the first instance, we chose *Halloween II* and *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* for their narrative stakes, which place the stories after slasher events. What interests us in these films is what we might call an “*after-slasher*”, a moment when the character survives the previous experience and must rebuild beyond a repetitive threat typology. If the slasher is the horror of a phantasmatic event, then we ask what the narrative representation of trauma induces in the experience–fantasy of violence with the “*after-event*” experiment. To put it more simply, we are looking at how the narrative representation of trauma affects the typical horrific experience of a slasher film.

Our method is phenomenological. We will first retrace, in our analysis, the emergence of our emotions and sensations related to the image’s specific structure. We use the technique of focusing (Varela et al. 1993). Our emotions are the core of our theoretical data. Focusing allows us to direct our gaze to the emergence of our emotions. These feelings are grounded in an active and stimulated projection of a specific environment. This environment, in our case, is the cinematographic image representation. Our first hypothesis emerges from this cognitive inscription. We observe, in return, the aesthetic and visual components of the image. We cut up the image into its structures (Monaco 2000), and we relate these components to the sensations they evoke when they are viewed (Rose 2001). Once this information has been collected and related to our first impressions, we can draw a topographical diagram under the situational mapping model (Clarke 2005) between the emergence of our emotions and the structure of the image frame. We will then proceed to a theoretical discussion of this experience in a “back and forth” mode (Charmaz 2006). In this mode, conceptual reflections are constructed as illustrations of the cognitive hypotheses that the experience stimulates.

Our method is rooted in the field of qualitative analysis (Paille and Mucchielli 2021). Our problematic around the experiential representations of trauma and *slasher* experience engages a phenomenological problematic specific to the orientation of a gaze. We must detach ourselves from a symbolic and external posture of the sensations analyzed (Bachelard and Joshi 1986). In order to understand the experience in these cognitive structures, we adopt the principle of grounded theorization.

Grounded theory allows us to carry out an empirical qualitative analysis with a phenomenological theorization process. Grounded theory calls for a desire to construct the theoretical meaning of observations through the situation that leads to the observed action. We bring our method closer to the constructivist reading of grounded theory. The constructivist basis of grounded theory leads us to distance ourselves from a positivist analytical approach, where the objectivity of observation is justified through theoretical framing. The subjectivity of the researcher is taken into account as a projective and active degree in the observation reflexions (Clarke 2005; Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2017). Their codifications are thus taken into the active experience integrated into the test of the theoretical gaze embodied in an environment.

This environment, in our study case, is the filmic corpse. By understanding our emotions as sensations and reflections, we can, in turn, extract a phenomenological meaning of our own from the figurative frames. We cross the fields of grounded theorization with the fields of semio-pragmatism (Odin 1983, 1990, 2000). Semio-pragmatics is a critical disciplinary field for iconological analysis. The semio-pragmatic assumption is that the image can only be understood through structures inter-relation. These structures are the figurative, rhythmic, sound, and narrative constructions that make up the filmic material.

At the same time, we take a critical look at semio-pragmatics. What engages the reception of an image also depends on an aesthetic reality that is specific to it. In fact, our method leads us to consider the image and the viewer as part of an 'enacted' process. Enaction (Varela et al. 1993) corresponds to a cognitive and reflexive state connected between an environment and a body experiencing that environment. In order not to depart from our point of view, enaction allows us to consider the analysis of an image through its direct experience. We reduce this experience to a structural set of elements under the principle of situational mapping (Clarke 2005) in order to extract meaning from this image's impact.

The study screening took place in a private apartment, on Blu-ray, in basic spectator conditions. The film was viewed from the perspective of a middle-class white male. Our method of analysis is experimental. Our results are based on our own emotions. Nevertheless, we take a genealogical view of the process of the emergence of our sensations in relation to the structure of the cinematic image. Factually, we can describe the image accurately. The experience, however, through the development of this method, contains within its cognitive variants an aesthetic and semiological invariant.

2. Viewing Transcript: The Emergence of Emotions in *Halloween II* and *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*

*Halloween II*¹ takes place minutes after the end of *Halloween* (Zombie 2007). Laurie Strode survives Michael Myers by shooting him in the head after a fight in Michael's abandoned family home. The film opens with a cryptic insert on the Freudian symbolism of the white horse as the border between dream and chaos (destruction of reality). This insert gives pace to the spectator's attitude and guides the narrative interpretation. However, this position will be progressively deconstructed by the destabilizing experience of the images. In the opening scene, we follow Deborah Myers as she visits young Michael in a psychiatric hospital. The white balance conjures up a cold and bland atmosphere. The white calls up this impression of chaos in a cognitive way, with a monochrome dominant that slightly blurs the edges of the image and builds a vaporous halo that takes over the whole space and abstracts it to a normative recognition.

The whole film crystallizes towards this break in tone and this nihilistic and liminal experience of space. The white-tinted opening scene is broken by a black insert that surround the image, where the film's title suddenly appears accompanied by a loud sound of screams and sirens. Sensory engagement is suspended by the set of wide shots, where Laurie walks erratically through the streets of Haddonfield. The contrast in light darkens the whole and dimly demarcates the background with warm colors, with the whole atmosphere being cold. Laurie is reduced to a silhouette in the counterlight. The space is also dotted with "figure-totems" representing Halloween, elements that will be repeated throughout the film as a symbolic reminder of the traumatic event coexisting with Laurie's spatiotemporal evolution and the countdown to 31 October in the narrative construction.

The spatiotemporal evolution is dilated and contrasted, along with the apparent calm after the abrupt break of the insert. However, it is once again broken, this time by Laurie's reactive behavior to the traumatic event. She is in the midst of an emotional crisis when she is found by Sheriff Leigh Brackett, the father of Annie Brackett, Laurie's best friend and a recent survivor of Michael's attack in the first film. The rest of the sequence will show a constant in the film's cognitive engagement. Alternating between Laurie's emergency operation and the discovery of Myers' massacre by the police, the shots will be close up, unframed, and alternating between bright, bland colors and light chiaroscuro with dark blue tones. The shots will be suffocating and destabilize all reflexive representations of the environmental ensemble, multiplying the points of view. The use of white heat will support the organic materialization of body fluids.

Proximity will accompany the difficult narrative evolution of Laurie's character, who is plagued by nightmarish hallucinations that push her to continually re-live the phenomenological traumatic event of the meeting with Michael Myers in the first film. For example, the

sequence in which Laurie wakes up in the hospital after her operation uses the processes of visual disorientation already described to follow Michael's reappearance in the corridors. Then, during the chase in the hospital car park, the shots employ a rainy environmental atmosphere, with the sonorous saturation of the rain paralleling the visual saturation of the drops, and the vaporous reflection of the yellow lighting. This creates a diffuse warmth and a sensation of dirtiness that accompanies the perceptual chaos generated by the framing. When Laurie, trying to escape from Michael, falls into a mass grave, the use of bright red lighting marks the surface of a multitude of corpses filmed from a bird's-eye view. This surreal passage of space marks an initial break with the anchorage of reality that supports visual chaos.

Then, the chaos is punctuated by the down movement of Michael's axe face-to-camera, before Laurie's startled awakening in her room. We have been fooled by the diegetic reality for the first twenty minutes. With a change of atmosphere, despite the previous sequence colorimetric re-use, the viewer's traumatic reminiscence of Michael Myers' reappearance denotes a tension that now disrupts the connection with reality by projection onto Laurie's character.

Michael's appearances will also condition the spectator's sensations in a traumatic ordeal. The visual chaos generated by the narrowing of the frame and the unstable movement of the image accompanies a distancing of the killings, having the effect of attaching the *slasher* ordeal to the sudden gesture and threatening presence of Michael in the image. The result makes it impossible for the viewer to hold on to a way out that cognitively resolves an escape from the sense of terror that this danger inspires. In the Halloween party sequence, halfway through the film, his spatial anchoring is manifested by a surging and disappearing cut in the action of the image that marks his presence–threat with a relative absence in the figurative spatial engagement.

The white as a total deconstruction of the perceptual senses, mirroring the opening scene, is reproduced in the final sequence, when Michael takes Laurie hostage in an abandoned farmhouse. The image tightens and unframes, adopts a multitude of points of view, and is marked before each cut by a white flash. These different ruptures crystallize the cognitive tension that totally deconstructs the sensitive anchoring to space, already complicated by perceptual disorientation. The image leads to a cognitive nothingness, with the total abstraction of all luminous atmospheres and all possible representations. In the final scene, with a succession of slow tracking shots, the frame tightens to a close-up of Laurie Strode, sitting on a bed, in a liminal room. However, instead of the opening scene, here we have completely abandoned the reading key of white horse symbolism, as our senses have been destabilized in the overall experience of the film. The final space is this space that is both intimate (by fading in and out with the aerial tracking shot of Laurie's corpse, shot by the police as she tries to kill Loomis) and cognitive (for the spectatorial projection). It follows the recovered calm of anchoring in a contradictory way with a liminal white tint that pushes the reflexive and sensory limits to a breaking point.

As with *Halloween II*, *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* opens with a recalled traumatic event from the previous film. We follow young Tommy Jarvis, the child who massacred Jason Voorhees in *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (Miner 1984), as he walks through a forest in a torrential downpour before stumbling upon Jason's grave, dug up by two young men who are slaughtered when Jason rises from the dead. The rain, the chiaroscuro composition, and the resulting abstraction of the forest in the background, together with the heavy musical atmosphere, mark the spatial anxiety.

This anxiety becomes concrete with Jason's awakening, aesthetically marked by the figure of the undead. A "loop" effect on Tommy's face, and a light tracking shot of Jason advancing towards the screen, summon a sensitive shift in the contrasting proximity of the threat. The scene is cut by the sudden awakening of the then-older Tommy, who is driven in a medical van to an experimental psychiatric center. Nevertheless, the traumatic marking that emerges from the spatial anguish underlies the pornographic aesthetic of the killings, with the two young men being killed in close-up shots of a penetrating blade. This double

shift will be present in the second part of the film, with the suggestive return of Jason. The scenes that build sadomasochistic tension into the spatial threat, and the spectacular contraction of the killings, are connected to a fade-out of Tommy's panic attacks, the victim of hallucinations. These hallucinations are composed of a succession of shots playing on the absence/presence of Jason (then narratively dead) and the visual contraction/dilation of the frame that follows his appearance/disappearance.

In this way, the traumatic ordeal is hallucinogenic and composes a symbolic trauma that recalls the event in its psychological consequences on the character of Tommy. The symbolic accentuation of his absence/presence is embedded in his ambiguous return, placing the killing sequences in a time-space between the real and the surreal narrative that has the effect of unframing the spectatorial anchoring in the narrative continuation.

In the last sequence of the first part of the film (before the return of a new Jason), with the death of Joey's character (a patient at the same center as Tommy), the neurotic ambiguity of killing emerges. His death is constructed in the tension between the innocence and emotional attachment to Joey's character and the nervousness of Victor's (another patient) character, materialized by the sudden movements and sounds of the axe-cut woods at the frame border. The scene gradually leads up to extreme suffocation until the frame tightens with close-ups and low-angle shots of Victor plunging the axe into Joey's back, his face having an expression of pain and surprise very closeup. The next scene opens with Joey's corpse buried under a white shroud marked by a bright red bloodstain. The use of bright colors acts as a catalyst for the stereotypical existences of the characters pushed to the extremes of their typologies, where the narrative and visual whole are marked by a projective abnormality.

A connection is made to Tommy at the window. At this point, the musical theme of the saga, which evokes Jason's murderous appearance and the killing action, emerges from the image and engages the viewer in contradictory emotions between the suffocating violence of the scene and the fantastical codes of the saga. The meta-communicative resurgence of the musical theme sensorially blurs the experience of attachment to the film, as well as the various appearances of the new Jason.

This projective blurring culminates at the end of the film when Tommy wakes up in the hospital. The narrative resolution (the unmasking of the new Jason by Pam, the second center manager, helped by Tommy in the final chase) marks the mortality of the real Jason and the safety of the characters. Nevertheless, before Tommy wakes up, the atmosphere is built up in such a way as to feel a sensory heaviness, with the silence that accompanies the tightening of the frame and the progressive isolation of Pam. The next cut abruptly breaks this heaviness with Pam's arrival in Tommy's room. The music is deliberately melodramatic; the reunion is exaggerated. However, the scene offers a new break, with a close-up of a knife (hidden under Tommy's blanket) and Pam's death in a sonic chaos marked by the distortion of Tommy's face caught in a hysterical laugh. This distortion takes place in close-up images and a cold and bright lighting atmosphere.

A new break opens when the next shot shows Tommy, in a medium shot and in a bird's-eye view, waking. Looking worried, he stands up and sees Jason in front of him, appearing in the field against a field with his musical theme. Jason then fades out of the shot, which is replaced at this time by his fantomatic presence. Tommy gets up and walks towards the drawer. The worry gives way to a sudden determination that is incomprehensible to the viewer, and the theme of "kill ma" appears. Tommy takes the mask of the new Jason and puts it on. In the next shot, Pam is advancing down the corridor, the close-up and isolated whole of her presence, coupled with the silence, construct a contradiction with the dreamlike break in the previous scene and summon a sensation of reality. The last shot is a medium-angle shot of Pam, who has entered the room and notices with fright that the window is broken, letting in a cold, bright light that contrasts with the warmth of the room's interior. As the door closes, Tommy emerges, motionless, in the left-hand corner of the frame, a knife in his hand pointed at Pam, donning Jason's new mask. A tracking shot begins until it circumscribes the frame and enters the black hole that forms the eye

of the mask. This shift is experienced in a detached way in Tommy (whereas the whole film is experienced in an impressionistic way) and is the result of his psychological change induced in the intra- and extra-sonic break at the beginning of the sequence.

3. Theoretical Discussion on the Analytical Feedback of Our Emotions

In *Halloween II*, the breaks are cognitive and reinforce the narrative follow-up of the traumatic representation that affects (in a critical way) the violence erotization. The visual chaos engendered in the film marks the spectatorial experience on the side of Laurie's difficulty in re-anchoring. It pushes to repackaging the slasher as a traumatic ordeal, constructing violence as a degree of cognitive and reflexive destabilization towards the sensation of negative reversal.

The anchoring is conflictual, the spectator is constantly reminded of his impossibility of inhabiting the space-time of the image. These images use the visual contraction typical of the slasher (Freeland 2000) to induce a rupture in the phantasmatic relationship of violence. This violence is traumatic insofar as its distance and its chaotic experience induce a feeling of terror. Physical violence has two levels: an inverted "raw" level, where organic proximity is linked to visual chaos and leads to the abstraction of the body figure, and a second, distanced level, where the relationship to violence is reduced to its critical distancing. In this case, the cutting gesture is marked by a normative rupture that emphasizes the traumatic degree of the spatial-temporal experience. As spectators, we cannot project ourselves into the narrative follow-up, as we are constantly cognitively solicited in the successive space shifts specific to Laurie's post-traumatic crisis.

As a result, the traumatic event as a disturbance of reality is permanent. Trauma is experienced here as a feeling of terror. This feeling leads to a disorganization of the senses of reaction and perception to a hopeless event, typical of a loss of control (Herman 2015). In this way, we are faced with a trauma that does not form after the event but follows from it (Kardiner 2012). This feeling of terror, *vis-à-vis* the Self, is then experienced as an 'intrusion' (Herman 2015), deconstructing normative perceptual and reflexive patterns. The cleavage that this hallucinatory spatial experience summons, however, does not compose an externalization of the Self in the face of the event (Herman 2015) but constructs an internalization that goes beyond the normative acceptance of cognitive behavior and integrates the Self into the traumatic source. The experience is traumatic in the sense that the entire filmic corpse induces a progressive deconstruction of the gaze and cognitively engages a spatial-temporal violence.

In such a way, this chaotic experience leads to the very absence of representation with the symbolic and cognitive figure of white summoned in the liminal finale, which sensorially marks the chaotic symbolism of the traumatic experience and results in a shock that goes beyond the socio-cultural framework to open up the nihilistic metaphysics of existence. The trauma experienced in *Halloween II* refers to trauma as a nihilistic phenomenon (Crocq 1999), a moment when the normative boundary between self and death is blurred. In this sense, the event is tragic in relation to body anchorage (Barrois 1988) and operates a collapse of sensory and reflexive reference points that destabilizes personal meanings (Sironi 1999). The traumatic event is composed of a sensitive engagement that leads to a phenomenological rupture (Janoff-Bulman 1992). Laurie's difficult evolution is reinforced by the chaotic experience that composes the meaning of her traumatic representation.

In *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*, the traumatic experience is neurotic. The codes of the slasher are maintained and integrated into the traumatic experience. The traumatic outbursts are episodic; the rupture is ephemeral, but it marks the narrative with an ambiguity that reverberates through the horrific experience of space-time anxiety. The event here is past and surviving. It is composed of the play of Jason's metareflexive memory and figurative absence-presence. The emotional experience is tricked by the plunge into madness of Tommy's character, marked by Jason's ghostly threat. Post-traumatic emergences are intimately linked to the pornographic violence of the typical slasher killings (Clover 2015).

However, the traumatic ordeal subsumes the entire filmic experience in the way that it infuses a sense of projective decentration specific to Tommy's character development. The traumatic symptoms are a hallucinatory dissociation from the spatiotemporal event (Squverer 2012). It does not only concern his narrative development. The phantasmatic experience marked by Jason's appearance is thwarted by the connection to Tommy, bringing the whole ordeal of violence back to his traumatic experience. The issue then goes beyond the framework of the narrative to become embedded in the meta-communication game of spectatorial participation.

The traumatic event that marks the horrific experience of *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* is a disruptive event, interrupting the projective horizon of expectation. Thus, it interrupts a visual fantasy by making the narrative issue of Tommy's post-traumatic distress co-exist. This interruption engages, at the same time, a process of reality excess (Jasper et al. 2013), and a dynamic operation of sensitive recollection of an event that arises and deconstructs the consciousness of the Self and its environment (Anzieu 1998). In this case, we are not dealing with a chaotic experience. The cognitive trauma is less frontal. It emerges from a spectatorial expectation thwarted by the contradictory emphatic attachment to Tommy. It is stimulated by a stereotyped symbolic set of situations and behaviors, paralleled by a play of spatial anxiety and the ghostly emergence of danger. This trauma is then activated in the eventual co-existence of a fantasy of violence and its neurotic resultant, thus inducing the typical slasher experience in an emotional "gray zone".

4. Conclusions

By looking at the distance that the representation of post-traumatic syndrome composed from the typical experience of the slasher, we see that the horrific issue leads to a spectatorial traumatic experience. This reinforces the narrative experience specific to the evolution of the character. In both cases, the perception induces a cognitive action (Noe 2006) that actualizes the symbolic degree of Tommy's and Laurie's trauma. The matrix commitment of the slasher is then integrated with this specific horrific experience and constructs a disruptive ordeal of space-time related to traumatic wound representation.

The traumatic representation, then, is not literal. It composes a horrific experience that accentuates a differential sensation. This difference is the very heart of the horrific issue. The traumatic representations comprise an experiential horror that marks the filmic corpse in its continuity and codifications. A chaotic experience emerges for *Halloween II*, and a meta-reflexive experience for *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*.

The traumatic experience is not only illustrative of the character's condition but is part of a horrific *mise-en-scène* issue that involves the gaze and body of a spectator. The narrative evolution of the character is not, in the second stage, the illustration of a figurative aesthetic of violence phantasm. It marks its existence with an autonomy that breaks with the projection view. Ultimately, there is not one traumatic representation, but several traumatic experiences that are activated in a cinematographic reality and a filmic corpse. The image, as a result, becomes autonomous and offers a sensitive "other" slasher experience that is actualized in the cognitive experience of trauma representation.

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Note

- ¹ We choose to analyze the director's cut. The story is set two years after the events additional scenes and changes of montage help to illustrate the continuity of Laurie's trauma. Moreover, the final sequence offers a more frontal perspective of Laurie's passage to madness and Michael's existence, where the theatrical version plays on the surreal ambiguity.

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