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# DUAL IMAGES OF THE "MONSTROUS FEMININE" IN THREE HORROR FILMS

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DUAL IMAGES OF THE "MONSTROUS FEMININE"

IN THREE HORROR FILMS

BY

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MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

OF

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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
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**Abstract**

"Dual Images of the 'Monstrous Feminine' in Three Horror Films" centers on the women in mainstream, psychological horror films. Namely, as an extension of Barbara Creed's extensive research of the horror genre in works including *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (1993), my analysis locates the concept of the "monstrous feminine" in three distinct, yet interconnected films: *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), *Carrie* (1976), and *Single White Female* (1992). However, my analysis of these films deviates slightly from Creed's study of the "monstrous feminine" – whereas Creed examines the representation of singular female characters in horror films, I am exploring the dual representation of women in the horror genre, namely in psychological horror films.

The methodological approach to my thesis rests on analyzing each of the films separately, uncovering the ways in which their individual narrative, visual, and auditory components align with visions of the "monstrous feminine" and woman-as-"Other" or "abject" described in *The Monstrous Feminine*. Moreover, since my analysis hinges on the dual representation of woman, utilizing films that contrast the "monstrous" or "threatening" woman with images of more traditional femininity (according to patriarchal society), this analysis explores how this traditional, "threatened" vision of femininity is constructed within each film. Visions of "normal" femininity prescribed by the films will be compared and contrasted with images of the "monstrous feminine," ultimately bringing the ideas regarding the representation of woman in the horror genre, established by Creed, full-circle.

An interesting tactic utilized within each of the films is their shifting representation of the "monstrous feminine."  The three films, in their utilization of the dual image of woman, alternate between representations of monstrosity and prototypical femininity during multiple moments in the narrative.  To put it in another way, there is no clear-cut distinction between the "monstrous" and apparently "normal" feminine in the films; each female character assumes the role as monstrous at different points in each of the films.  As a result, these films communicate the idea that, as a whole, the image of woman can never be positive or wholly good; woman will always be outside of the margins of patriarchal discourse, becoming a "monstrous," "Othered" figure when compared to societal ideals.  The doubled visions of female monstrosity presented within these films, then, not only projects male fears onto conflicting images of the female body (as suggested within Creed's analysis) but, more importantly, helps to endorse a highly problematic, altogether negative portrayal of femininity.

**Acknowledgements**

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Dual Images of the "Monstrous Feminine" in Three Horror Films

**Introduction**

As the horror genre of film has increased in commercial and critical success over the years, branching off into numerous sub-categories – from gut-wrenching "torture porn" movies in the vein of the *Saw* franchise to thought-provoking psychological thrillers, and everything in between – it has, nevertheless, not shied away from controversy. Often times cited for its exploitation of sex and extreme violence, horror films have battled heavy criticism from nearly every portion of American society, and arguably have risen in popularity due to their taboo nature. Significantly, while the horror genre gained both positive and negative notoriety amongst audiences, so too has its popularity risen in the academic sector – in film criticism and theory. Beginning in the 1980s, horror films have been a common source of inspiration for scholars, and although it has been subject to contention, the horror genre has proven to be a viable genre for serious scholarship. Horror films have become more than merely cheap forms of entertainment; they have seamlessly integrated into numerous theories surrounding narrative, spectatorship, race, and gender, to name a few.

Feminist film theory, an integral area of scholarship within film studies, has given particular attention to the horror film: representation of female characters is a hot-button issue amongst scholars, who have utilized psychoanalytic and semiotic paradigms as the basis for studying the objectified, repressed image of woman in the horror genre (Chaudhuri, 2006; Grant, 1996a). It is from this point that I begin my thesis work – my analysis explores the representation of woman in mainstream,

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psychological horror films.  Namely, as an extension of Barbara Creed's extensive

research of the horror genre in works including *The Monstrous Feminine: Film,*

*Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (1993), my analysis locates the concept of the

"monstrous feminine" in three distinct, yet interconnected films:  *Whatever Happened*

*to Baby Jane?* (1962), *Carrie* (1976), and *Single White Female* (1992).  However, my

analysis of these films deviates slightly from Creed's study of the "monstrous

feminine" – whereas Creed examines the representation of singular female characters

in horror films, I am exploring the dual representation of woman in the horror genre,

namely in psychological horror films.  That is, Creed's analysis focuses on one

female/feminine character within key films to develop her categorization of the

"monstrous feminine," as well as characteristics including the castrating woman or

*femme castratrice* and *vagina dentata*.  In choosing films where two (or more) leading

characters are female, I am exploring multiple representations of woman confined

within one filmic environment, looking at how they are constructed in relation to one

another and ultimately if, and how, they conform to characteristics of the "monstrous

feminine."  This, in effect, leads to a more thorough investigation of female

representation in the horror film as a whole, extending the work of Creed while

modifying it for the evolving horror genre.

**Justification of Study**

I chose to analyze the horror genre for a variety of reasons; first and foremost, I find it to be an incredibly interesting (and highly problematic) area of research, one that I have not fully touched upon in my studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, yet have wanted to explore for quite some time.  Furthermore, since the genre has gained steady traction within the realm of film scholarship, let alone amongst audiences across the nation, horror films are prevalent, deal with diverse subject matter, and relevant when exploring common issues, especially those surrounding the representation of woman.  By choosing a topic that is steadily gaining attention by both scholars and laypeople alike, I hope to contribute to a newly developing area of research, one that makes important connections to the modern world.  My selection of the horror genre in film also relates specifically to its use of key visual, auditory, and narrative conventions.  As Creed and several others have insinuated – and a point that I ultimately argue in my thesis – is that the heightened, horrific material utilized in this genre has been mapped onto woman, and in the case of the "monstrous feminine," has made the female image one that is synonymous with destruction, repulsion, and overwhelming power if not controlled by patriarchal society.  The latent objectification of woman, as well as the negative portrayal of woman that antagonizes their male counterparts within society, is manifest in the horror genre.

An obvious reason for selecting *Baby Jane*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female* is that they each feature two contrasting representations of woman, which ultimately sets my thesis apart from prior work in this area.  By portraying two distinct images of

woman – a threatened versus threatening or "monstrous" version of femininity – these films blatantly communicate a prototypical image of gender that, if not carried through by members of society, will be destroyed, posing an even greater danger towards men. The distorted image of femininity displayed by the "monstrous" female character is shown as unwanted, impure, and all-around evil, making messages posited by each film urging audiences to conform to society's version of femininity even stronger. As rhetorical devices, these films strongly adhere to traditional visions of femininity within patriarchal society, suggesting that if woman were to deviate from these conventions, she is the monstrous "Other." The only option to prevent this female monster from destroying the status quo, these films suggest, would be to kill her.

A second reason for selecting the three films is their overall relation to the horror genre. While *Baby Jane*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female* may not closely align with traditional conceptions of the horror genre – conforming more to the thriller or psychological horror film – they nevertheless feature a more complex representation of horror in society. Since these films focus on the ways in which gender is related to the distorted and horrific material found in our everyday lives, they all seem to fit Creed's notion of the "monstrous feminine," mirroring this concept's emphasis on the importance of gender when looking at the creation of horror in film (p. 3). Their seamless integration into one facet of feminist theory, which primarily deals with this genre, also supports my decision to choose the above films.

Lastly, I have decided to analyze these films because they follow a neat, chronological path; that is, they were each released in a relatively short time frame, and follow from the early 1960s (*Baby Jane*) to the 1970s (*Carrie*) to the early 1990s

(*Single White Female*).  By selecting films chronologically, a more comprehensive examination of the portrayal of the "monstrous feminine" can be undertaken. Furthermore, since they were each made during periods marked by shifts not only in filmmaking practice, but of femininity and conceptions of gender, each film is culturally and historically significant.  Since their ideological or rhetorical messages do align with their respective historical environments, new conclusions can be drawn about the influence of society on the creation of mainstream films, and vice versa. Most importantly, since these films were made during different periods of time – regardless of their cultural and historical significance – they will prove to be interesting points of analysis when considering how representations of woman as a whole have evolved, not only within the realm of mainstream, Hollywood films, but also specifically in the horror genre.

One goal that I ultimately have for my study is to uncover the ways in which images of woman have been sustained within the cinematic medium over the course of several decades, using the horror genre as a microcosm for explaining such representations.  In using this approach, I hope to shed light on how these images have transformed, or even remained static, alongside changes in the medium. Consequently, an analysis of films spanning different periods of time points to the ways in which cultural and historical factors have influenced cinematic images of woman in film, and the ways in which cinema has maintained or revived such representations within patriarchal society.  This suggests the rhetorical nature of film – and, in this study, the horror genre of film – and essentially how it is an effective tool

for communicating various messages about gender and sexuality to audiences, for better or for worse.

**Literature Review**

Emerging in the 1970s from the foundations laid out by second-wave feminist political thought (Chadhuri, 2006, p. 4) and the so-called "post-1968 women's movement" in both America and Britain (Thornham, 1997, p. 1), feminist film theory and criticism developed as a response to the ways in which women were situated within patriarchal society, exploring the inconsistencies and disproportionate nature of the production of cultural artifacts (pp. 2-3). Consequently, many early theorists illuminated the absence and overall marginalization of women in cinematic practices, concluding that, if female voices were to be heard in mainstream, Hollywood filmmaking practices, they were few and altogether undervalued.

These observations led to an even larger discovery within second-wave feminist theory, arguably dominating many of the texts to come out of this school of thought: the exploitation and objectification of the female image within numerous cinematic texts. That is, as feminist scholars drew upon the lack of female creative or productive presence in the creation of mainstream, Hollywood films, they subsequently observed how language and images, within political, cultural, and ideological spheres, collectively shaped the representation of woman. As Doane, Mellencamp, and Williams (1984) articulate, these efforts developed "an understanding of the textual contradictions that are symptomatic of the repression of woman in patriarchal culture" (p. 8), shedding light on the ways in which female images are sacrificed in order to maintain patriarchal order. In effect, feminist film theorists exposed the ways in which film as a medium and art form support, and can potentially weaken, the systems of patriarchal control.

**Feminist Film Theory – Early Influences**

Central to the arguments posed by early feminist film scholars is the work of Simone de Beauvoir, whose scholarship in works including *The Second Sex* (1949) was integral in solving the problem of female representation (and misrepresentation) in cinema. On *The Second Sex*, Sue Thornham (1997) in *Passionate Detachments* explains that, when constructing gender in society, woman is classified in terms of "immanence," which is a position intrinsically bound to passivity, subordination, and control (p. 3). Ideally, in order to move away from this (arguably female) position and to achieve true freedom, fully confirming an identity as Self, one must move towards "transcendence," characterized in part by active behaviors in day-to-day life. Transcendence, for de Beauvoir, is largely male – man in this instance is equated with rationality (Chadhuri, 2006, p. 16) and represents the ideal subject position within human existence. Woman is therefore placed in the position of the "Other" in order to ratify the active position of the male Self, and is essentially defined as man's opposite: as irrational, incidental, and inessential (quoted in Thornham, 1997, p. 3).

Taken from this perspective, what is at stake for the representation of woman within cinema? Firstly, de Beauvoir's account of gender locates woman against the active power of masculinity, taking on the position of passive "Other" within society. In effect, de Beauvoir illustrates patriarchal society as one enabling the "projection of male fantasies and fears" onto the body of the woman (p. 4). As an extension of cultural myths perpetuated within society, the cinematic medium becomes a key instrument in both the objectification of woman-as-"Other" and the recirculation of masculine power within cultural discourse. Secondly, as Thornham suggests, the

psychoanalytic roots of de Beauvoir's theory involve "psychic determinism which reduces to a matter of unconscious drives what is in fact socially and culturally produced" (p. 4). To put it in another way, cultural myths surrounding gender are not only bound to the collective and individual unconscious, but have also shaped psychoanalytic discourse, which has often times been accused of excluding and misrepresenting woman in the analysis of the mind. This points to the larger role of patriarchal society in the objectification of woman in all areas of research, shedding light on the ways in which femininity, and gender as a whole, becomes a social construct. When exploring the objectification of woman, and her ultimate role as the "Other" relative to man, it is therefore important to consider how a deeper analysis of unconscious impulses, as provided by psychoanalysis, can shape and be shaped by cultural forces.

Drawing upon de Beauvoir's theories of the construction of woman-as-"Other," as well as work within psychology and psychoanalysis, early feminist theorist Betty Friedan also provided inspiration for emerging scholars in the 1970s. In sum, Friedan praises some progress on the part of women within society; however, it is through cultural conceptions of woman, namely the "shifting 'image of the American woman'" (p. 7) that has hindered this progress. The virgin-whore dichotomy (Chahduri, 2006, p. 17; Thornham, 1997, p. 7), a staple of this so-called "American woman" trope, is one such representation that makes the division between active male and passive female prevalent in cultural discourse. Contrasting images of "the feminine woman" (p. 7), which encompass de Beauvior's conception of the woman-as-"Other" (the irrational, incidental, inessential figure fully articulating man's

fantasies) with that which assumes an active, often times masculine position, this representational contradiction offers a unique lens for exploring how the image of woman has been shaped within patriarchal discourse. Moreover, her argument is particularly important when considering Barbara Creed's notion of the "monstrous feminine" and ways that dual images of woman within the horror genre can reinforce negative, objectified visions of femininity within patriarchal discourse, an idea which will be explored below.

**Laura Mulvey and "Visual Pleasure"**

Arguably, the most influential work guiding current studies in feminist film theory is Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), drawing upon both semiotics and psychoanalysis to uncover "the way film reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking, and spectacle" (p. 58). In part, Mulvey tackles similar problems of gender as de Beauvoir and Friedan, as well as other scholars dealing exclusively with semiotics; namely, the "question of woman as signifier in a patriarchal order" (Thorham, 1997, p. 40). For Mulvey, the image of the woman tends to function as the bearer of difference when compared to the man, and due to her passive nature, is easily manipulated in the signification process and, in turn, the act of looking on the part of the spectator.

As Mulvey articulates in the beginning of "Visual Pleasure," the chief method for explaining how the image of woman is caught in the process of signification, and is thus marked as a repressed "Other," is through psychoanalysis, as it demonstrates "the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (Mulvey,

1975, p. 58).   Adopting the language of Freud, Mulvey determines that "the function

of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold: she firstly symbolizes the

castration threat by her real lack of a penis and secondly thereby raises her child into

the symbolic" (p. 59).   Central to her argument on the symbolic – and one that

connects to Creed's notion of the "monstrous feminine" and *femme castratrice* – is the

notion of castration anxiety.   Taken from this perspective, woman is forever bound to

the "image as bearer of the bleeding wound" (p. 59); or, to put it in another way,

woman is always defined as lacking a penis, as inherently different from man and

castigated from the symbolic order.   As a result, when a woman bears a child, this

offspring serves as a signifier of the penis, an attempt to enter the world of the

symbolic despite radical difference from those within this system.   Since the female

image (specifically, the maternal female image) cannot produce meaning on her own –

as a "bearer, not maker" of meaning, as mentioned previously – she is absent and

excluded from the patriarchal symbolic order.   On the other hand, the child is

automatically bound to the signifier of the penis, entering and sustaining this dominant

social structure.

Mulvey's lasting influence in feminist film theory lies in her "reworking of

psychoanalytic film theory which places sexual difference, and the privileging of the

masculine, as central to the understanding of film pleasure and film meaning"

(Thornham, 1997, p. 42).  Her utilization of Freudian psychoanalysis, paired with an

understanding of semiotics provided by her contemporaries, allows for a deeper

exploration of the ways in which female representation has been constructed within

mainstream film, and looks to cinema as a vehicle for spreading and sustaining

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messages of societal norms and values to the public.   While many scholars have criticized Mulvey's approach to film analysis, taking issue with the general absence of a consideration of the female spectator and possibility for feminine discourse (pp. 42-43), her work in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" nevertheless "generated much of the vocabulary and terms of debate that followed in film theory, putting feminist questions at the center of the discipline" (Corrigan, White, & Mazaj, 2011, p. 706).  Moreover, Mulvey's work demonstrates the rhetorical nature of film, examining the ways in which mainstream, Hollywood films help communicate messages supporting the beliefs and norms within society.  In her treatment of film as a text – to be critically and closely read, as a legitimate medium comparable to the likes of literature, theatre, and the photographic image – Mulvey's work distinguishes the cinematic medium as a valid point of entry in the analysis of discourse as a whole, one that reaffirms the status quo in the overall structure of patriarchal society.

**The Horror Film – Essential Scholarship and Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine***

As feminist theory gained traction within film scholarship, the study of specific genres of film exemplary of key theoretical concepts and terms emerged.  Genres with "less cultural esteem" (Williams, 1991, p. 269), such a pornography and the melodramatic "weepies" of the 1950s, were often taken as objects of analysis, as they dealt commonly, and sometimes implicitly, with the representation of sexual difference and gender.  The horror genre, a category of film that didn't shy away from critical attention and scorn, soon became an area largely researched by feminist scholars, who attributed the depiction of the grotesque and monstrous as integral to the shaping of the image of woman relative to societal demands.  Central to the critical

reading of the horror genre is psychoanalysis (Grant, 1996a, p. 4): from studies of the

monster in mainstream horror films to analyses of madness and psychological horror,

feminist approaches to the genre employed Freudian (and, as commonly used in

current readings of horror films, Lacanian) psychoanalysis.  In this regard, scholars

and critics were able to pinpoint the exact ways in which (male) desire can be mapped

onto a filmic environment (p. 4), and how the female body can transform into the site

of unacknowledged fantasy and anxiety, whether on the level of the individual or on

the part of the collective, societal unconscious.  Broader questions of how sexual

identity is created, how gender is compromised both culturally and historically (p. 7),

and how difference between genders is stipulated through society are some other

directions feminist analyses of horror film have taken.

The issue of spectatorship, as well as the larger issue of the affects of film on

the spectator, have had, by and large, a lasting presence in both classic and

contemporary film theory: early critics including Andre Bazin and Sergei Eisenstein

paved the way for studying how audiences react to the moving image, and feminist

scholars like Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure" and Teresa De Lauretis in both "The

Technology of Gender" (1987) and *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*

(1984) have translated issues of subjectivity into the realm of gender construction.  It

is no wonder that feminist approaches to the horror genre have paid equal attention to

the issue of gender and identification in the horror film; for example, Carol J. Clover

in "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" (1989) isolates the slasher

subgenre of horror and looks to how the blurred lines of gender presented in these

films complicate the issue of male identification (Thornham, 1999, p. 230).  Moreover,

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Linda Williams in "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess" (1991) looks to film genres featuring bodily and emotional excess – the horror genre, in addition to pornography and melodrama – and how they cause the spectator to oscillate between male and female identification (p. 232). Since these types of films over-involve the viewer, fully absorbing them in bodily excess and matching the types of reactions felt by the spectator (Williams, 1991, pp. 270-270), they allow the audience to become fully invested, both consciously and unconsciously, with their narrative material, heightening the chance of character identification.

Important to Williams' study of these body genres – and, something of value when considering the role of horror film in identification – is her use of Freudian psychoanalysis to situate the viewer's sense of identification with both male and female characters. Williams adopts Freud's seminal work, "A Child is Being Beaten" (1919) as well his work on castration anxiety and the work of Clover in the horror genre, to argue that gender is not fixed on the part of the spectator. Rather, taking on "Clover's more bisexual model of viewer identification in the horror film" (p. 274), Williams asserts that the emphasis of the female victim particularly within the slasher film, and the ultimate repetition of fantasies and anxieties within the narrative structure of this breed of horror, switch back and forth between sensations of sadism and masochism, of the spectator projecting their desires onto the female body while at the same time feeling similar sensations of being brutally and suddenly attacked by an unknown source (Williams, 1991, pp. 278-279; Thornham, 1999, p. 232). In essence, the slasher film, and the broader category of the horror film, exhibits real shifts in gender identification taking place not only in studies of spectatorship, but within

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Western society as a whole. As Williams concludes, the horror film "hinges upon rapid changes taking place in relations between the 'sexes' and by rapidly changing notions of gender – of what it means to be a man or a woman" (p. 280). This presents a generally optimistic message surrounding the horror genre, one of changes in the ways in which gender is constructed and communicated within society.

An important piece when considering feminist analyses of the horror genre, and one that is crucial for the analysis of the representation of woman as "monstrous," is Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993). In the tradition of Freudian psychoanalysis, semiotics, and early feminist scholarship, *The Monstrous Feminine* contains two central arguments, each working in tandem to develop a feminist perspective of the horror genre. On one hand, Creed's argument borrows from Julia Kristeva (1982), whose work on horror fiction in literature argues that the representation of women as monstrous derives from the concept of abjection (Creed, 1993, p. 8). The abject, which according to Creed, situates "the monstrous-feminine in the horror film in relation to […] that which 'disturbs identity, system, order'" (p. 8), is seen as a foil to what is typically prescribed in society as clean and normal. That is, things including bodily waste and fluids, religious "abominations" (p. 9), bodily deformities, and abnormal sexual desire, to name a few, threaten the border between what is normal and abnormal, human and inhuman (pp. 9-10). Eliminating the abject – those objects or ideas that ultimately straddle the line between what is proper and improper – is the ideological goal of societal structures, in order to "guarantee that the subject take up his/her proper place in relation to the symbolic" (p. 9).

Interestingly, Kristeva and Creed stress that woman, namely in the horror genre, has a particular relationship to the abject. Not only is woman connected to a staple in horror films – the monster – through her similar release of fluids in menstruation and other biological processes, as well as her subsequent disfigurement from the process of childbirth, woman can also be assumed as physically grotesque and abject, remaining on the border between being human and inhuman. As a result, woman's abjection deems her as "monstrous," therefore making her a threat to the inherent stability of patriarchal society. A supporting example of how woman is closely related to the abject and "monstrous" is in the construction of the maternal figure (p. 11), a point that both Kristeva and Creed emphasize in their arguments. As a site of both sexual desire and physical and bodily impurities, the maternal both "repels and attracts" (p. 14) those around her, crossing societal boundaries and therefore becoming abject, much like the horror monster has the unique ability to entice and disgust those around it. Moreover, the maternal is deemed abject and ultimately "monstrous" through her relationship to her child. Unable to fully break her control, the maternal figure threatens the development of her child's unique, independent identity and ultimate integration into the symbolic order within patriarchal culture. Consequently, the child has an unstable relationship "between two orders: the maternal authority and the law of the father" (p. 13). In other words, the "monstrous," maternal feminine spawns children that are inherently abject, where they are not fully separated from the mother and cannot completely integrate into society. The representation of the maternal as abject, and essentially the "monstrous" feminine as a whole, is a semiotic device assigning meaning as a part of a greater ideology. As

a rhetorical device, the construction of the "monstrous" feminine, especially within the horror genre in film, aims to communicate messages to members of society that maintain normalcy while eliminating things that threaten such stability.

On the other hand, Creed's theory of the "monstrous feminine" is strongly influenced by the work of Freud, namely his commonly held idea that "woman terrifies because she is castrated" (p. 87). Using Freud's case study, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy [Little Hans]" (1903), as well as his overall theory of castration anxiety in men, Creed reverses the oft-cited notion that castration anxiety is instilled at an early age (particularly, in men, but that is not always the case) due to woman's juxtaposition of having strong phallic attributes – power, terror, and destruction – but lacking a penis. Rather, castration anxiety arises because woman's phallic attributes can be used to castrate men, ultimately asserting her dominance and monstrousness. The female genitals, as an agent of castration, are therefore represented as the toothed vagina, or *vagina dentata* (p. 105), and essentially weaken man, destroying him mentally, psychically, and physically (pp. 108-110). Arousing the castration anxieties in male viewers (p. 127), the *vagina dentata* ultimately takes form in the horror film, as Creed points out, as the woman-as-castrator, or *femme castratrice*. This representation of the "monstrous feminine," commonly applied to the slasher film (p. 125), is crucial to Creed's overall argument of castration anxiety, in that the image of the *femme castratrice* primarily "challenges Freud's view that man fears woman because she is castrated" (p. 127). The *femme castratrice* therefore poses a direct threat to patriarchal society, as both an agent of male exploitation and antithesis of traditional female roles in her dominant, near-phallic power over men.

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Creed later notes that the horror film ultimately furthers castration anxiety in men by marking a distinction between the castrated and castrating woman – the threatened image of traditional femininity versus the threatening *femme castratrice*, respectively – essentially constructing a more horrific image of woman as "monstrous;" however, in my analysis of *Baby Jane*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female*, my analysis takes a slightly different approach. Rather than identifying the image of femininity endorsed and sustained within the horror genre in film as "castrated" (a point in Creed's argument that contradicts her own, overall notion of the "monstrous feminine" earlier in the text), I will instead use the term "threatened" to describe this representation, which serves as a direct foil to the *femme castratrice*, or woman-as-castrator. That way, the comparison between images of the threatened versus threatening woman can be seen in a clearer fashion and therefore strengthen the notion of the "monstrous" feminine in the selected films and overall horror genre.

Creed's analysis of the horror film is essential for feminist scholarship for several different reasons. In addition to drawing critical attention to the horror film, Creed's work also features a new reading of Freudian psychoanalysis, one that reconstructs the notion of topics including castration anxiety and fantasy, and creates a more realistic, fluid translation of the role of unconscious desire in society. Furthermore, in a similar way to Clover and Williams, Creed underscores the ways in which the horror genre redefines gender identification, looking at the same types of oscillation between male and female subject positions. However, her reading of subjectivity is slightly different, reinforcing several earlier scholars' notions of male authority and female passivity – she comes to the conclusion that "the fantasy

structures of the horror film, with their shifting subject positions and blurring of gender boundaries, reveal a great deal about male desires […] but tell us nothing about female desire" (Thornham, 1999, p. 232).  Creed, in essence, looks to the prevalence of patriarchal control in the projection of desires onto the screen, excluding and vilifying those belonging to woman.  While subject positioning is fluid and mobile within the horror film (Chadhuri, 2006, p. 96), the representation of the "monstrous feminine" speaks to the male gaze, desires strictly reinforcing patriarchal, societal norms.

**Analysis**

*Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female* are arguably three radical examples of the dual image of woman in the (psychological) horror film, employing various techniques that offer unique images of the "monstrous feminine" as constructed by, for, and within patriarchal culture. From the melodramatic, dramatized world of two aging sisters in the evolving film industry, to the supernatural tale of a hormonal teen and her mother, to the thrilling cat-and-mouse game between a successful yuppie and her new roommate, each of these films present diverse images of woman aligning with the cultural, social, and historical conditions within patriarchal society particular to the time that they were produced and released. In effect, they shed light on the different ways in which woman can embody so-called "monstrousness" not only according to her role within the diegesis of the film, but as stipulated by society in day-to-day life. The diverse subject matter of these films, then, offers varying interpretations of *The Monstrous Feminine*, and highlights components within the theoretical framework of Creed's analysis of the horror film.

The methodological approach to my thesis rests on analyzing each of the films separately, uncovering the ways in which their individual narrative, visual, and auditory components align with visions of the "monstrous feminine" and woman-as-"Other" or abject described in *The Monstrous Feminine*. Moreover, since my analysis hinges on the dual representation of woman, utilizing films that contrast the "monstrous" or "threatening" woman with images of more traditional femininity (according to patriarchal society), this analysis explores how this traditional, "threatened" vision of femininity is constructed within each film. Visions of "normal"

femininity prescribed by the films will be compared and contrasted with images of the "monstrous feminine," ultimately bringing the ideas regarding the representation of woman in the horror genre, established by Creed, full-circle.

Despite their noticeable differences, the three films nevertheless have many common features that allow for a more thorough reading of the "monstrous feminine." The most blatant similarity between the films involves their employment of dual images of woman, contrasting images of femininity conforming to the norms prescribed by patriarchal culture with those that are outside of the status quo, deemed as "monstrous." Also, these films share themes of motherhood and overall family dynamics, as well as rivalries between the two female leads, adhering to most arguments within feminist film theory and Creed's overall theory of woman's monstrousness in the horror film. The use of a Camp aesthetic, prevalent in *Baby Jane* and having visible traces in *Carrie* and *Single White Female*, is another shared characteristic of the films, heightening the distorted, often times horrific images of woman prevalent throughout their narratives.

The narrative structures of each of the films also share similar patterns, particularly when constructing threatened and threatening images of woman. As indicated previously, each of the films mark one female character as "monstrous" or threatening, posing a clear danger to the patriarchal order of the films; the second female character, on the other hand, assumes what is seen as a proper feminine role both within the film's diegesis and in patriarchal culture in real life. Consequently, conflict arises from the threat imposed by the "monstrous feminine" onto the prototypical, otherwise "normal" woman, and the horror in these films stems from the

psychological and, to a lesser extent, physical threat of the "monstrous," abject woman to the stability of patriarchal codes within society. To safeguard the stability of the social order, and to ultimately go against alternative, apparently threatening versions of femininity, the "monstrous" character is killed in each of the films' finales by the character adhering to prototypical feminine roles.

An interesting tactic utilized within each of the films is their shifting representation of the "monstrous feminine." The three films, in their utilization of the dual image of woman, alternate between representations of monstrosity and prototypical femininity during multiple moments in the narrative. To put it in another way, there is no clear-cut distinction between the "monstrous" and apparently "normal" feminine; each female character assumes the role as monstrous at different points in each of the films. So, for example, Carrie and Mrs. White in *Carrie*, during different scenes and interpretations of the film, are each considered to be "monstrous" and, in later scenes, are shown to abandon this role, opting for traditional feminine characteristics. The same can be said for *Single White Female* and *Baby Jane* – each female lead adopts the role of monster and threatened woman in the narrative trajectory of their respective films, oscillating between monster and outright victim. The fact that this contradictory pattern is employed is rather important, in that is signals the inherent danger that any version of femininity, horrific or otherwise, poses to the patriarchal social order. As a result, these films communicate the idea that, as a whole, the image of woman can never be positive or fully good; woman will always be outside of the margins of patriarchal discourse, becoming a "monstrous," "Othered" figure when compared to societal ideals. The doubled visions of female monstrosity

presented within these films not only projects male fears onto conflicting images of the female body (as suggested within Creed's analysis) but, more importantly, helps to endorse a highly problematic, altogether negative portrayal of femininity. It will be beneficial, then, to compare and contrast the varying images of woman presented in each of the films. In looking at the ways in which each individual film constructs dual images of woman, my analysis will locate the similarities and differences amongst the three films in their construction of representations of femininity. Since these representations overlap – that is, common tropes or visions of woman as "monstrous" versus "threatened" are apparent in all three films – the overall argument can be made surrounding the ultimate power of the filmic medium, and even the horror genre, to perpetuate and maintain certain images of woman in the public.

Each of the films adheres to several different aspects of Creed's analysis, and are even mentioned in detail in key arguments within the framework of *The Monstrous Feminine.* All three films, for example, illustrate Creed's extension of abjection, as laid out by Kristeva in *The Powers of Horror.* In particular, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* fully utilizes the notion of the abjection, with Blanche and Jane Hudson traversing the boundaries between the clean and unclean, proper and improper, of social norms and behaviors. *Carrie*, a film discussed at length in Creed's chapter on the "Woman-as-Witch," clearly signifies an association of motherhood to monstrosity, and the relationship between Carrie and her mother extends misogynistic myths of menstrual blood, reproduction, and the infant-as-other (Creed, 1993, p. 83). *Single White Female* exhibits the final topic discussed by Creed, that of the *femme castratrice* and castration anxiety, in that it exploits the female psychopath trope commonly

utilized in domestic thrillers of the late 1980s and early 1990s.  In sum, the dual

images of woman presented in each of the films offers a deeper insight on the ways in

which woman's monstrosity is constructed within the horror genre, and how these

images are sustained within patriarchal society.

### *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*

The psychological thriller *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, directed by

Robert Aldrich and starring Hollywood icons Joan Crawford and Bette Davis, has

often been cited as one of the first films establishing the sub-genre of the "horror-

woman's film," a category of the horror genre emerging in the 1960s at the

intersection between the woman's film, or "weepie," and the new breed of horror

emerging from Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film, *Psycho* (Greven, 2013, p. 2).  That is,

films in the tradition of the "horror-woman's film" utilized a female-driven plot –

often focusing on the emotional, social, and psychological conflicts of female

characters (p. 2) – while simultaneously adopting a style marked by violence, gore,

and terror.  Aligning with a more troubled image of femininity (p. 2), these films

feature female characters as both the subject and object of a given narrative; while the

structure of a "horror woman's film" is arguably sustained by the action of female

characters, it nevertheless paints a complex portrait of femininity that is troubled and,

in the case of *Baby Jane*, a grotesque spectacle.  *Baby Jane*, and other films from the

1960s merging the woman's film with new conceptions of horror, helped to pave the

way for female-centered films of the past 50 years or so; the success of *Carrie* and

*Single White Female*, alongside numerous other psychological horror or thriller films,

is essentially indebted to *Baby Jane*.

In addition to paving the way for a new formula for the horror genre, *Baby Jane* also redefined the boundaries of the Camp aesthetic within mainstream cinema. Often cited by early critics as the embracing of "actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis" (quoted in Robertson, 2006, p. 3), forms of Camp emerged from gay male sub-cultural groups, acting as a means of liberation and activism in a time where this was absent from the dominant cultural consciousness (p. 4). As Camp in the 1960s mediated between cultural production that reflected the gay male experience to performances bringing the marginalized voice of the heterosexual woman to the forefront (pp. 4-5), a newer form of Camp, often times coded as pastiche or parody, emerged within the larger cultural consciousness. This variety of Camp, while not wholly abandoning its roots, is marked by a distinct emphasis on the nostalgic, offering an almost ironic look at outdated, dead forms of artistic expression. *Baby Jane*, released in 1962, was one of the films ushering this new, mainstream version of Camp; in addition to featuring two actresses commonly tied to Camp performance (Crawford and Davis), it features many of the common themes attributed to Camp as a whole. The nostalgic, almost melancholy look at vaudeville; the appropriation of outdated modes of cultural production; an ironic look at socially validated emotional displays (Greven, 2013, p. 3); the abrupt transformation of tragic material into the melodramatic – all of these tactics, featured throughout *Baby Jane*, help solidify the film's place in the Camp canon. Likewise, since its Camp aesthetic transforms seemingly normal, mundane material into the exaggerated and grotesque, *Baby Jane* can therefore be considered a prime example of the psychological horror film.

Reviews of *Baby Jane* after its release pick up on the film's overall use of Camp and horror techniques, taking into account the melodramatic, heavy-handed stylistic and narrative elements of the film in constructing its scary tone.  On Davis and Crawford's performances as the aging Hudson sisters, Bosley Crowther's 1962 review from *The New York Times* praises the characters' "amusing and eventually blood-chilling displays of screaming sororal hatred and general monstrousness" (Crowther, 1962, p. N7).  Crowther, concluding with a remark on Davis' performance as a "sadly demented creature who is simply working out an ancient spite," emphasizes the film's contribution to the horror genre, noting that the picture can be considered "a 'chiller' of the old-fashioned type – [a] straight exercise in studied horror" (p. N7).  The sheer absurdity of the film's premise, emphasized by its melodramatic elements and grotesqueries, heightens the horrific nature of the film; Howard H. Prouty (1981), in another review of the film, echoes this sentiment, suggesting that Davis' portrayal of Jane in particular is "simultaneously blood-chilling and grotesquely funny" (Prouty, 1981, p. 2651).  While it may not appear to be considered as a straight horror film, the utilization of various forms of performance and spectacle, as well as heightened emotional displays on the part of Crawford and Davis, helps create its overall sense of unease and terror.

Critics and scholars alike have also drawn upon the *Baby Jane*'s eerie similarities between the aging careers of its protagonists in real life and within the film's overall narrative.  Crowther, for example, bluntly asserts: "The feeble attempts that [director Robert Aldrich] has made to suggest the irony of two once idolized and wealthy females living in such depravity […] wash out very quickly under the flood of

sheer grotesquerie" (Crowther, 1962, p. N7).  On the other hand, Prouty's review,

arguably less scathing and more empathetic to the film's female protagonists, observes

that "Crawford's and Davis' 'movie star' images are used for more than mere

commercial fodder; it is the filmmaker's shrewd manipulation of their 'real' film pasts

that makes the casting more than merely a cheap gimmick" (Prouty, 1981, p. 2653).

 Beyond merely pitting the two aging actresses against each other, the film, as it has

often been observed, highlights the grotesque reality of aging, to sometimes

disheartening levels.  Molly Haskell in *From Reverence to Rape* (1972), for example,

clearly displays her dismay over the characterization of Davis and Crawford as

washed-up figures of yesteryear, suggesting that the women "were turned into

complete travesties of themselves in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*" (Haskell,

1972, p. 328).  Williams, quoted by Greven (2013) in "Bringing out Baby Jane: Camp,

Sympathy, and the 1960s Horror-Woman's Film," continues this observation of the

overall demonization of older actresses in Hollywood, using *Baby Jane* as a central

point of reference: "The Bette Davises and Joan Crawfords considered too old to

continue as spectacle-objects nevertheless persevere as horror-objects" (p. 5).  Moving

beyond the mere representation of aging Hollywood actresses, *Baby Jane* successfully

sheds light on the horrors of everyday life, of aging and death (literal and figurative)

within society.

Baby Jane* opens with a title card reading "1917," the muddled sounds of

human voices juxtaposed with the loud cries of a young child slowly fading into the

sequence.  A clown-like jack-in-the-box, abruptly bursting from a chaotic spiral of

springs and lights, appears in the frame; as a girl looks on, clinging to her mother's

waist and revealed to be the unseen child weeping over the "1917" text, the clown

sheds a tear, an emotionless display mirroring the behavior of the girl while

simultaneously mocking her, as indicated by its wry, static, haunting smile.  Cutting to

an establishing shot of a circus tent with a glowing marquee that reads, "Baby Jane

Hudson," the scene then features the vaudevillian show of the so-called "diminutive

dancing duse of Duluth" (Aldrich, 1962) – child star and titular antagonist, Baby Jane.

 The young performer, who is introduced mid tap-dance, delights both the crowd and

her parents, who look on from backstage; a living toy herself, Baby Jane Hudson is

perfectly polished and manicured, her long blonde curls falling down her youthful,

porcelain face, her frilly dress accentuated with a big, tight bow.  Her performance,

culminating with a choreographed father-daughter duet of the ballad "I've Written a

Letter to Daddy" – a tune that will reappear throughout the film's score – causes the

audience to roar with applause, pleased with the work of their idol.  A signature Baby

Jane Hudson doll, bearing the image and likeness of the entertainer, is given in lieu of

flowers for her rousing performance, a token that cements her position as virtual

plaything for the masses.

This opening scene, in addition to providing important expository information

for the grown Jane character (Davis) and her sister, Blanche (Crawford), sets up

several of the recurrent motifs present in the film's narrative; the comparison of

women to playthings can be easily seen here, as illustrated by the Baby Jane Hudson

doll and jack-in-the-box clown toy.  Additionally, other themes, including the father as

symbol of patriarchal control, are also prevalent throughout the film, leading to bigger

arguments surrounding the construction of femininity and monstrosity within social

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discourses.  Subsequently, greater conclusions can be made about the ways in which monstrosity is linked to disability; both Blanche and Jane, by the film's standards, are damaged goods, each bearing the marks of deformity not only from old age, but from some sort of mental or physical impediment.  The film therefore sheds light on the ways in which monstrosity can manifest itself in daily life, giving insight on the ways in which physical versus mental deformities are communicated and even interpreted by the general public.  The question of whether Blanche or Jane is truly "monstrous" in the overall narrative of the film is predicated by this issue, and the ways in which deformity or disability are represented in *Baby Jane* help shape the overall representation of the "monstrous" feminine in the film.

Importantly, the film does not make a clear distinction between which characters are "monstrous" and which maintain threatened, prototypical qualities of femininity posited within patriarchal society.  Rather, upon several close readings of the film, it is clear that the characteristic of feminine monstrosity switches back and forth between Jane and Blanche.  Subsequently, this points to a troubling portrayal of the image of woman as a whole: femininity is seen as threatening by the standards within society, and despite the place that any woman assumes within the patriarchal order, she is still inherently "monstrous," a figure threatening the stability maintained within society.  On the borders between proper and improper behavior, between the normal and the grotesque, the image of woman presented in the film adheres to Creed and Kristeva's conception of the abject, a perpetual, horrific "Other" on the outskirts of patriarchal society.

**The Motif of Toys and *Baby Jane.*** The motif of toys throughout *Baby Jane*, predominantly consisting of images of (female) baby dolls, plays a significant role in the overall construction of prototypical femininity. As a result, this sets up a clear distinction between what is arguably normal female behavior and, conversely, which behaviors constitute "Otherness," or monstrosity. The Baby Jane Hudson doll, introduced in the film's opening performance and maintaining significance in the older Jane's life and career, is one such bearer of societal norms. The doll, measuring around the same height as the young performer, matches her appearance in an almost frightening way: everything from her hair to her dress and shoes is the same as the real-life Baby Jane, and when depicted side-by-side, the two figures are indistinguishable from one another. The only difference between the child and her *doppelganger*, however, is the painted-on, emotionless stare of the toy, a face of youth and perfection frozen in time and regrettably unattainable by the star in her old age. As the doll is presented on stage – given to Jane by a young male admirer, no less – her father swoons behind her, enthusiastically promoting the beauty and subsequent novelty of the toy with the repeated chant, "Have you ever seen such a lovely doll?" (Aldrich, 1962). This phrase, used later as a tagline for merchandise including replicas of the Baby Jane Hudson doll and other themed paraphernalia, communicates the overall image of femininity promoted within the confines of patriarchal order, one tied to perpetual youth and an aesthetically pleasing appearance. Moreover, the doll, as a passive plaything, reinforces the subordination and exclusion of woman within the symbolic order; the Baby Jane persona embraces this passivity, and in using her

seemingly childlike innocence, she reinforces the prescribed position for women within patriarchal discourse, one that is subordinated and virtually voiceless.

It is when Jane matures, breaking from the traditional vision of femininity projected onto the doll, that her characterization as "monstrous" takes shape. In a rather chilling sequence, varying shots of a Baby Jane Hudson doll are shown near the scene of Jane and Blanche's car accident, a large chunk of its forehead shattered and exposing a hollow center. As different angles of the crime scene are depicted, ending with a slow dissolve from the broken doll to a modern suburban neighborhood, a melodramatic variation of "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" plays, summing up the very transition Jane makes from vaudeville darling to an outdated, washed-up vision of the past. A catalyst for both her mental illness and departure from the limelight, the car crash severs Jane's ties with the entertainment industry, thus excluding her from the symbolic order and marking her as a clear "Other" within patriarchal society. The shattered head of the doll, no longer beautiful or, in the words of Jane's father, "lovely," mirrors the physical transformation of Jane in her old age. She can never return to her beautiful, "lovely" state as a child. Ultimately, an older Jane, seen as a physical and symbolic threat to traditional visions of femininity posited by the doll, is deemed "monstrous."

As Sally Chivers argues in "Baby Jane Grew Up: The Dramatic Intersection of Age with Disability" (2006), Jane's identification with the Baby Jane Hudson doll as an older woman signifies her desperate attempts to return to stardom, to resurrect her vaudeville career in her old age. Her near obsessive attempts to regain her youth through the object of the doll, as Chivers suggests, is not only misguided due to the

rapid changes in technology and cultural tastes in this era, but one that is truly horrific in itself. "In her defiance of time," Chivers asserts, "Baby Jane hearkens back to an age so young as to be disturbing. A visibly aging woman attempting a child's stage antics provides a juxtaposition worthy in Hollywood's term only of a horror film" (p. 218). Her attempt to mirror the image of the doll increases gradually and ridiculously as Jane's mental condition slowly lessens, transforming her from a sympathetic image of age and decay to a monstrous threat to the stability of social order and mental health. Jane's behaviors, then, have clear connections to Creed's interpretation of the abject: as Creed asserts, "the definition of sin/abjection as something which comes from *within* [Creed's emphasis] opens up the way to position woman as deceptively treacherous" (Creed, 1993, p. 42). Jane not only struggles between the boundaries separating socially acceptable behaviors of older versus younger women, a constant theme throughout the film (which will be discussed later), but through her idolization of the doll, of a relic of an unattainable past, she poses an imperceptible threat to patriarchal social order. Although she tries to attain the beautiful appearance of the doll, this masks her true evil, according to prevalent social norms, and therefore conforms to the common stereotype of "beautiful on the outside/corrupt within" (p. 42) as observed by Creed in her discussion of abjection.

Two scenes clearly illustrate Jane's identity as "monstrous" through her identification with the Baby Jane Hudson doll. The first, which has been popular amongst critics analyzing the film, offers a solid glimpse of the level of obsession the aging performer has with the career of her youth, as embodied by the doll. As Jane slowly plays the tune of "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" on her piano, she suddenly

hears the sound of her own voice, from childhood, singing the ballad a cappella; the camera then quickly cuts to an image of the doll, sitting on a chair in the corner of the room, ominously lit by a singular lighting fixture overhead.  Thinking that the doll is singing to her, Jane walks over to it, her eyes filled with tears as she looks on with a mixed sense of nostalgia and melancholy.  She then continues to take the bow off of the doll's head and places it on her own, in an attempt to replicate the image of youth sitting before her.  Framed in a way to suggest the spotlight of a stage, Jane proceeds to sing the tune (in a rather off-beat way) in addition to repeating a childhood poem. Juxtaposed with this scene are images of her sister, Blanche, who can easily hear Jane's singing, looking on with disgust and pity.  Jane's solo performance ends abruptly as she catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror – her skin no longer matches the porcelain complexion of the doll's, and her hair, once springy and full of life, is limp and dead.  Her hopes to regain her position as child star, to mirror the physical perfection exhibited by the young doll, are shot, ending as the sound of Blanche's buzzer summoning her sister echoes throughout the house.

The second scene connecting Jane to the doll comes later in the film, as Jane works to revive her vaudeville act.  After transforming her physical image (wearing caked-on makeup and clothes similar to the frilly dresses of her childhood), Jane hires a composer, Ed Flagg (Victor Buono) to accompany her planned comeback performance.  Their awkward first meeting culminates in Jane's bizarre performance of "I've Written a Letter to Daddy," featuring the musical accompaniment of Flagg at the piano, where he watches and gives constant (albeit fake) admiration to the star.  As Jane continues to sing, she begins to dance, her movements following the exact

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choreography featured in the opening scene.  As she dances – and as Blanche overhears the performance from her room – the scene then cuts to a wider angle of the performance, shot from a perspective replicating the position a viewer could possibly maintain when watching a performance on stage.  Highlighted by the glow of faux-stage lights, her performance ends with a childlike curtsy to the imaginary audience, garnering the enthusiastic, and rather sympathetic, applause from Flagg.

In each scene, Jane's identification with her Baby Jane persona, preserved in the doll bearing her childhood likeness, grows to horrific levels, transforming the nostalgia for the past into a grotesque spectacle that distorts the feminine form.  As Creed asserts, in the act of placing the female body within the context of spectacle, the female figure breaks from the proper roles stipulated for women within society (p. 42); as she reclaims her femininity, and deviates from the male gaze, she subsequently poses a threat to the ways in which woman is situated within patriarchal discourse.  In a similar sense, Jane's active display of her body, which in itself is seen as against what is socially acceptable, is an attempt to penetrate the patriarchal social system that she has been constantly pushed away from.  Her identification with the Baby Jane Hudson doll, in addition to being the pinnacle of Camp performance, marks her as a figure crossing the boundaries between what is beautiful and ugly, socially acceptable and socially corrupt.  Her abject nature, as a result, marks her monstrous nature; she is the so-called threatening woman in this instance, the "monstrous feminine."

The coding of Jane-as-monster, and consequently Blanche as a threatened version of femininity prescribed by patriarchal discourse, may appear deceptively easy, if taken at face value.  Upon a closer reading of the doll motif within *Baby Jane*,

however, it is clear that the film takes a different approach to characterizing its female

leads. That is, based on the significance of the doll as a bearer of patriarchal order and

control, it is Jane that is the threatened image of femininity, and Blanche who is truly

monstrous. On one hand, Jane's constant identification with the doll from a very early

age helps solidify images of femininity that are proper and socially desirable; her

appearance conforms to traditional images of woman as aesthetically pleasing,

youthful, and otherwise an object of desire and control. Jane, whose place within the

social order (as represented through the microcosm of the entertainment industry)

wanes alongside her old age, strives to regain her proper place in patriarchal discourse,

transforming her image to conform to prototypical images of femininity prescribed by

cultural and artistic expressions. In her identification with the doll, which maintains

its rightful place in patriarchal society due to its unchanging appearance and ties to

childhood (as well as, implicitly, the meaning systems created within social order), she

strives to uphold the very structures dictating proper femininity, which is altogether

objectified and projects male fantasy. The finale of the film, exhibiting Jane's full

mental breakdown and return to a childlike state, solidifies woman's role in patriarchal

society as a passive, irrational, voiceless "Other."

It is Blanche, then, who is ultimately constructed as the "monstrous feminine"

throughout the narrative of *Baby Jane*. Blanche never fully identifies with her past

career, let alone her childhood: despite her massive success as a young adult,

independent from the control of her father, the now matured Blanche appropriately

"acts her age" (Chivers, 2006, p. 222), hardly showing signs of wanting to return to

her old career. Furthermore, she never fully identifies with images of her youth –

unlike her sister, Blanche does not hold on to relics of the past, lacking the same type of drive towards achieving a similar type of beauty possessed in her youth.  In positioning herself away from her youth, and subsequently away from the Baby Jane doll, Blanche furthers herself from the symbolic order, cementing her "Otherness" and monstrosity by society's standards.  Unlike Jane, who fully and willingly takes her place within patriarchal discourse through her identification with the Baby Jane doll, Blanche's actions in the film expose the shortcomings of this meaning system, making her a threatening figure as a whole.

Moreover, many critics have observed Blanche's noticeable deformities, caused by the car accident, as key indications of her association with monstrosity. Jodi Brooks (1992), for example, strongly suggests that it is Blanche, not Jane, who is the source of terror, due in part to her "sickly 'femmi-ness'" (p. 230).  That is, Blanche's external beauty is offset by her physical deformities, and her maudlin arm and facial movements throughout the most melodramatic parts of the film are rendered bizarre and overtly narcissistic (p. 233).  Wholly removing herself from the site of male desire, Blanche deliberately acts as a grotesque spectacle and, adhering to Creed's discussion of spectacle and monstrosity, traverses the space between prototypical female behavior and that which is improper, unusual, and horrific.  Her physical appearance, a stark contrast to the static, emotionless, youthful essence of the doll, makes her a monstrous figure.

**The Law of the Father and *Baby Jane.*** The Law of the Father, a strong theme within the film, is set up at a very early point in the narrative.  The working and personal relationship between Baby Jane and her father exhibited in the first scene of

the film helps establish this issue, and Jane's loyalty to her father throughout the narrative, even after his death, signifies the strength of the patriarchal symbolic order. Jane, as a perpetual "daddy's girl," is fully absorbed into the symbolic order, therefore signifying her proper feminine role within society. Consequently, Blanche, in her close connection to other female figures as a child and in adulthood, cannot escape maternal authority, and coupled with her grotesque physical appearance, is a threat to the clean, "whole and proper" (p. 13) patriarchal order, marking her as the "monstrous feminine."

In her discussion of Kristeva, Creed highlights the duality of maternal authority and paternal laws, or as many have called it, the Law of the Father. The latter concept, the Law of the Father, signifies the symbolic social order, a so-called "universe of shame" (p. 13) that assigns clear boundaries between proper, clean behaviors and those evoking disgust and contempt. Conversely, the former concept – maternal authority – comes before the child's assimilation into the social order, blurring the lines between what is "whole and proper" (pp. 12-13) and what is irrational, disgusting, and perverse. Often characterized alongside bodily functions (especially producing blood, feces, and vomit, to name a few), maternal authority is marked by Creed as a "universe without shame" (p. 13), reveling in the break of taboos marking the unclean and improper. As a result, the threat to the Law of the Father posed by maternal authority is twofold: it threatens the stability of patriarchal symbolic order by going against socially prescribed notions of proper behavior, and removes the child from the Law of the Father indefinitely.

Although Creed's summary chronicling the Law of the Father is strictly tied to horror films featuring gore, it nevertheless leads to important directions when considering the construction of female monstrosity in *Baby Jane*. It is clear that from the very first scene of the film, Jane's loyalty to her father solidifies her integration into the Law of the Father, and her constant performance of the song, "I've Written a Letter to Daddy," is of particular importance when analyzing the film's narrative as an extension of the patriarchal social order. When featured diegetically – that is, when actually performed within the film's cinematic environment – the ballad illustrates Jane's slow assimilation into the social order, her willing acceptance from a very early age of the Law of the Father. The emotional, vaudevillian ballad, written from the perspective of a young girl lamenting the loss of her father, acts as Baby Jane's magnum opus, the highlight of her stage performance for adoring spectators. Its lyrics, sappy at best, paint a rather interesting picture: "I've written a letter to daddy/ His address is heaven above/ I've written 'Dear daddy, we miss you, and wish you were with us to love'" (Aldrich, 1962). At first glance, this may seem innocent enough – a young child simply misses her father, who appears to have a lasting presence on her life. The tone of the song mimics the naïveté of childhood, of not fully understanding death as a part of life. It continues: "Instead of a stamp, I put kisses/ the postman says 'That's best to do'/ I've written this letter to daddy, saying 'I love you!'" (Aldrich, 1962). It's a simple tune with a simple message, and Baby Jane's cutesy performance of the song is a crowd-pleaser.

A deeper reading, however, suggests that "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" sends a strong message about the dominant role of the father within the social order.

The loss of the father is a grave one: the little girl, and the family to a certain degree, cannot properly function without the physical presence of their beloved "daddy." The lyric, "Dear daddy, we miss you, and wish you were with us to love," connects to this veneration of father figures; there is a clear and present void in the family unit as a whole in the absence of a father. This connects to Creed's discussion of monstrosity in the context of the family – when the father is "invariably absent" (p. 12) from the home, the relationship formed between the mother and child (or children) prevents assimilation into the symbolic realm. "Partly consumed by the desire to remain locked in a blissful relationship with the mother and partly terrified of separation, the child finds it easy to succumb to the comforting pleasure of [a] dyadic relationship" (p. 12), and, as a result, can no longer return to the symbolic order of the Law of the Father. The song, then, signals the importance of the role of the father within patriarchal order, and when missing altogether, produces dire consequences that goes beyond the sadness of a small child.

Performing "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" at an early age, Baby Jane is introduced to her rightful place within patriarchal order; when singing the same song in adulthood, Jane solidifies this role. Jane's father is a lasting presence in her life, even after his death, an eerie similarity to the lyrics of the song. In addition to buying their family home, additional traces of their father can be seen in pictures hanging on the walls of the house, and songbooks featuring a "daddy" theme litter the piano in Jane's rehearsal room. The desire to revive her once defunct career, hinging on the popularity of "I've Written a Letter to Daddy," furthers Jane's over-reliance on the memory of her father. By constantly aiming to please her father, whether dead or

alive, and keeping his image and likeness intact throughout her home, Jane constantly reaffirms her place within the patriarchal order, refusing to deviate from her proper role in Hollywood and, to a greater extent, society as a whole.

Furthermore, nondiegetic variations of "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" featured in the film's score provide insight on the film's overall rhetorical message, that which is in line with patriarchal discourse within society. A constant throughout the film, the tune is featured in parts or as a whole, changing its rhythm and key depending on the emotional complexity or narrative content of each scene. Adding to the film's Camp aesthetic, the "Daddy" theme within the score adds a sense of ironic nostalgia for the past, with the vaudevillian song an appropriation of a bygone cultural hallmark. Importantly, however, "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" communicates a message sustaining the powerful role of the father not only within the family unit, but within society as a whole. Clearly, Jane cannot function without the guidance and approval of her father; the score, accompanying scenes featuring her mental illness, illustrates this. If Jane's father left a lasting, negative toll on her life, surely the absence of patriarchal control within society will have equally dire consequences. The Law of the Father, linked to rationally, order, and control, is necessary for the functioning of Western society; without it, the film posits, society becomes flawed, irrational, and destructive.

Whereas Jane has strong connections with male characters throughout the film (her father in her childhood, and Flagg in her adult career), Blanche is predominantly featured interacting and even identifying with other female characters. Going back to the opening scene, Blanche is first introduced alongside her mother, miserably

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watching her sister perform alongside her father.  Timid and unassuming, the young

Blanche is the complete opposite of her diva-like sister, opting for plain attire instead

of the frilly, girly clothing of Jane.  It is also clear from this scene that she has a very

different relationship with each parent – her mother is shown as reassuring, kind, and

loving to Blanche, whereas her father yells at her repeatedly.  Harkening back to

Creed's overview of maternal authority and the abject, Blanche's relationship with her

mother is signified by this so-called "universe without shame;" her behaviors, opposite

from what is deemed proper and normal from her father, are welcomed by her mother,

breaking the symbolic order situated within the narrative.  Blanche almost literally

identifies with maternal authority in this scenario, maintaining a strong relationship

with her mother and deviating from the control stipulated by her father.

As she matures, this strained relationship with patriarchal authority deepens,

indicated by her successful career independent from her father and, as a signifier of

patriarchal control, her sister Jane.  Blanche's bright career comes to a screeching halt

after her debilitating car accident; confined to a wheelchair and in her bedroom,

Blanche adopts her rightful place within the system of the Law of the Father, one that

passively adheres to socially sanctioned norms and behaviors.  Jane, who constantly

attempts to fulfill proper roles within society, forces her sister to fully separate from

maternal authority, from "Otherness" that is improper and unclean by the patriarchal

standards.  Although her abusive and manipulative temperament can be understood as

monstrousness, Jane's control over Blanche is arguably seen as necessary measures

for sustaining the symbolic order created in part by her father.  The physical and

emotional torture aimed towards Blanche is "mere child's play" (Brooks, 1992, p.

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230) when compared to the horrors associated with Blanche's close association with the abject, with maternal authority.

Blanche's attempts to escape from the confines of her sister's control, and ultimately of the patriarchal symbolic order, are thwarted time and time again. In one climactic scene, Blanche desperately tries to enlist the help of her neighbor, Mrs. Bates, (Anna Lee) in dealing with Jane's out-of-control behavior. Desperately throwing a hand-written note from her window, with bars covering the exterior in a way reminiscent to a jail cell, Blanche tries to get the attention of the woman with weak screams and whistles, a last-stitch effort to free herself from patriarchal control and reclaim her independence. Unfortunately, her attempts fail – Jane discovers the note, and continues to verbally abuse her sister. Reasserting the power of her father, Jane exclaims, "Daddy bought this house, and he bought it for me! Don't think I remembered that, do 'ya?" (Aldrich, 1962). Blanche's desperate effort to try to overthrow the power of her sister – by selling their house and sending Jane to a psychiatric institution, by confiding in and working alongside her female neighbors, whose freedom she envies – turns into disaster, and reaffirms the ultimate power of the Law of the Father. Her food and access to the outside world are taken away; she is confined even further, punished for her dissociation from patriarchal order.

Blanche's strained relationship with her sister, and ultimate desire to identify with maternal authority, results in her seeking out the affections of her housekeeper, Elvira (Maidie Norman). With a strong distaste for Jane and a warm, understanding personality, Elvira stands in for the void left by Blanche and Jane's mother, acting as a confidant and caretaker to the disabled star. Elvira even offers to live with Blanche if

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Jane were to be admitted to a "home," as they put it, furthering the bond between the maternal figure and her close friend. Just as she did as a child, Blanche latches on to Elvira and distances herself from the patriarchal order, which, in this case, is fulfilled by Jane. Seen as a threat to the inherent stability of the symbolic order, Elvira is constantly shooed away by Jane, and in one scene, is told that she can take the day off from work (when, in reality, Jane wants to get rid of her housekeeper to further separate her sister from the outside world). Elvira's threat to Jane's control over Blanche is eventually destroyed: towards the end of the film, she discovers Blanche tied to her bed and gagged, and when trying to rescue her, Jane bludgeons Elvira to death with a hammer. Elvira's death, eliminating Blanche's chances for freedom literally and figuratively acts as a warning of sorts communicated by the film – either you assume your place according to the Law of the Father, breaking from the social symbolic and refusing maternal authority, or you risk becoming a part of the social taboo, of becoming altogether "monstrous."

**Mental and Physical Disability and *Baby Jane.*** Playing into and around "cultural stereotypes of disability as complete helplessness and dependency" (Chivers, 2006, p. 222), *Baby Jane* sheds light on the ways in which both physical and mental disability are constructed within society, extending to the horrors of uselessness, weakness, and a state of decay. When aligned with the female image, the stigma surrounding disability intensifies; in the vein of scholar Rosemarie Garland Thompson, Chivers suggests that physical disability in particular "diminishes the cultural value of […] femininity without disability" (p. 223), placing an even greater emphasis on woman's perceived inferiority, deviancy, and status outside of patriarchal

discourse.  As a result, Blanche's paralysis brought about by the film's infamous car crash is equated with horror, solidifying her position as "monstrous" and therefore a threatening presence to the stability of patriarchal society.

Despite the fact that she wheels around passively, and is physically weak due to missed meals (Jane starves her on a daily basis), Blanche nevertheless encompasses what some have considered to be "the sinister cripple" role (quoted in Chivers, p. 222).  That is, she utilizes her passivity to obtain what she desires, ultimately surviving despite her dwindling physical health.  Blanche's admission of guilt in her own paralysis at the end of the film is a clear example of her sinister, "monstrous" character.  As she reveals to her sister that she caused the infamous car-accident – "Don't you understand?  I crippled myself!" (Aldrich, 1962) – she reveals her own moral shortcomings (p. 224) in seeking revenge towards her sister, a twisted fulfillment of her mother's promise to a young Blanche that "Someday, it's you that's going to get all of the attention" (Aldrich, 1962).  "Believing this confession," Chivers states, "means believing that Blanche's last able-bodied action was an attempted murder" (p. 224); Blanche, as it appears, not only attempted to destroy Jane's career and public acclaim, but tried to kill her in a rather horrific way.  As a result, Blanche's monstrosity is not only due to her outward, grotesque appearance: her disability is affiliated with immorality, and should be feared by audiences for her evil activities.

The representation of Jane's mental illness in *Baby Jane* is a bit more troubling, especially considering the fact that the source of Jane's monstrosity lies in other people's actions towards her. The desire to please her father and audiences, the plummeting of her career in the 1930s, and the tragedy of the car accident injuring

Blanche all placed a great amount of stress on the aging star, leading to her gradual decline mentally and emotionally.  Moreover, the transition from vaudeville to television and newer media outlets spurred her mental illness; she cannot cope with the loss of adoration from the masses, nor can she understand new industry standards, and as a result, her mental state declines rapidly.  The external factors causing her insanity pose a difficult contradiction: much like Creed stresses, the film understands that horror can come from within, but at the same time, it can also be attributed to a misalignment with cultural, historical, and environmental conditions.  The film simply doesn't know what to do with Jane, not fully understanding the nature of mental illness or addiction, leading to an even more difficult reading of (or identification with) the character of Jane altogether.  Is Jane, as abusive, shape shifting, and totally insane, the real monster of the film?  Or, rather, is Hollywood, as an instrument of patriarchal control and subordination, truly horrific?

It would seem, then, that throughout the course of the film, that *Baby Jane* points to the former predicament – that Jane, through her mental illness, is truly "monstrous."  This is clearly exhibited by her ability to transform both her appearance and voice; plagued with multiple personalities, Jane shifts her identity based on her own, individual, sinister needs, doing more harm than good with her talents.  Moreover, the abuse directed towards her innocent, wheelchair-bound sister is seen as a physical manifestation of her mental deformities.  Withholding Blanche's meals, killing and presenting animals to Blanche in lieu of food, and repeatedly attacking Blanche in a vicious manner are all outward projections of Jane's horrific mental state.  Parallel to various psycho-killers throughout the horror genre, Jane's behaviors go

beyond childish tormenting and teasing, taking on a fully aggressive, destructive nature.  Her abusive behaviors, as an extension of her mental illness, furthers the notion that it is not merely physical grotesqueries, or blood and gore for that matter, that make the monster: the monster comes from within.

It is clear that the physical manifestations of mental illness come into play when constructing Jane's position as "monstrous;" her reversion to a childlike state, another extension of mental illness, solidifies her monstrosity.  Jane, as it appears, cannot fully let go of the past, bypassing a transition into healthy, normal adulthood.  Straddling the barriers between childhood innocence and adult responsibility and control, Jane cannot fully integrate into the symbolic order, nor is she clearly isolated from patriarchal discourse.  Her inability to be accurately categorized by society, and her resistance of a clear role within patriarchal discourse, essentially underscores her abject, monstrous nature posited by the film.  *Baby Jane*'s final sequence is a culmination of the film's placing of mental instability within the context of monstrosity, chronicling the full decent of the aging star into a state of child-like delusion.

After killing her housekeeper, Elvira, Jane begins to talk in a soft, innocent manner; her voice now is radically different from her typical, gruff tone featured throughout the film.  She slowly begins to talk to herself, drunkenly, while looking fondly at a scrapbook of her past achievements.  Revelations about her career emerge from the monologue – "You could've been better than all of 'em, but Daddy didn't want that!" (Aldrich, 1962) – as a singular spotlight hangs above her head, illuminating her aging body and the pictures of her youth in the album.  As tension

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builds throughout the scene – Flagg arrives to the Hudson home and calls the police, his mother warns of Jane's toxic reputation, Jane escapes with Blanche to the beach – Jane' behaviors become increasingly childlike and reinforce her proper place in the symbolic order. As Blanche reveals her role in the car accident, Jane is in a state of denial, repeating childish aphorisms such as "daddy" and pleas to only hear "nice things" (Aldrich, 1962). Furthermore, her behaviors parrot those of a young girl, spinning around and moving nervously back and forth; as she arrives at the beach, she continues her jittery movements, and carelessly plays in the sand next to her dying sister. As a radio personality is heard broadcasting Jane's role in her sister's abduction, she pays no mind, making sandcastles and offering an ice cream cone to her sister, a complete transformation into a young, naïve child, free of responsibility from the outside world. Even as she interacts with those around her, including the cops investigating her crime, she childishly moves about, averting eye contact with those around her. The final moments of the film display her full reversion to childhood: she plays ball with little girls, and as the cops arrest her, with crowds forming around the action, she spins and performs for the audience, finally achieving the public attention she so actively sought throughout the bulk of the film.

Jane's mental disturbance, coming to a head in this final sequence, paints an uncomfortable, haunting portrait of the monstrosity linked to the character. Her reversion to a childlike state, in addition to being an outward, grotesque projection of her mental breakdown, shows her inability to assume healthy, normal roles prescribed on society. In an attempt to reenter the social order by reclaiming her position as a child star, Jane gains attention from her peers, but for all of the wrong reasons – she is

a spectacle, something that is both repulsive and attractive.  Moving between the borders of sanity and insanity, of proper and improper behaviors, she is truly "abject," threatening the normalcy experienced by the innocent beachgoers.  She, for the crowds gathering around her, is a cautionary tale; if you don't conform to societal norms, you will suffer from public ridicule and embarrassment, transforming into a monster. *Baby Jane*'s finale, as a result, posits that mental deformity, beyond physical grotesqueries, is truly horrific, a phenomenon moving beyond the limits of patriarchal control.

### *Carrie*

Brian De Palma's 1976 supernatural coming-of-age film, *Carrie*, introduces the titular character, Carrie White (Sissy Spacek), huddled in the corner of a volleyball court during a high school gym class.  Dollying slowly from an extreme high angle to a closer, lower angle, the scene features the young student – a plain, dangerously skinny girl with pale skin and stringy, blonde hair – being teased by her peers after the game.  As the girls push past Carrie, they snicker and sneer towards her direction, with one particularly aggressive student hitting her with a baseball hat.  Shouting obscenities including, "Eat shit!" (Monash & De Palma, 1976), the group of girls makes their disgust for Carrie White very clear, foreshadowing their cruel behaviors towards the protagonist as the film progresses.

What then follows is arguably one of the film's most infamous sequences: in a rather dreamy, surreal fashion, the camera pans across a locker room as the girls interact in varying states of undress.  The camera then turns to Carrie, washing and apparently enjoying her own body in the shower, a detail that many scholars have seen

as a direct parallel to the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Bathrick, 1977; Briefel, 2005).  Carrie's pleasure comes to an abrupt halt, however, as a small trickle of blood runs down her legs, signifying the onset of menarche.  Carrie, visibly frightened and confused, enters a state of hysteria – it is implied not only that she has never experienced her period before, but she had never been educated about this biological process.  As she runs hurriedly towards her peers, seeking help and comfort from the girls, they instead mock Carrie, throwing feminine products at her and laughing, repeatedly chanting the phrase, "Plug it up!" (Monash & De Palma, 1976). The horrific bullying comes to an end as the gym teacher, Miss Collins (Betty Buckley) comes to the aid of Carrie, embracing her while admonishing the girls for their behavior.  Nevertheless, her full transition into womanhood is not marked by menstruation alone: Carrie immediately develops telekinetic powers, shattering the light hanging above the locker room.

This chaotic opening sequence has set the tone, as many critics have observed, for *Carrie*'s overall horrific subject matter, combining the sense of dread and embarrassment when reaching puberty with magical, destructive abilities.  Based on the Stephen King novel of the same name, *Carrie* heightens the average, seemingly normal behaviors of a teenage girl with grotesque, unusual, and terrifying thematic devices.  In a similar way to the King novel, it equates sexual maturity with the supernatural, and for many critics, this alone has solidified its current position within the American horror film canon. Roger Ebert's 1976 review, for example, praises De Palma's efforts in creating a successful "observant human portrait," arguing that what "makes it so good" is the fact that "Carrie [White] isn't another stereotyped product of

the horror production line; she's a shy, pretty, and complicated high school senior who's a lot like kids we once knew" (Ebert, 1976). The effectiveness of the horror within the film, then, lies in the mundane, everyday nature of the film's subject matter – what happens in the film could happen to anyone, at any point in time. "Just let me say that 'Carrie' is a true horror story," Ebert concludes, "Not a manufactured one, made up of spare parts from old Vincent Price classics, but a real one, in which the horror grows out of the characters themselves" (Ebert, 1976).

Despite the apparent enthusiasm that critics including Ebert have for *Carrie*, many reviews upon the release of the film are negative at best, targeting the ways in which horrific material are constructed throughout the narrative. Richard Eder, in his 1976 review in *The New York Times*, criticizes the very balance between the mundane and supernatural, the melodramatic and horrific, that was otherwise praised. "[Carrie] is sometimes funny in a puzzling way, it is generally overwrought in an irritating kind of way, and once in a while it is inappropriately touching," Eder asserts, "It isn't frightening at all until the very end [...]" (Eder, 1976, pp. N17, C24). Moreover, critics including Eder have taken issue with the melodramatic, "hysterical" undertones of the film, particularly when looking at the performances of Sissy Spacek and Piper Laurie, as Carrie and Mrs. White, respectively. Eder concludes: "Mr. de Palma [sic] has ordered universal overacting. Piper Laurie does it with considerable grace…[the] marvel, though, is Sissy Spacek. She makes it perfectly aware that she is overacting, and yet she is very effective. Her hysteria is far too hysterical" (pp. N17, C24).

The apparent failures attributed to *Carrie* by some critics – the over-the-top treatment of traditional horror devices, the overblown performances of Spacek and

Laurie – have extended to a larger reading of the film in the vein of a Camp aesthetic. While De Palma, in a 1977 interview with *Cinefantastique*, has rejected these claims, stating that the film instead "keeps very serious in the realm of its own world" (Childs & Jones, 1977), other scholars have generally disagreed with these claims. Rather, the film's gratuitous use of slow-motion, gauzy filters, and an overly emotional score heightens its horrific material to extreme levels, using a "hyperbolic language of melodrama" (Lindsey, 1991, p. 34) to paint a grotesque image of Carrie's transition into womanhood. Darren Elliot, in "Queering the Cult of *Carrie*: Appropriations of a Horror Icon in Charles Lum's *Indellible*" (2009), furthers this notion of the Camp aesthetic in *Carrie*, suggesting that its lasting cult status derives "mainly from its use of excess" (p. 139), both in terms of visual style and thematic material. This excess, ranging from lighting to the use of colors and the extreme performances of both Spacek and Laurie, creates a similar sense of unease as *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, a film that distorts the reality of the narrative and displaces it into the realm of surrealism. Ultimately, both films successfully create an atmosphere of horror from their heightened, albeit outrageous, material.

Aside from garnering attention from film critics and horror fans, *Carrie*'s legacy extends to film scholarship, where it has been critiqued extensively by noted scholars in this field. Even Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine* devotes an entire chapter to an analysis of the film: her discussion of the woman-as-witch trope centers on the film's portrayal of the titular protagonist, exploring how the motifs of blood, menstruation, and female sexuality complicate the representation of woman in the horror film. The "monstrous feminine" in *Carrie* essentially lies in this conflation of

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the image of woman with witchcraft and, as an extension of Julia Kristeva's work on abjection, constructs an image of femininity that is tied to nature, is inherently irrational, and can be terrifyingly powerful. Furthermore, the representation of mother-child relationships also lends itself to the depiction of abjection and the "monstrous feminine" throughout the film, making broad assumptions surrounding patriarchal norms and taboos. The ways in which femininity and female relationships are depicted throughout the film's narrative, in turn, shed light on the rhetoric employed within the film that endorses patriarchal stereotypes surrounding the "monstrous feminine."

In a similar way to *Baby Jane*, *Carrie* moves back and forth between Carrie and Mrs. White when endorsing images of monstrosity. To put it in another way, several scenes of the film clearly designate Carrie as the "monstrous feminine;" in other scenes, and upon a second reading of the film, however, Mrs. White is depicted as the monster. This is the case especially in the film's final, destructive sequence – as the film changes the central point of identification on the part of the audience, its depiction of the "monstrous feminine" moves from one character to the next. This not only complicates the representation of the image of woman within horror films, but also problematizes audience identification and spectatorship within the genre as a whole.

**The Motif of the Woman-as-Witch and *Carrie*.** Creed's discussion of the woman-as-witch trope within the horror genre hinges on the work of Kristeva who, in *Powers of Horror*, suggests that the figure of woman within patriarchal discourse as a whole is often portrayed as "synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed"

(quoted in Creed, p. 76).  Moving beyond ancient myths and childhood fairy tales, which often align this trope with malevolent supernatural powers, the woman-as-witch in the horror film extends the notion that woman threatens the boundaries between rationality and irrationality created through the symbolic.  In her connection to nature, decay, and death, the witch in the horror genre evokes a sense of irrational uncontrollability.  Importantly, however, her ability to traverse the space between the real and the imaginary is seen as "a malevolent, destructive, monstrous figure whose constant aim is destruction of the symbolic order" (p. 77).  The overtly feminine qualities of the woman-as-witch, juxtaposed with a sense of dominance from her active, supernatural powers, reinforces her abject and "monstrous" nature, furthering the threat posed to the stability of the patriarchal order.

It is clear throughout *Carrie* that, as the titular character discovers and acknowledges her own sexual desire, her association with supernatural powers propels her characterization as the woman-as-witch, as the "monstrous feminine."  To start, Carrie's own mother believes that Carrie is a witch due to her sexual appetite; as Creed points out, "Carrie's mother [Margaret White] is a religious bigot who thinks that female sexuality is inherently evil and responsible for man's fall from grace" (p. 78).  For Creed, the witch in horror films is linked primarily to feminine sexuality and reproduction: the woman-as-witch trope can be connected to repressed or burgeoning feminine sexual desire, as well as biological functions including menstruation and the ability to bear children.  Both characteristics of the "monstrous feminine," through the lens of the woman-as-witch trope, are expressed throughout *Carrie*; on one hand,

Carrie White's budding sexuality featured throughout the film's narrative establishes her characterization as the "monstrous feminine."

This, in part, can be attributed to common stereotypes surrounding the image of woman and sexual desire. Drawing upon *The Malleus Maleficarum*, a document commissioned in the 1400s by the Catholic Church in efforts towards the prosecution of supposed witchcraft, Creed explores the early parallels between female sexual behaviors, and subsequently sexual deviancy and monstrosity. "Many of the witches' alleged crimes were of a sexual nature," according to Creed, "[witches] were accused, among other things, of copulating with the devil, causing male impotence, causing the penis to disappear and of stealing men's penises [...]" (p. 75). The carnal, irrational nature of woman is explicitly chronicled in *The Malleus Maleficarum*, furthering "the popular mythology about the depraved and monstrous nature of woman's sexual appetites" (p. 75) and solidifying the notion that woman is man's animalistic, evil "Other." Moreover, the dangers associated with female sexuality – the threat of castration – further the notion that woman poses a literal and figurative threat to the phallic order. Magical powers, moving outside of the confines of the symbolic, are therefore attributed to the image of woman, serving as a "monstrous," uncontrollable force against patriarchal society.

It is made explicit by Mrs. White throughout the film that, much like the behaviors described throughout *The Malleus Maleficarum*, feminine sexual desire is animalistic, filthy, and tied to Satanic ritual. Constantly referring to the "sins of woman" (Monash & De Palma, 1976), Mrs. White sees her daughter's budding sexuality as an extension of the biblical Eve's curse of sin onto the world, and in a

dramatic monologue, asserts that Carrie is continuing this demonic, supernatural curse onto the world. "And still Eve did not repent," Mrs. White shouts, in a direct reference to a Biblical passage, "nor all the daughters of Eve, and upon Eve did the crafty serpent found a kingdom of whoredoms and pestilences" (quoted in Creed, p. 79). Bound to nature, irrationality, and an unbridled sexual appetite, the figure of Eve is seen as a direct catalyst for the early fall of man; her near-magical powers, reinforced with terms including "curse" and "sins," connects her to the woman-as-witch trope. Likewise, Carrie's newfound sexuality, marked by her "illicit touching" (Briefel, 2005, p. 22) in the film's opening sequence, is deemed evil, surrounded by a similar sense of malevolent, mysterious powers adopted by Eve in the Garden of Eden. The film's final sequence, which will be discussed in the following sections, acts as a fulfillment of the evil brought about by female sexuality, of the supernatural "sins of woman" aligned with femininity.

Carrie's telekinetic powers connote the same types of destructive powers attributed to the image of woman-as-witch in ancient myths and modern stereotypes surrounding feminine sexual desire. Her carnal, uncontrollable sexuality is inherently evil, as prescribed through patriarchal discourse, but due to the fact that her supernatural powers lead to the literal destruction of those around her, she is linked even further to monstrosity. As man's "Other," Carrie White is seen as actively threatening the symbolic order – through her telekinetic powers, she is bound to nature, the imaginary, and the improper within society. As a figurative agent of castration, Carrie breaks from and essentially defies the phallic order in her active

embrace of both her sexuality and her supernatural abilities, slowly entering the realm of the abject.

Quite literally, the conflation of newfound sexuality with witchcraft is expressed throughout the film with the motif of telekinesis. As Shelley Stamp Lindsey argues in "Horror, Femininity, and Carrie's Monstrous Puberty" (1991), as "Carrie's eroticism moves to objects outside her body, so do her acts of violence, as the aggressive nature of her sexuality is displaced on to destructive telekinetic acts" (p. 37). Her telekinetic powers, introduced during the film's opening sequence, are therefore connected to the development of her female sexual desire, and as the film progresses, are linked to her repressed sexuality, both at home and in school. For instance, Carrie is prohibited by her mother from having relations with the opposite sex, romantic or otherwise; she therefore takes her sexual frustration out on her mother by using her telekinetic powers, shattering mirrors, slamming doors, and making lights flicker violently. Moreover, since Carrie is isolated at school – none of her peers are interested in any contact with her – she is ultimately withheld from experiencing any meaningful relationships with her male counterparts, including the object of her affections, Tommy Ross (William Katt). As a result, her aggressive, magical powers are geared towards her classmates, eventually culminating in the film's final, destructive sequence.

A related issue surrounding the woman-as-witch trope is the common connection between menstruation and witchcraft. Creed suggests that this notion has both historical and mythological roots – according to some ancient cultures, "a young girl who had prophetic dreams at the time of her menarche was frequently singled out

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as a future shaman or witch [...] Historically, the curse of a woman, particularly if she were pregnant or menstruating, was considered far more potent than a man's curse." (p. 74). Furthermore, scholars including Serafina Kent Bathrick (1977) have explored the role of menstruation in the construction of the female witch in popular myths, drawing connections between a woman's monthly menstrual period and heightened states of power and destruction. Bathrick explains: "In many cultures the menstruating woman threatens male virility, contaminates crops or poisons the foods she cooks. Thus her reproductive powers are destructive ones [...]" (Bathrick, 1977, p. 2). In contemporary horror films, portrayals of the woman-as-witch not only recirculate these early myths surrounding menstrual blood, but, according to scholars such as Aviva Briefel in "Monster Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film" (2005), position "menstruation as the structural double of the masochistic moment offered by male monsters" (Briefel, 2005, p. 21). That is, menstruation, seen as a state of pain and suffering, acts as motivation for sadistic acts of violence and destruction enacted by the female protagonist. Quite literally, the image of woman, when connected to menstruation, is constructed as monstrous in the horror genre of film.

Carrie is no exception to this trope: a central motif within the film is the onset of menarche, and just as Carrie White begins to bleed in the shower sequence, she enters the dual realms of femininity and monstrosity. Similar to scholars including Vivian Sobchack, Creed argues that the "symbolic function of woman's menstrual blood is of crucial importance in *Carrie*" (Creed, 1993, p. 78), and like films including *The Exorcist*, is a pivotal example of the ways in which horror films construct

abjection around their female protagonists.  Since the motif of blood is often aligned, in a historical and cultural context, with nature, death, and decay, it lies outside of the barriers created by the Law of the Father and is ultimately linked to abjection. Alongside other bodily fluids including excrement, vomit, and urine, blood is a particular form of abject matter that is deployed in ancient taboos and myths, and in the case of menstrual blood, is seen as a mechanism for uncontrollable, evil powers. As a result, by "associating Carrie's supernatural powers with blood, the film draws on superstitious notions of the terrifying powers of menstrual blood" (p. 80), thereby cementing Carrie White's portrayal as the "monstrous feminine."

It is clear that, throughout key scenes of the film (such as the shower sequence or the final prom scene), that Carrie White is marked as witch or monster, straying away from what is characterized as clean and proper within patriarchal discourse. However, upon a second reading of the film, the case can be made that Mrs. White adheres to the woman-as-witch trope, and embodies the "monstrous feminine" endorsed by Creed in her analysis.  Primarily, Mrs. White's physical appearance mirrors the stereotypical images of the witch in popular culture: she is introduced in the film wearing a long, black, modest dress adorned with a cape, and her hair is frizzy and unkept.  At face value, Mrs. White's attire illustrates the very type of superficial messages surrounding the image of woman that the film seems to communicate – if she takes on the appearance of a witch, then she automatically becomes this type of character.  Yet, Mrs. White's witch-like garb leads to important connections to the overall representation of woman within patriarchal discourse.  That is, by wearing a modest dress, inspired by attire worn by Puritanical or fundamentalist societies, Mrs.

White removes herself from the site of active male desire, reclaiming her body and ultimately deviating from social norms prescribed through the symbolic order. Her sexual modesty throughout the film, as connoted through her dress and cloak, becomes a newfound translation of the "patriarchal stereotype of the sexually unfulfilled woman" (p. 79), an image of woman that, willingly or otherwise, deviates from the male gaze entirely. Moreover, her appearance is so grotesque – the antithesis of female beauty communicated by characters including Miss Collins – that she is otherwise unwanted, placed so far outside of the symbolic that she automatically becomes the "Other," the "abject" in society. As a result, she is depicted as the woman-as-witch, a character who moves beyond what is considered proper and aesthetically pleasing within the boundaries of the patriarchal social order.

**The Portrayal of Family Dynamics in *Carrie*.** One way in which the film portrays Carrie White as the "monstrous feminine," as an apparent threat to the symbolic order, is through her strained, and rather perverse, relationship with her mother. Creed, making connections to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, asserts that the mother-child relationship is depicted throughout the film as abnormal at best. "Carrie desires independence and yearns to lead her own life," Creed points out, "yet she is unable to break away from her mother's dominating influence" (Creed, 1993, p. 78). This is apparent throughout the film, as Carrie simultaneously expresses both disgust and sick admiration towards her mother, cushioning rebellious outbursts with terms of endearment including "mama" and sheepish kisses on the cheek. Moreover, Carrie is shown to completely deviate from her mother's control; despite her loyalty and apparent respect for her mother, Carrie nevertheless goes against Mrs. White's wishes

and attends the senior prom, maintaining apparently illicit, sinful relationships with the opposite sex.  This alone solidifies Carrie's monstrous nature – she willingly, and forcefully, goes against the social norms prescribed within the family unit.  However, the film's final sequence, fulfilling Mrs. White's prophecy that "they're all gonna laugh at you!" (De Palma, 1976) –  "they" being Carrie's peers – solidifies the notion that a rebellion against the family is detrimental to the stability of society at large.  That is, as scholars such as David Pirie have observed, the failing of the adult-child relationship in the horror film is a "reflection of a wider collapse in social relationships" (Creed, 1993, p. 77).  Pirie explains of the film's finale: "The apocalypse which follows reunites the two basic strands of American horror which [...] seem to deal either in massive, apocalyptic destruction or unnatural family relationships which themselves imply the end of society.  In *Carrie*, the breakdown of relationships leads directly and concretely to the destruction of community" (quoted in Creed, p. 78).

In her discussion of *Carrie*, Creed points out that, according to several scholars, the film "presents a critique of the family and of middle American values" (p. 77), particularly the exploration of the ways that it extends common representations of family crises in the horror genre as a whole.  Robin Wood, for example, suggests that the film aligns with the "Terrible Child" subcategory of American horror films, having distinct connections with motifs of "Satanism, diabolic possession, [and] the Antichrist" (quoted in Creed, 77).  Furthermore, Vivian Sobchack in "Bringing it All Back: Family Economy and Generic Exchange" (1996) argues that horror films often present and represent issues surrounding "moral chaos,

disruption of natural order, [and a] threat to harmony of hearth and home" (Sobchack, 1996, p. 144) through heightened, terrifying material.  In *Carrie*, this is no different: following in the vein of prior horror films, *Carrie* endorses social norms and values prescribed through bourgeois social life through the microcosm of the family (p. 146). Seen as a rather familiar and relatable social "Other," Carrie White actively goes against the status quo, destroying not only the family unit, but the patriarchal society housing it.  As Sobchack concludes, the "apocalyptic destruction wrought by Carrie seems as much generated by familial incoherence and paternal weakness as the cause of it" (p. 151).  The overall rhetoric of the film, then, constructs Carrie White as a monstrous, unstoppable threat to the stability of the family unit, therefore warning against such destructive behaviors and actively endorsing norms aligning with the patriarchal social order.

On the other hand, larger arguments surrounding mother-child relationships and the abject lead to a reading of the film that suggests that Mrs. White is in fact the "monstrous feminine."  Going back to Creed's reading of Kristeva, another distinct way in which the horror film illustrates abjection is through the maternal figure (p. 11) – the mother is seen to prevent her child from fully entering the realm of the symbolic, and by turning herself and her child away from the Law of the Father, becomes a figure of abjection.  In *Carrie*, Mrs. White completely prohibits her daughter from developing her own identity outside of the home, promoting maternal authority and rejecting paternal laws.  She, therefore, is considered a threat to the proper functioning of the symbolic, narcissistically maintaining a stronghold on her daughter in order to secure her own active dominance within the dyadic mother-child relationship.

Furthermore, Mrs. White exemplifies the archaic mother, or in Freudian terms, the pre-Oedipal mother, a figure that for Kristeva and Creed is constructed as abject and "monstrous." That is, the pre-Oedipal mother is connected to a child's infancy, a stage that is characterized outside of the realm of the symbolic and is, as explained above, inherently abject. Mrs. White, in her inability to free her daughter from a pre-Oedipal (and, essentially, pre-symbolic) state, is therefore portrayed as the archaic mother, the threatening, monstrous figure on the outskirts of proper, rational discourse. Additionally, the pre-Oedipal mother is an integral figure to the creation of patriarchal society, and in her connection to decay, death, and unwelcome sexual desires, is seen as an ominous force that is not only harmful to the development of identity in the patriarchal social order but, in going against social taboos, is destructive to social organizations. Mrs. White, as an otherwise sexually unfulfilled woman who, towards the end of the film, breaks the balance between life and death, rationality and irrationality, furthering her representation as the archaic, maternal monster.

Beyond the notion of the maternal monster or the archaic/pre-Oedipal mother, Mrs. White's monstrosity is constructed through the film's overall representation of the White household. That is, Carrie White is noticeably fatherless, with Mrs. White taking on full familial responsibilities after her husband, Ralph, left her for another woman. Not only is Mrs. White's dominance within the household powerful, as the film suggests, but it is inescapable, a force that is intricately bound to the White family unit. Due to the fact that Mrs. White moves away from prescribed notions of family within patriarchal society, she is essentially portrayed as a harmful figure, one whose rage is a catalyst for the destruction experienced towards the end of the film. As the

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film clearly shows, Mrs. White is both emotionally and physically abusive, shown in several scenes to drag Carrie by the hair, slap her repeatedly, and lock her in a small closet for hours on end; throughout the film, Mrs. White taunts her daughter with damning biblical passages, referring to Carrie as filthy, evil, and wicked, amongst other things.  Moreover, towards the end of the film in a dramatic monologue, Mrs. White reveals that she wanted to kill Carrie – "I should've given you to God when you were born" (Monash & De Palma, 1976) – a clear indication of her apparent disgust towards her daughter.  Towards the end of the film, Mrs. White's abusive behavior comes to a head, as she unsuccessfully attempts to stab Carrie after the massacre after the prom.  It appears, then, that the violent and traumatic series of events throughout the narrative trajectory of the film is sparked by the absence of the father within the family unit.  Just as *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* depicts the negative social and individual repercussions of the lack of a father at the head of the household, *Carrie* features the horrific consequences that, according to patriarchal society, result from a broken or incomplete family unit.  Mrs. White, assuming control in her household in lieu of a dominant male figure, is seen as particularly monstrous, breaking away from prescribed notions of the family and adopting characteristically male, active power within the home.  As the film implicitly communicates, the maternal monster exposes the instability of the patriarchal order, and in order to prevent ultimate destruction, the father figure – and, in a larger sense, the Law of the Father – is vital.

**Female Relationships in *Carrie.***  In addition to providing a problematic view of mother-child relationships, *Carrie* offers an interesting depiction of the image of woman as a whole, predominantly through the social relationships adopted by female

characters at Bates High School.  In general, this can be divided into two categories: the relationship between Carrie White and her female counterparts, and the relationship between Carrie and her closest confidant and school gym teacher, Miss Collins.  Both approaches to the representation of the relationships between women throughout the film lead to greater arguments surrounding the notion of the "monstrous feminine."  The ways in which Carrie is ostracized by her peers, and ultimately refuses to adhere to the prescribed image of femininity upheld by the women around her, sheds light on the strong connection between the titular character and monstrosity.

It is clear, beginning with the film's opening scene, that the girls of Bates High School are not sympathetic to the lonely, awkward Carrie White; rather, they have an extreme dislike for their peer, bordering on an almost sadistic, murderous hatred for Carrie.  Led by prototypical mean-girls Chris (Nancy Allen) and Norma (P. J. Soles), the group of young women in the high school repeatedly mock and abuse Carrie, likening the character to excrement – a rather literal translation of the formation of the abject in patriarchal society.  Ultimately, Carrie is viewed by the girls as a figure of abjection, one that should be castigated and, towards the end of the film, destroyed in a horrific manner; this is not only illustrated through the parallels drawn between Carrie and abject matter, as exhibited through their incessant taunts and bullying. Instead, there are several points of entry that the girls use when shaping Carrie as an abject, "monstrous" figure – one implicit way that they achieve this is through their comparison between Carrie and animals, specifically pigs.  Moreover, the girls in Bates High School offer a version of femininity that is beyond, and arguably more

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appealing than the type of womanhood embraced by Carrie. That is, especially in the case of chief antagonist Chris, each of the girls share the dual characteristics of passive, prototypical female and active, assertive male – they flaunt their hypersexualized, overly made-up appearances just as effortlessly as they exercise their control over subordinates. By adhering to the image of woman prescribed by patriarchal discourse, while asserting dominance over her peers, Chris in particular is seen as the ideal image of womanhood, the ultimate representation of the symbolic.

This favorable image of femininity is illustrated in several instances throughout the film; take, for example, a scene where Chris enlists the help of her boyfriend Billy (John Travolta) in taking revenge against Carrie. After being humiliated by Miss Collins for her part in bullying Carrie – forced to perform a grueling workout during detention, and subsequently being banned from prom – she goes out on a date with Billy, who drunkenly drives her to a local gathering. Following a heated (and violent) scuffle, Chris uses her sexual prowess to persuade Billy to gruesomely slaughter pigs, in order to obtain the blood used in a prank towards Carrie. The juxtaposition between violence and sex, between active control and passivity, eventually works to Chris' favor, as she is able to recruit male lackeys for her scheme and successfully orchestrate the prank on the unsuspecting Carrie White. The fact that her plan works, that she was able to humiliate Carrie and regain her control over her peers, endorses this type of femininity and, as the finale demonstrates, demonizes Carrie's weak attempts to integrate into the symbolic. As the film purports, Carrie does not possess the ideal characteristics of woman, no matter

how hard she tries; she, therefore, is the "monstrous feminine," and the film's final project is to fully eliminate her from society.

The relationship between Carrie and Miss Collins is equally troubling, despite the fact that throughout the film the two characters are shown to be very close, even closer than Carrie and her own mother appear to be. A vision of modern female sexuality, Miss Collins is just as beautiful as she is powerful, shown wearing makeup and a feminine track suit as she verbally commands (and physically reprimands, with harsh slaps across the face) the girls that relentlessly torment Carrie. She is even shown to defend Carrie amongst her own colleagues, correcting the principal as he refers to Carrie as "Cassie" (Monash & De Palma, 1976). Throughout the film, Miss Collins serves as a surrogate mother to Carrie, offering her advice and giving her the type of positive reinforcement that Mrs. White has failed to practice in the White household. As a stark contrast to the White matriarch, Miss Collins praises Carrie, calling her beautiful when others referred to her as "pig" and "witch." At face value, Miss Collins appears to be the loving and positive figure Carrie so desperately needs during her transition into womanhood.

However, as several scholars have pointed out, Miss Collins is more deceptive than she appears, and in a similar way to Mrs. White and the other girls, adopts a version of femininity prescribed within patriarchal discourse that aims to subordinate and demonize Carrie White. Shelley Stamp Lindsey, for example, argues that "although apparently contrasted, Miss Collins and Mrs. White work together to insist upon women's culpability and to establish the female body as a site of transgression" (Lindsey, 1991, p. 37). Echoing this sentiment, Serafina Kent Bathrick stresses that

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"Miss Collins' special punishment for the blood-thirsty Chris [...] brings on the final catastrophe that eliminates the senior class. Thus these two seemingly opposite women must share responsibility for the Hellish night" (Bathrick, 1977, p. 5). Both of these ideas can be attributed to the fact that Miss Collins promotes a sense of beauty to Carrie that is prescribed within the symbolic – she encourages her to wear make-up, fix her hair, and wear clothes more flattering to her body type, all in an attempt to shape Carrie's image into the prototypical version of femininity prescribed throughout the film. In an attempt to make Carrie more aesthetically pleasing, to make her adopt a new appearance for and after the prom, Miss Collins eventually transforms Carrie "into a fetish object in order to conceal those aspects of her body disturbing to the male onlooker" (Lindsey, 1991, p. 39). To put this another way, Miss Collins not only stifles Carrie's individual feminine sexuality by covering it with a more pleasing facade, she also suggests that Carrie's femininity is inherently monstrous, and should be destroyed in favor of a more socially-sanctioned image of beauty and sexuality. Carrie, towards the end of the film, is unable to maintain the standards promoted by Miss Collins and patriarchy as a whole, rendering her as "monstrous" and literally threatening to the stability of the social symbolic.

The final sequence of the film cements Carrie's status as the "monstrous feminine" through her inability, and eventual refusal, to adhere to the standards of femininity suggested by her female peers. After Carrie verbally spars with her mother regarding the dance, she is eventually escorted by her date Tommy into the auditorium where the prom is being held, a room adorned with various sparkly decorations and packed with dancing students. At this moment, Carrie is embraced by her peers: she

casually has conversations with students who would otherwise ignore her; is

encouraged by Miss Collins to enjoy the night, who hauntingly assures her that she'll

"never forget it" (Monash & De Palma, 1976); and she is even invited to dance by

Tommy at the suggestion of another girl, a character who is seen earlier in the film to

otherwise feel contempt towards his meek classmate.  As Carrie and Tommy begin to

dance, spinning around in a circle as the camera revolves around them in a dizzying

fashion, it becomes clear that Carrie's attempts to re-enter the symbolic, the realm of

femininity endorsed by her female peers, are slowly working to her favor, as

evidenced by the passionate embrace and kiss initiated by Tommy during the scene.

 Carrie – with her blonde hair slightly curled, her face accentuated with make-up, and

wearing a loose-fitting dress revealing her girlish figure – "builds up the surface of her

body, as if to cover up what lurks beneath" (pp. 38-39), essentially masking what truly

makes her horrific according to societal standards.

This "masquerade of femininity" adopted by Carrie throughout the prom, to

borrow a term coined by early scholars including Joan Riviere and Michele Montrelay

(p. 39), is ultimately destroyed by Chris and Billy's prank during their nemesis'

crowning as prom queen.  This scheme, filmed in an excruciatingly slow manner,

involves the dumping of a large bucket of pig's blood onto the body of Carrie and,

subsequently, revealing her monstrous nature.  By destroying Carrie's dress and

overall appearance with abject matter, Chris removes the facade of "mature

femininity" (p. 39) that Carrie used to try to move into the symbolic, to adhere to the

otherwise untenable standards prescribed by Miss Collins and the Bates High School

student body.  This, in effect, reveals Carrie's true nature: a terrifying figure that

disguises herself in order to infiltrate, and subsequently destroy, the patriarchal social order.  Moreover, the prank shows that because Carrie can't fully enter the symbolic, adhering to norms and practices of femininity prescribed by her female peers, she is considered to be "monstrous," a social "Other" whose version of femininity is repugnant and morally wrong.

As Carrie is drenched with the pigs' blood, inciting roaring laughter from her peers, her true monstrous nature is revealed.  The sparkly, dreamy auditorium is now covered with red light, and as shown through a split-screen, becomes an inescapable death trap.  Carrie takes out her revenge on every member of the student body, violently spraying them with a fire hose and telekinetically throwing objects and pieces of the auditorium at her peers.  Subsequently, she ends up knocking unconscious and killing key characters in the film: her cynical English teacher and principal are electrocuted; her bully Norma is whacked with a flying object; and her once-beloved teacher, Miss Collins, is killed by a flying rafter that hits her in the stomach.  The lethal combination of water and electricity causes a massive fire in the school, and is implied to have murdered most of the students trapped in the building.  Carrie, with widened eyes and a stiff, elongated frame, walks away from the site of destruction, when she is almost killed by Chris and Billy in their getaway car.  It is clear, however, that Carrie's path of destruction has not ended after the incident at the high school – noticing the car driving quickly towards her body, Carrie uses her telekinesis to move the vehicle, throwing it into the air and smashing it onto the pavement, causing a fire and killing the villains on impact.

Re-entering her home, which is now filled with lit candles, Carrie returns to a weak, childlike state, washing away the pig's blood and wearing a modest nightgown. As she embraces her mother in tears – "suggesting symbolically a return to the womb" (Creed, 1993, p. 82) and renouncing the version of femininity that she adopted for the prom sequence – Mrs. White continues the condemnation geared towards her daughter, referring to Carrie again as "witch" and "sinner." Revealing her own sins before Carrie's birth, succumbing to her husband's "filthy touching" (Monash & De Palma, 1976) before they married, Mrs. White then repeatedly stabs Carrie in the back while reciting the Lord's prayer, a last-stitch attempt to destroy her devilish, evil daughter. Collapsing down a flight of stairs, Carrie is seemingly defenseless against her knife-wielding mother, who is staring fanatically into the camera making stabbing motions with the large weapon. In an act of self-defense, and in a final act of destruction, Carrie attacks her mother telekinetically with various knives and sharp objects, pinning her to a doorframe with a stance similar to the bizarre St. Sebastian relic featured throughout the film. Removing her mother from the door, Carrie embraces the dead body as their house collapses around them, fully sinking into the ground and disappearing in plain sight.

It is through these acts of terror, geared towards (and motivated by) her female peers, that solidifies Carrie's positioning as the "monstrous feminine." Her inability to adhere to standards and norms surrounding the female body cause her peers to laugh and torment her throughout the film, and although she attempts to act "normally" in this final sequence, Carrie is a perpetual social "Other," unable to be fully integrated into the symbolic. Her mediation outside and inside of patriarchal order, juggling her

inherently monstrous characteristics with the facade of prototypical femininity, aligns her with the abject, and as evidenced in the prom scene, is an actual, perceivable threat to patriarchal society. The use of telekinesis throughout this scene, and towards the end of the film, causes Carrie to revert back to her position as outcast and social "Other," illuminating the fragility of the "female masquerade," of the literal and figurative structure of the patriarchal order encompassed by Bates high school students. The subsequent demonization by her mother as she leaves the prom furthers the notion that she is "abject" and "monstrous," a figure that, stemming from filth and inherent evil, must be destroyed. Carrie, who ultimately dies from the very means with which she kills her peers (read: telekinesis), becomes a cautionary tale at the end of the film, promoting the adherence of ideals within the patriarchal order and damning those that embrace their monstrosity, their "Otherness" separate from the symbolic.

The film's Coda further problematizes the representation of woman within horror film through its shifting of narrative perspective from Carrie White to Sue Snell (Amy Irving). Sue, a character who initially bullies Carrie yet, as the film progresses, is empathetic towards her peer, motivates Tommy to ask Carrie to attend the prom with him, arguably catalyzing Carrie's murderous rampage at the event. After the home of Carrie and Mrs. White collapses, the film then cuts to Sue, in her bed, violently tossing and turning; it is revealed by her mother that, since the senior prom, Sue has been in an incredibly weak mental state, and is expected to have a slow recovery. The film then transitions to a dream sequence, featuring the same types of gauzy filters, slow motion, and melodramatic music used throughout the film; it

appears as if Sue, mourning the loss of Carrie, is visiting her peer's grave. Marked by

a crucifix fashioned out of a "For Sale" sign that has been plastered with red letters

reading, "Carrie White burns in Hell" (Monash & De Palma, 1976), Carrie's gravesite

is surreal and eerie, placed in the middle of her house's old foundation. As Sue lays a

bouquet of flowers onto the ground, the tone of the scene shifts dramatically: Carrie's

bloody hand latches onto Sue's wrist, as the aggressive sound of violins floods the

score. Sue abruptly wakes from the nightmare, shaking violently and unable to be

comforted by her mother.

This final sequence provides some interesting parallels to Creed's notion of the

"monstrous feminine." On one hand, it makes a deeper connection between Carrie

and a traditional horror film monster, likening Carrie to a zombie of sorts as her

bloody limb reaches out of the ground and terrorizes Sue Snell. On the other hand, the

shifting perspective in the scene – moving from the protagonist Carrie to the minor

character of Sue – "completes the transfer of Carrie's particular horror to the female

population as a whole and attempts to displace its masculine fantasy of horror at the

female on to the female subject herself" (Lindsey, 1991, p. 42). Or, to put it in another

way, the film's Coda associates femininity with monstrosity, fully portraying the

threat of Carrie White as persistent, unconquerable, and able to regenerate, posing an

even greater threat to society even after death. By not adhering to the norms stated

within patriarchal discourse, and by going against her female peers, Carrie's sexuality

and femininity is seen to be unfamiliar, a negative force penetrating the boundaries

separating those within the symbolic from those outside of it, possessing "Otherness."

As Mike Thorn argues in "The Relocation of Monstrosity: An Analysis of Horror in

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Brian De Palma's *Carrie*" (2013), "Carrie, initially victim and protagonist, has now fully embodied the position of alterity. Depicted as a zombie-like subject, she reaches through the dirt and violates her classmate's deluded sense of peace" (p. 4). Carrie, as an undying threat to those around her, extends to a larger sense of feminine "Otherness" that destroys the overall structure and sanctity of the symbolic order. By aligning spectator identification with the terrorized victim of the now dead Carrie White, the film *Carrie* successfully communicates a sense of dread and destruction caused by the image of woman as a whole within the horror genre. As a result, the audience is feeling the same sort of victimization at the hands of the "monstrous feminine," recirculating misogynistic stereotypes surrounding the image of woman in modern discourses.

### *Single White Female*

  *Single White Female* (1992), based on the John Lutz novel *SWF Seeks Same* and directed by Barbet Schroeder, opened to mixed reviews from critics, who generally noted that the sexy, psychological thriller failed to deliver a sense of terror and legitimate threat presented in prior films of this ilk, particularly 1987's *Fatal Attraction*. Peter Travers' review in *The Rolling Stone* (1992), for example, asserts that although Schroeder's efforts to shape the film in the vein of thrillers from directors including Hitchcock and Roman Polanski, its "Sir Mix-a-Lot approach to moviemaking smacks less of art than commerce. Selling cheap thrills with pop psychology may earn him [Schroeder] a date-night hit, but what a comedown" (Travers, 1992). Todd McCarthy (1992) in *Variety* suggests the same sort of disappointment towards the film, noting that the film's "excellent lead performances"

(McCarthy, 1992) and impressive visual style are offset by the tired, often times over-exaggerated use of conventions from the aptly named "predator-from-hell" (McCarthy, 1992) subgenre of mainstream horror films. "Thriller aspects of the story, and suspense leading up to the climactic showdown, are handled expertly enough to get audiences lathered up," McCarthy states, "Formula basically works here, although it's beginning to wear a bit thin" (McCarthy, 1992).

Nevertheless, many critics praised the film upon its release, noting its success and overall contribution within the canon of psychological horror films. Vincent Canby's review in *The New York Times* (1992) offers that "[*Single White Female*] is smooth, entertaining, and believably sophisticated. It has far more sound psychological underpinnings than other movies of its type" (Canby, 1992). *Entertainment Weekly*'s Owen Gleiberman (1992) mirrors this enthusiasm for the film, proclaiming: "Watching this clever, by-the-numbers gothic thriller about a young Manhattan and the clinging, duplicitous psycho roommate who turns her life into a nightmare, you're never in doubt that each twist is going to lock into place with the assembly-line precision that has marked such recent jacked-up thrillers as *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* and *Unlawful Entry*" (Gleiberman, 1992). Despite comparisons to prior mystery films, Gleibman argues, *Single White Female* offers something new stylistically and from performances by Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason-Leigh, playing Allie and Hedy, respectively. As Gleibman concludes, "the cat-and-mouse structure [of the film] remains fun, and Schroeder, by letting the scenes play at a lifelike tempo, gives the actresses room to create detailed characters" (Gleibman, 1992). Moreover, Roger Ebert (1992) offers an astute reading of the film, mirroring

the delight expressed in other reviews: "This is a story which, in other hands, could have simply been an all-female slasher film, but Barbet Schroeder, who produced and directed it [*Single White Female*], has a mordant humor that pushes the material over the top.  It is a slasher movie, and a little more" (Ebert, 1992).

The comparisons made between *Single White Female* and other domestic psychological thrillers – by both proponents and detractors of Schroeder's work – have been echoed in scholarship and analysis of the film.  In particular, scholars including Barry Keith Grant (1996) have characterized the film as an example of the "yuppie horror film" (Grant, 1996b, p. 4), a subgenre of American horror representing bourgeois cultural norms and anxieties surrounding the family, economy, and material items.  Emerging in the late 1980s and coming into fruition throughout the 1990s, "yuppie horror" modifies traditional horror conventions within the context of white, affluent, successful protagonists, underscoring their fears of financial and social decline.  Instead of sinking into actual dark, unknown depths, as in the traditional horror film, characters within "yuppie horror" metaphorically enter darkness, moving away from financial and social power and transitioning into nothingness, urban decay (p. 5), and arguable "Otherness."  In the context of some "yuppie horror films," such as *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1992) and *Fatal Attraction*, this is realized through the entrance (and ultimate control) of an outsider into the sacred space of the home.  Disrupting the stability of the nuclear, bourgeois family unit, the antagonist within "yuppie horror" (interestingly, represented by woman in numerous cases) "[functions] as the Other, as an external, disavowed projection of something repressed or denied within the individual psyche or collective culture" (p. 8).  Much like a

traditional horror movie monster, the "yuppie horror" monster wreaks havoc in the fragile structure of the patriarchal order by breaking apart the seemingly stable worlds of domesticity, economic power, and dominance within the social sphere. Threatening the obtainment of ideals within bourgeois culture, the monster within "yuppie horror films" threatens "materiality more than mortality" (p. 10), and in this process actively destroys signifiers of power within the social symbolic.

As a pivotal example of the "yuppie horror" variety of the horror genre, *Single White Female* sheds light on the threat of urban decay within bourgeois society. Featuring the relationship between up-and-coming businesswoman Allie Jones (Fonda) and her psychotic roommate Hedra "Hedy" Carlson (Jason-Leigh), the film offers a glimpse of the ways in which a social "Other" can destroy socially prescribed notions of economic gains, power and status, domestic ideals and, arguably, notions of beauty and femininity within patriarchal discourse. Alongside *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* and *Carrie*, *Single White Female* situates its horror elements alongside societal structures, constructing the "monstrous feminine" as emerging from and existing within the social symbolic. By focusing its narrative action and horrific material through a domestic and work environment, the film presents an isolated threat to the symbolic that, if ignored, could potentially destroy society at large. Furthermore, by portraying the image of woman as "monstrous," the film explicitly communicates the "Otherness" associated with femininity within patriarchal discourse, serving as a rhetorical tool subordinating female characters.

The opening sequence of the film sets the tone for this overt "Othering" of woman within the structure of patriarchal discourse, paving the way for the

construction of the "monstrous feminine" throughout the narrative. As the film begins, a young girl is shown applying makeup to her face in what appears to be the bathroom of their family home; the shot slowly dollys outward, showing the girl putting lipstick and powder onto her twin sister's face. The two girls look into the camera, serving as a mirror of sorts, as the girl kisses her twin sister on the face. As the sequence cuts away, a large apartment complex is featured in the frame, with the camera panning and zooming in to capture the immense size of the building.

Alongside the image of the building, two voices appear over the melodramatic score, revealed in the next shot as belonging to Allie and her fiancé Sam (Steven Weber) talking about their impending marriage. The couple, laying in bed, embrace and look at each other fondly as they discuss the details of their apparently perfect relationship – they are happily in love and even share the desire to have the same amount of children as the "statistical norm" (Schroeder, 1992) in the United States. Their bliss, however, is short-lived, as Sam's ex-wife leaves a message on an answering machine revealing their affair to an unknowing Allie.

The various verbal and visual cues throughout this opening sequence – the girls carefully applying makeup on each other's faces, the domestic bliss of Allie and Sam – establish the very setting inherent in all so-called "yuppie horror films," one characterized by bourgeois ideals and upward movement within society. Furthermore, throughout the film, the image of woman is seen as a figure constantly violating the norms instilled within patriarchal society, therefore seen as an active, "monstrous" threat to the social order. An example of this lies in the unseen, and unnamed, ex-wife of Sam, an apparent outsider and threatening, diabolical figure within Sam and

Allie's relationship.  Importantly, the "monstrous feminine" within *Single White Female* extends to Creed's notions of the *femme castratrice*, a figure whose power comes from the ability to castrate, both literally (in terms of removing the penis from passive male figures) and figuratively (as an agent of destruction within the patriarchal order).  The *femme castratrice*, as well as the "monstrous feminine" at large, comes into play in several different aspects of the film.  Primarily, it is through the representation of the modern, successful, working woman that the *femme castratrice* takes shape.  As it will be explored below, the notion that the inherently "Othered" figure of woman can enter the characteristically male, active realm of financial independence and power is one that is threatening at best, symbolically removing the power placed onto the image of man within the phallic order.  As a result, the portrayal of male characters within the film are rather problematic, in that they implicitly represent the very anxieties communicated in patriarchal discourse surrounding "monstrous" images of femininity.

Furthermore, the motif of the mirror, extending to themes of doubling prevalent in both "yuppie horror" and the horror genre as a whole, pertains to Creed's argument surrounding the threatened versus threatening woman within the construction of the "monstrous feminine."  To put it in another way, the doubling of woman throughout *Single White Female* – whether through the actual portrayal of twins in the opening or Hedy's adoption of Allie's identity throughout the narrative – juxtaposes the *femme castratrice* alongside images of threatened, prototypical femininity, endorsing a passive image of woman while condemning active, threatening versions of femininity.

In a similar way to *Baby Jane* and *Carrie*, *Single White Female* constantly switches between characters Allie and Hedy in the construction of the "monstrous feminine." Consequently, key moments of the film place Hedy as the *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine," whereas other moments align Allie with monstrosity; the film's finale, however, portrays Hedy as a character that is truly monstrous, with her psychotic behaviors manifesting into near-murderous impulses. It is clear, then, that the film presents a rather complex image of femininity, further aligning with newer conceptions of the role of woman within society emerging during this time. By positioning the image of woman within the context of a modern, growing society, *Single White Female* offers a realistic view of femininity that mirrors the types of messages conveyed about woman within patriarchal discourse of the era. As a whole, the film extends the levels of subordination placed onto woman despite apparent progress during this time period, recycling misogynistic images of femininity towards modern audiences.

**The Career Woman and *Single White Female***. The representation of the career woman in *Single White Female* arguably lends itself to notions of the *femme castratrice*, in that the character Allie Jones is as successful and independent as she is threatening, penetrating and disfiguring the widely male realm of the workforce. This, as a whole, aligns with Creed's discussion of castration anxiety – going against Freud's general theory that postulates that woman arouses fears due to the idea that she is castrated, Creed proposes that woman's genitals induce fear because they have the potential to castrate. On the "Little Hans" case study, where Freud lays out his theories of castration anxiety, Creed summarizes: "while Hans feared his father might

punish him for his desire to have his mother for himself, he also feared the mother might castrate him as a punishment for masturbation and/or for his erotic longings for her. Freud's theory that the father is the castrator is only a part of the story" (Creed, 1993, p. 89). As a result, the father figure within this scenario is not the figure of castration, with the maternal feminine being a victim of this aggression, adopting the role of castrated "Other." Rather, taking on near-phallic attributes, the woman-as-castrator utilizes her toothed vagina, or *vagina dentata* (p. 105), to trap and inflict harm upon unsuspecting (often times male) victims.

As she is introduced in the beginning of the film, Allie is a talented businesswoman who develops software for fashion design distributed to prospective corporations in the city. Smart, sophisticated, and business-savvy, Allie is depicted as a well-established and respected woman in her field, and although she indicates that she and her former business partner ended their relationship on negative terms, Allie nevertheless proves to be a formidable figure in the workforce. This is indicated in her job interview with prospective employer Mitchell Myerson (Stephen Tobolowsky) – she is able to fully articulate the logistics of her software program, is able to negotiate compensation and various business costs, and exudes a sense of cool confidence that attracts the lecherous business owner. Additionally, she is shown to be highly experienced with technology as a whole, not only coding and constructing her fashion design software, but repeatedly using the Internet and various computer programs – skill sets that, for this era, were seen as new and highly complicated. Allie's hard work and expertise in the business world are shown to pay off, exhibited

by her lavish New York City apartment and expansive wardrobe filled with apparently designer clothing.

The establishment of Allie's career mindedness and prowess in the realm of business may appear to be positive attributes – unlike Jane Hudson in *Baby Jane* or Carrie and Mrs. White in *Carrie*, Allie is strong-willed and independent.  However, as many scholars have noted, Allie's presence in the workforce is seen as threatening at best, penetrating a realm often inhabited solely by men and taking on an active role in the phallic order.  Robin Wood, in "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" (1979), for example, stresses that the basic formula for the American horror film rests on the disruption of normality on the part of the monster figure.  "I use 'normality' here in a strictly nonevaluative sense to mean simply 'conformity to the dominant social norms'" (Wood, 1979, p. 31), Wood stresses here, arguing that the monster figure, in several cases, isn't merely a grotesque, fictional beast in the vein of a werewolf or vampire.  Rather, the monster represented in most horror films derives from the "dramatization [...] of the repressed/the Other" (p. 28) – figures that draw attention to what society represses or oppresses (p. 29), lying outside of the social symbolic and threatening its stability.  As Wood suggests, any character within a horror film embodying "Othered" characteristics – non-white, non-male, non-bourgeois – is portrayed as the "monster." As a result, Allie in *Single White Female*, through her active, assertive position within the business world, is portrayed as the "monster:" she resists proper roles for a woman of her age and social status, disrupting the "normality" created by her male peers and all the more subordinating them. Literally removing power from men within the phallic order, Allie figuratively

castrates and assumes destructive control within patriarchy, becoming the *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine."

Susan Bromley and Pamela Hewitt in "*Fatal Attraction*: The Sinister Side of Woman's Conflict about Career and Family" (1992) extend the notion that the social "Other" is considered to be a destructive, monstrous character. The career woman in psychological horror films breaks from traditional notions of feminine behavior, assuming monstrous characteristics. In their analysis of *Fatal Attraction*, they stress that the underlying rhetorical message of this type of psychological horror film vilifies the career woman character, who deviates from traditional notions of feminine behavior in favor of economic and material gain. As they argue, thrillers including *Fatal Attraction* communicate the idea that "women who opt for the career track are to be viewed not merely as unfeminine, but also as destructive who must themselves be destroyed" (Bromley & Hewitt, 1992, p. 17). Aligning with Wood's discussion of the monster as "Other" and Grant's analysis of "yuppie horror," Bromley and Hewitt stress that the representation of the career woman in horror films threatens the stability of bourgeois norms such as the family unit and, in her sexuality and powerful nature, is shown to be a deceptive, volatile figure whose destruction internally threatens the stability of patriarchal society. As an inherently "monstrous" figure, the career woman in this context "challenges the view that femininity, by definition, constitutes passivity" (Creed, 1993, p. 151), shown as a terrifying figure that subordinates her male counterparts, removing and arguably castrating them within the workforce.

Allie is no exception to this negative portrayal of the career woman. Although she has the desire to marry and bear children, she is in no hurry to do so; instead, she

actively works towards her career and resists male companionship in favor of a female roommate after her failed engagement to Sam. Her resistance of societal ideals surrounding the image of woman – male companionship, marriage, motherhood – is enough cause for the film's negative portrayal of the successful career woman. However, throughout the film, Allie is seen to be an agent of castration within the workforce, and in her near-phallic powers, is a powerful, destructive threat to the stability of her employer's business. A secondary plot within the film features Allie's sordid relationship with her new employer Mitchell – he is initially represented as a slimy, manipulative figure who has the potential to subordinate Allie during her residency in his corporation. The tension between the two characters comes to a head in a rather unsettling scene featuring Allie and Mitch preparing to leave after a business meeting. As Mitchell persuades Allie to show him functions on her computer software, he proceeds to stand behind her, looking closely as she works on the computer. Mitchell then proceeds to sexually assault Allie, groping her breasts from behind and nearly forcing her to perform sexual favors. Instead of complying with his sexual demands, Allie violently attacks Mitch, hitting him in the groin and running away.

Resisting sexual temptations, Allie is shown to be strong-willed and dominant, resisting images of woman as passive, compliant, and an object of sexual desire adopted through patriarchal discourse. Allie's rejection of Mitchell's advances in this scene act as a type of symbolic castration, with her activity and dominance in the workforce subordinating and ultimately humiliating her male counterpart. Once in a position of sexual and economic power, Mitchell is now degraded, subject to the same

type of threatening, "abject" terror (Creed, 1993, p. 125) experienced by passive, otherwise voiceless victims of violence within traditional horror films.  Moreover, Mitchell's hopes at regaining power within the industry are quashed towards the end of the film, solidifying his subordinated, castrated position: he and his secretary discover that Allie's software is equipped with a destructive, virus-type code, deleting all financial and creative data as her employment with the company draws to a close.  The malware in this sense removes all traces of male economic success and power within the fashion house and furthering the notion that she is a castrating, threatening figure within the business world.  Moreover, the programmed glitch in the software helps to reclaim Allie's creative agency, allowing her to be an active force financially, industrially, and artistically.  By removing Mitchell's power and reclaiming her own dominance with the career world, Allie is shown to be a figure of castration that destroys the symbolic structure of the phallic order, decimating bourgeois ideals and becoming the "monstrous feminine."

Taken from a different perspective, however, the film can be seen as endorsing the idea that Hedy, not Allie, is the *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine" as a whole.  That is, aligning with Creed's argument on the castrating woman, the female psychopath trope within several horror films emerges from the inability "to lead a 'normal' life in possession of friends and family [...] woman transforms into a monster when she is sexually and emotionally unfulfilled" (p. 122).  Hedy, who desperately wants human companionship and a surrogate sister in the form of Allie, can therefore be seen as the "monstrous feminine," symbolically castrating others and leading a path of destruction in order to achieve her proper place within the patriarchal social order.

Throughout the film, Hedy slowly and actively seeks out to destroy her roommate's life, in the quest for achieving social and domestic fulfillment that she was once denied. From stealing mail, to deleting important messages on Allie's answering machine, to manipulating her roommate for control within their apartment, Hedy is shown as "deceptive and unknowable" (p. 136), conforming to stereotypical images of woman as symbolic castrator and immediate threat to the social order. Furthermore, Hedy's destructive behaviors grow to violent and twisted levels – it is implied that she kills Allie's puppy in order to seek attention and control within the apartment, and gradually begins to cannibalize (p. 122) the appearance of her roommate in order to steal her identity altogether. Reclaiming the once unattainable levels of domestic, financial, and social success within patriarchal society, Hedy subordinates and ultimately removes the power from her roommate, and transforms from a meek, ordinary, voiceless character into one that castrates and destroys.

Throughout the film, there is a clear connection between Hedy and evil, sinister depths: she is always hiding in her darkly lit apartment, is shown to frequent an underground sex club, and enacts her destruction towards Allie in the basement and eerie corridors of the apartment. Hedy's association with depths, passageways, and darkness (Creed, 1993; Grant, 1996b), consequently, extends the notion that she possesses the power to castrate. Often used in traditional horror films and the genre of science fiction, the motif of dark enclosures suggests a character's power to engulf or enclose victims, sucking in and essentially decimating them. A direct parallel to the *vagina dentata*, dark corridors and underground spaces are associated with evil powers, and when featured alongside female characters, presents castration threats

brought about by the *femme castratrice*.  As a result, Hedy is seen as a truly evil, base character, one with the power to engulf and destroy those around her.  Fulfilling the desire to replace her sister and achieve her proper place within the symbolic, Hedy's powers to castrate those around her, implied through the motif of enclosures, explicitly communicates her monstrous nature.

   **The Representation of Men in *Single White Female*.**  The representation of male characters in *Single White Female* sheds light on the specific ways in which the image of woman can penetrate and destroy the phallic order, ultimately becoming the *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine."  Two central male characters – Mitchell and Sam – are essential in understanding the ways in which femininity is linked to castration anxiety within the film.  The former character, Allie's boss Mitchell, has been described above, serving as an example of the ways in which the career woman can subordinate and symbolically castrate men within the patriarchal order.  On the other hand, the latter character – Allie's on-again, off-again fiancé, Sam – helps establish the negative stereotypes around woman prescribed both within and outside of the film's narrative.  In a similar way to other psychological thrillers, the relationship between Sam and the film's female leads "suggests that women are potential killers and that having sex with [them] is an extremely dangerous business" (Creed, 1993, p. 124).  Consequently, the sexuality of either female protagonist is called into question and further connected to destructive, evil, castrating powers.

   Initially, Sam is portrayed as having the upper hand, so to speak, in his relationship with his girlfriend: he successfully has an affair with his ex-wife, and is able to persuade a rather distraught Allie into re-entering a relationship with him,

despite his nefarious behaviors.  Allie's reliance upon Sam within their relationship is highlighted through the first acts of the film, as she willingly admits that she cannot fully adjust, mentally or otherwise, to her newly single status, to truly being "alone" (Schroeder, 1992) and away from Sam.  Through Allie's codependence in their relationship, Sam at this point can be seen as adopting an active, sexual position as endorsed within patriarchal society.  Allie, in contrast, is shown to be Sam's direct "Other," the passive, irrational, and mentally unstable foil to her fiancé's dominant and powerful stance within their relationship.  Sam's manipulative, hyper-masculine personality, relative to Allie's passivity and lack of control in their relationship during the first act of the film, adheres to notions of heteronormative sexuality prescribed within patriarchal discourse.  Sam, as the film suggests, is fulfilling the typical role of man within a heterosexual relationship, asserting his dominance over Allie, his sexual and social "Other."

Sam's masculine power, however, is threatened during the second and third acts of the film, as Allie's loyalty to and reliance upon the opposite sex dwindles upon the entrance of her roommate Hedy.  That is not to say that Allie's threat to Sam comes from her full abandonment of heterosexual relationships when bonding with Hedy, a character who, as some have suggested, is potentially a lesbian (Paulin, 1996; Ngai, 2001).  Instead, what is important to consider with Allie's newfound friendship with Hedy is that Sam is gradually removed from his active, sexual position in their relationship.  Now finding her own voice and gaining power within the social and business spheres, Allie moves away from the position as "Other" and assumes the same type of dominance as her male counterparts, an idea made explicit in her violent

battle with a crazed Hedy in the film's finale.  Sam, who initially adopts traditionally

male characteristics of "activeness, aggression, self-assertion, [and] organizational

power" (Wood, 1979, p. 26), is now subordinated by Allie, his masculinity replaced

by passive, arguably female traits.   Steven Weber, who portrays Sam in the film, even

picks up on this feminization of male characters, aptly observing that he plays the

"traditional female role – I prance around naked and then get killed after sex" (quoted

in Jermyn, 1996, p. 265).  Consequently, Allie's transgression away from socially

sanctioned images of woman as subordinated and dependent symbolically castrates

Sam, who experiences a loss in identity (Creed, 1993, p. 107) and whose dominance is

otherwise compromised in their relationship.  Awakening heterosexual, male anxieties

and seen as a potential threat to man's goals of dominance and activity (Paulin, 1996,

p. 41), Allie is ultimately shown in this context as the *femme castratrice*.

Hedy's relationship with Sam throughout the film can also be seen as

threatening to the stability of the phallic, symbolic order, and as Hedy begins to adopt

Allie's persona, the terror and violence enacted towards Sam allows for her

characterization as *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine."  In addition to her

role in Allie's emancipation from patriarchal norms and from Sam's dominance in

their engagement, Hedy is portrayed as a deceptive, evil figure that actively

manipulates Sam throughout the film.  Moving between the poles of active-masculine

and passive-feminine, Hedy's interactions with Sam span from casual flirtations to

outward projections of contempt and malice, blurring the proper roles separating either

gender within heteronormative relationships and, in doing so, awakening Sam's

anxieties surrounding power and control.  Psychologically exploiting Sam's weakness

in his dwindling relationship with Allie, Hedy is portrayed as an imperceptible threat to both Sam and the whole of patriarchal society, her monstrosity shown as being far more dangerous because it is on a mental, emotional level.

A physical manifestation of Hedy's role as symbolic *femme castratrice* takes place towards the end of the film, as her manipulative behaviors and psychotic tendencies target an unsuspecting Sam in his apartment. After brutally attacking Allie's friend Graham (Peter Friedman) and slowly revealing her true identity as Ellen Besch, Hedy begins to mentally unravel, rejecting the professional help offered by her roommate and estranged father. Left distraught and yearning for Allie's affections, Hedy is nearly defeated by her peers until she receives a sudden call from Sam, who contacts the apartment in the hopes of speaking with Allie. Hedy, whose ability to impersonate others is shown throughout the film – a detail that parallels Jane Hudson's twisted performance abilities in *Baby Jane* – takes on Allie's persona, proceeding to talk with Sam and casually entering his apartment building. Unbeknownst to Sam, Hedy breaks into his bedroom and performs oral sex in the attempts of persuading her victim to leave Allie. A literal vision of the *vagina dentata,* of a volatile female character whose "duplicitous nature [...] promises paradise in order to ensnare her victims" (Creed, 1993, p. 106), Hedy uses her sexual prowess and mental control to subordinate Sam, who is paralyzed and ultimately powerless to the actions of this *femme castratrice.* His final efforts to quell Hedy's control are ultimately failed, and after a heated argument and attempted physical measures to restrain the villain, he is brutally murdered with a high-heeled shoe.

Sam's assault and murder present an image of prototypical masculinity that is threatened by woman's growing power within patriarchal society. The notion that Hedy is threatening because of her mental, physical, and sexual dominance furthers her imperceptible threat to the social order, and in removing Sam's dominant identity within his relationship with Allie, is seen as a monstrous figure whose desire, let alone ability, is to castrate those around her. As the film suggests through the destructive, domineering character of Hedy, men within society "must be ever on the alert, poised in phallic anticipation whenever signs of the deadly *femme castratrice* are present" (p. 138).

**The Motif of Mirrors and Doubling in *Single White Female*.** The motif of mirrors in *Single White Female* is established early on in the narrative – the twin girls in the film's opening scene are introduced in the reflection of a mirror – and links to the overall theme of doubling that is important to the construction of femininity within filmic, patriarchal discourses. As many scholars have noted, the portrayal of dual, mirrored images of woman is rather complex. For example, the *doppelganger* or double is a common feature of nineteenth and twentieth century literature, prevalent in Gothic fiction (Spooner, 2001, pp. 292-293) and used to convey a sense of psychological or social anxiety. The female *doppelganger* motif, gaining prominence in the twentieth century, not only reflects these themes, but also stipulates various societal norms surrounding the construction of femininity. Through fashion, appearance, and masquerade (p. 293), female doubling and mirroring in film extends a rhetoric of what woman should be, according to patriarchal discourses, juxtaposed against a skewed, improper version of femininity that is against the social norm.

The motif of mirrors featured throughout *Single White Female* aligns with early visions of the female *doppelganger* trope, splitting the image of woman in order to compare and contrast proper versus improper visions of femininity.  As Catherine Spooner (2001) observes, both Allie and Hedy "are continually framed by mirrors in the same way as the twins in the opening sequence" (p. 302): throughout the film, the two characters are not only shown to look at each other within the frame of a mirror or reflective surface, but move as to suggest a mirroring effect between the women.  Coincidentally or otherwise, the women mimic each other's body gestures, as if the two were looking at and responding to their own eerie reflections.  In one scene, for example, the women begin to bond as they shop together and renovate their expansive apartment; as they walk along the streets of New York City, they walk closely next to each other, enjoying ice cream cones.  Their simultaneous behaviors – moving at the same pace, looking in the same direction, even eating in the same way – suggests that they are a divided image of woman, split between two bodies but exhibiting the same patterns of behavior and ways of thinking.  Furthermore, the women are often shown standing side-by-side and with their faces close together, implicitly pointing to the splitting of the image of woman within patriarchal discourses.

Despite their similarities, as indicated by their growingly identical behaviors, Allie and Hedy are shown to be radically different, with the former embracing proper, prototypical femininity and the latter as improper and altogether "monstrous."  Allie, on one hand, is shown to be physically appealing, modifying her appearance through fashion and masquerade and altogether becoming the site of masculine desire.  In contrast, Hedy is shown to be dowdy and plain, her mousy brown hair hanging plainly

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down her face and her small frame sporting loose-fitting, droopy clothing. Comparing "correct" versus "incorrect" visions of femininity, the film extends the *doppelganger* motif and communicates gendered, social norms within patriarchal discourse. Ideally, as the film purports through the contrasted, mirrored images of Allie and Hedy, woman should embrace her role as the site of masculine desire, modifying her appearance in order to maintain her proper, and altogether unthreatening, status within the social order.

Importantly, the theme of the double utilized in the film is taken to a horrifying extreme: instead of merely portraying an image of woman that goes against patriarchal ideals, *Single White Female* constructs woman into a figure that actively seeks to destroy the fragile structure of patriarchal society. In effect, the doubled or mirrored image of woman in *Single White Female* is presented as the *femme castratrice*, a monstrous character that, in essence, threatens and can wholly remove power from active male figures within the phallic order. Initially, it can be argued that the film places Allie in this threatening, "monstrous" role: in her connection to the mirror motif, Allie exudes "a symbolic *vanitas*, implying her stereotypical feminine narcissism" (Paulin, 1996, p. 47). Allie's near-obsessive ties to her own reflection are displayed throughout the narrative, as she casually glimpses at her mirrored image through reflective surfaces and appears to take pleasure in her highly coiffed, feminized appearance. Consequently, this female narcissism – which in itself is a negative quality by society's standards – translates into an overt acceptance and embracing of entirely feminine, "Othered" qualities. To put this in another way, Allie's doubled image within mirrors represents a vision of femininity outside of the

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boundaries of patriarchal control that define rationality, practicality, and overall proper behaviors.  By looking at her own reflection, Allie forges an identity that is forever outside of the phallic order, willingly becoming the "Other" and "monster" in the social symbolic.  Allie's threat to the symbolic, in turn, lies in her own overtly "Othered" behaviors, suggesting that "femininity itself is pathological, that the practices attendant on 'normal' femininity are in themselves deviant" (Spooner, 2001 p. 301).

Moreover, Allie's female narcissism and so-called *vanitas* lend itself to traditional conceptions of the *femme castratrice* in psychological horror films as a whole.  As Creed suggests, the *femme castratrice* often takes on the characteristics of traditional, prescribed beauty (Creed, 1993, p. 128); in order to lure in male victims, this figure is the site of both desire and terror, a deceptive force that can easily, and actively, castrate those around her.  Allie's trendy clothing, makeup, and haircut embraces prototypical femininity but uses it as a weapon, as an instrument to penetrate the social order and castrate those around her.  Allie's hyper-femininity, moving beyond the site of desire, is used to her advantage in the realms of business and the home, making her an imperceptible threat to the social symbolic.  Actively looking at and modifying her own appearance, Allie is able to reclaim her body and sexuality; she is the site of her own desire, distancing herself from traditional female passivity and removing power from others.  In turn, despite being an initially likable character, "the one to whom we are obviously meant to warm, [Allie] is not a very likeable heroine" (Jermyn, 1996, p. 264).  In her close connection to her own mirrored image,

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therefore, Allie incites chaos and destruction within the phallic order, becoming the *femme castratrice* and "monstrous feminine."

Despite Allie's implicit connection to monstrosity, Hedy is ultimately portrayed as the *femme castratrice* during most of the film through her explicit connection to doubling and the mirror motif. Quite literally, Hedy references her own twin throughout the film admitting her own personal doubling or mirroring of the image of woman; due to her apparent lack of individual identity within the social symbolic, Hedy can therefore be seen as the grotesque, "Othered" vision of femininity that is repellent by society's standards. Additionally, Hedy's strong desire to steal Allie's identity through mirroring lends itself to monstrosity – much like the traditional *doppelganger* trope or vampire character in the horror genre (Paulin, 1996, p. 44), Hedy consumes Allie's identity, becoming a complete replica of her roommate by the end of the film. Innocently enough, this doubling starts with the borrowing of material items: Hedy borrows Allie's clothing when it gets soaked by the spraying of a broken sink, and the two are shown to exchange and lend out accessories including earrings as they become close friends. Guided by Allie's blind generosity and kindness, Hedy increasingly takes over the physical appearance of her roommate, and is revealed to swap out her old clothing for Allie's during the second act of the film. Moreover, in a haunting scene towards the film's finale, Hedy transforms into Allie's nearly identical twin, getting the same haircut and proclaiming, "I love myself like this" (Schroeder, 1992)**,** like the beautiful image of her popular, powerful roommate.

The eerie effect of Hedy's doubling – and so-called cannibalization (Creed, 1993) – of her roommate Allie lies in the initial motivation for stealing her identity. In

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part, this stems from guilt over her sister's death; Hedy has taken the blame for her twin's apparently accidental death, and in order to fill the void from this devastating accident, acquires a new twin in the form of Allie. Moreover, it is what Hedy does with her ability to double or mirror Allie's appearance that is all the more frightening, according to the film's standards – she frequently partakes in promiscuous behaviors, resists help and attention from her family, and tries to ruin Allie's reputation as a business woman and in her own personal relationships. Hedy's desire to become whole again, so to speak, to resolve the part of her "that is missing" (Schroeder, 1992), ultimately translates into destructive behaviors that not only threaten Allie's overall safety, but her honest reputation as well.

However, the horrific nature of Hedy's doubling of Allie lies in the fact that Hedy herself does not have an individual, fully formed identity. Rather, she steals Allie's appearance in order to compensate for her own failing in the social symbolic, to fully enter the patriarchal order despite her status as social "Other." Throughout the narrative, for example, it is difficult to discern Hedy's true nature, motivation, or even real name – she shifts from the name "Hedra" to "Hedy" to her birth name, "Ellen Besch." As she adopts Allie's personality through the acquisition of material items, Hedy's mysterious origins, and apparent lack of identity, becomes more pronounced; Hedy physically transforms into a new woman as to suggest a distancing from her own reflection in the mirror (Spooner, 2001, p. 299), her apparent lack in the social symbolic. Her incessant cleaning, shown initially to be compulsive and a bit annoying, subsequently furthers her attempt to abandon her incomplete identity and consume that which belongs to Allie. Hedy's aggressive emulation of Allie (Ngai,

2001, p. 204) and ultimate removal of her initial, albeit incomplete identity, is translated into wholly castrating, monstrous powers. Her attempts to conform to a complete, fully realized woman through the cannibalization of Allie's image and identity, allows Hedy to be seen as the *femme castratrice* or "monstrous feminine" within the film. Essentially, "in the process of achieving her desire" – to abandon her past life, to adopt Allie's appearance, to penetrate the phallic order – "Hedy becomes a monster" (Spooner, 2001, p. 303).

Furthermore, Hedy's characterization as the *femme castratrice* lies in the "interrelation of identification and desire" (Paulin, 1996, p. 46), in the ways that the mirrored image leads to larger discussions of the corrupted and corrupting powers of the female gaze. As many scholars have noted, Hedy's relation to the doubled image of woman, and to the mirror reflection of Allie, is grotesque and altogether threatening to the stability of the social order. The direction of Hedy's gaze when faced with her own image and the image of her roommate is characteristically active and male: quoting Hollinger, Catherine Spooner observes that Hedy "is often shown gazing at Allie with a mixture of desire, identification, and concealed malice" (p. 302). When compared to Allie – who is often times shown as the object of the gaze, either in looking at herself or when looked at by male characters – Hedy takes on a subject position that is arguably masculine, being able to identify with and even desire the doubled image of woman in the mirror. As a result, Hedy's monstrosity arises from her masculine, and subsequently lesbian gaze directed towards Allie and her doubled or mirrored image. Beyond threatening the institution of heterosexual desire and relationships, Hedy's masculine/lesbian gaze at the mirrored image of woman serves

to remove the power of the look from those within the social symbolic, becoming an active agent of castration within the phallic order.

The final sequence of *Single White Female* solidifies Hedy's position as the "monstrous feminine:" aligning with what critics including Deborah Jermyn (1996) have asserted about the finale, Hedy is eventually represented as the "unacceptable face of femininity which must be defeated. As the abject she must be expelled, destroyed from her symbolic castration of the men she attacks, her violence and, particularly, her sexual excess" (p. 265). This, as a whole, can be explained through the repeated motif of mirroring; although she fully changes her appearance and removes herself from the position as Allie's physical double at this point in time, Hedy nevertheless assumes and consumes various internal attributes of her unsuspecting roommate. From forcing Allie to book a flight in her name, to dictating a fake suicide note from Allie's perspective, to using Allie's fingerprints to cover up her own heinous crimes, Hedy goes beyond surface qualities and mirrors the very characteristics that construct Allie's identity and public persona. Blurring the lines between herself and her female foil, Hedy becomes Allie's symbolic double, and in keeping with the traditional female *doppelganger* motif, is an active threat to the otherwise passive, proper vision of femininity endorsed by patriarchal society.

After seriously harming (and even killing) the male protagonists of the film, as well as kidnapping and torturing her roommate, Hedy forces Allie to kill herself by intentionally overdosing on prescription drugs. As she hands her the pills, Hedy recognizes her own position as a female foil or double: "Did you know, identical twins are never really identical? There's always one who's prettier, and the one who's not

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does all the work" (Schroeder, 1992). As this statement implies, not only does Hedy recognize her own position as the mirrored image of prototypical, acceptable femininity, but she embraces it, actively seeking revenge on her doubles by assuming, and ruining, their identities. Hedy's physical and emotional power over Allie in this sequence, however, comes to an abrupt halt, as Allie attacks Hedy with a glass of water in the hopes of escaping her clutches. The two women then engage in a thrilling cat-and-mouse chase, physically fighting and running throughout their sweeping apartment complex. Fully removing herself from her *doppelganger* and securing her own identity, Allie exclaims, "I'm not your sister, Hedy. Not anymore!" (Schroeder, 1992), and flees from Hedy, who has been pinned down and restrained by the now fully conscious Graham.

Hedy – who fights and chokes Allie in an elevator – eventually returns to the basement of the building, where she plans to burn her roommate's body in an incinerator. Rummaging through boxes and eventually finding a rusty wheelbarrow, Hedy returns to Allie's body, only to find that it is missing. Shocked and visibly worried, Hedy looks for Allie in the dark corners of the basement, shouting for her roommate and defending herself with a sharp grappling hook. Allie, who is revealed to be hiding in the ceiling, looks on and throws a rat at her nemesis, in an attempt to thwart Hedy's murderous impulses; nevertheless, Hedy pursues Allie and searches intensely for her in every corner of the area. Hedy, in a fit of rage, eventually mistakes her mirrored image for Allie – a clear indication that she has not fully separated from her adopted, doubled identity. The scene ends in Hedy's destruction, as Allie appears from the ceiling and stabs Hedy to death.

*Single White Female*'s destructive conclusion extends the notion that Hedy, through her delusions and active mirroring of Allie's persona, is a *femme castratrice*, a monstrous figure that has the potential to hinder normal identity development within patriarchal society.  As an active agent of destruction, Hedy must be destroyed by a figure that fully adheres to prototypical visions of femininity, in order for balance to be restored within the social symbolic.  Moreover, the film's Coda – which features a voice-over of Allie lamenting over Hedy's apparent mental illness – blatantly communicates the overall notion of female doubling as both natural and highly dangerous.  That is, the final shot of the film features a photograph of both Hedy and Allie, ripped in half and placed together as to suggest the fusing together of the women's faces.  By returning back to the mirrored image of woman, the film suggests that woman's dual nature is an inherent – albeit constructed – feature of femininity.  The "monstrous feminine" is an inescapable concept within patriarchal society, a symbolic threat that persists even after the death of the literal *femme castratrice*.

**Concluding Remarks**

In analyzing *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female* through the lens of Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine*, several important findings have been uncovered regarding the representation of the image of woman not only in the horror genre, but in mainstream American films as a whole. Primarily, the repeated oscillation between characterizing female characters as "monstrous" versus threatened or adhering to prototypical femininity communicates a vision of woman that, as a whole, cannot fully separate from her status as social "Other." To put it in another way, since each character adopts the role of the "monstrous feminine," the larger argument can be made that woman, regardless of her position or apparent progress within society, can never be wholly good, a figure that is always tied to irrationality, abjection, and an inherent threat to the symbolic order. This negative image of femininity can therefore be viewed as a social construct developed in order to safeguard active, phallic power within the social symbolic and eliminate the potential threat of the social "Other" as a whole.

It can be argued, then, that the horror genre is a microcosm for the larger cinematic medium: what is communicated and constructed within the three films is a reflection of the type of stereotypical rhetoric adopted by American films as a whole. Despite the fact that the horror genre actively distorts and heightens narrative material, studying the representation of woman here helps to uncover general assumptions surrounding femininity and gender within the larger scope of American films. As artifacts that extend patriarchal discourse, horror films allow for the recirculation of common stereotypes prevalent in various genres of film, literature, and

other media, and in their critical and commercial appeal, help sustain negative, "monstrous" images of woman.

Moreover, a chronological approach to studying the dual image of woman in horror films also helps to uncover the recirculation of misogynistic stereotypes within patriarchal discourse. Despite apparent forward movement on the part of women in society during the span of *Baby Jane*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female*, each of the films nevertheless go against this progress, deflecting the very sense of achievement and professional power that women could have earned during this time period. Moving back to traditionalist, altogether sexist ideals, these films place women in a state of subordination and passivity, and as Creed points out, "reinforce the phallocentric notion that female sexuality is abject" (Creed, 1993, p. 151). The fact that the same types of images were repurposed in these films as well as others underscores film's rhetorical potency within the social symbolic, as a tool for patriarchal discourse in "Othering" the image of woman altogether.

Several questions emerge from the study of the "monstrous feminine" within the horror genre and, in particular, the ways in which the dual image of woman has been constructed in filmic texts. Primarily, does this notion of dual monstrosity end at a specific point in time, fading off into obscurity as new technologies, styles of film, and modes of communication change in the 21st Century? Arguably, the representation of the "monstrous feminine" through two female protagonists is still prevalent in modern filmmaking practices; just as older notions of abjection and monstrosity were recycled in *Baby Jane*, *Carrie*, and *Single White Female*, recent films appropriate the same sort of themes to cater to the tastes of growing audiences.

Films including Darren Aranofsky's *Black Swan* (2010) and remakes of *Carrie* (Kimberly Pierce's *Carrie* in 2013) and *Single White Female* (*The Roommate*, directed by Christian E. Christiansen and released in 2011) have recycled the same types of representations of woman within their narratives, adhering to the notion of dual monstrosity exhibited in prior films. As a result, the dual image of woman will always stand, and in the recycling of tropes including the female *doppelganger* and virgin-whore dichotomy, will contribute to the overall stereotyping of woman as "monstrous" and "Othered." Deborah Jermyn, in her analysis of *Single White Female*, agrees with this phenomenon of the doubled woman: "[dominant] ideology attempts to pose the association between woman and the notion of 'doubling' or duplicity as natural. This is at least partly because women are made to exist in a state of dissemblance [...] It is because of this that the feminist appropriation of the double is such an important act of critical resistance" (Jermyn, 1996, p. 263).

Similarly, a question emerging from the larger discussion of the representation of woman pertains to a potential feminist appropriation of the horror genre. Taking all things into consideration, are there any examples of purely feminist horror films, ones that surpass stereotypical images of woman and can account for active, positive visions of femininity? It can be said that some subgenres of horror – the rape-revenge film, the lesbian horror film, films featuring the Final Girl trope – can successfully achieve a positive, empowered vision of femininity that foregoes the "monstrous feminine" entirely. However, I would argue that these films are few and far between, lying in the margins of mainstream filmmaking practice and gaining little prominence with horror audiences. Additionally, horror films that feature the rape-revenge plot

and Final Girl trope, for example, still adhere to negative conceptions of the "monstrous feminine," translating qualities that may appear active and powerful into those that are threatening to the overall stability of the patriarchal order. Despite this seemingly hopeless future for the horror genre and the "monstrous feminine," there is still a glimmer of hope; as suggested by Creed in her conclusion, "the notion that the monstrous-feminine challenges the view that femininity, by definition, constitutes passivity" (Creed, 1993, p. 151). It would appear, then, that the "monstrous feminine" can work to construct progressive images of woman within mainstream horror films, and can even deviate from traditional stereotypes surrounding femininity.

Lastly, my analysis of woman's dual monstrosity in film is grounded in psychological horror films, as opposed to traditional versions of the genre. To what extent, then, do psychological or mental sources of horror successfully communicate images of woman's monstrosity, as opposed to their gore-filled, physically terrifying counterparts? Are audiences impacted more by what is mentally or emotionally grotesque – and are therefore more susceptible to negative portrayals of woman – than what is physically disturbing? What do audiences make of psychologically distressing material in these horror films, and how does this challenge methods of interpreting messages communicated through patriarchal society? These questions lead to interesting connections to affect theory, as well as questions of spectatorship and identification, and will be considered for future research in this area.

In the vein of feminist film theory, which helps to uncover "how the logic of a narrative, a characterization, or a thematic progression could create disparities in the representation of gender" (Bordwell, 1991, p. 91), Creed's theory of the "monstrous

feminine" has proven to be a valuable tool in the study of the dual image of woman in the horror genre. In part, the "monstrous feminine" helps locate the precise ways in which femininity has been distorted in order to promote misogynistic myths prevalent within patriarchal discourse. Importantly, Creed's theory provides the foundation for new ways of studying the image of woman in film, particularly the dual image of woman's monstrosity perpetuated within patriarchal discourses. The study of the dual representation of the "monstrous feminine," in essence, answers the very question posed by the powerful film executive in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*: "What do they make monsters like this for?" (Aldrich, 1962). These female, abject monsters, as it appears, are the projection of societal anxieties about the figure of woman within the symbolic, of the threat that woman can present if she moves beyond socially prescribed notions of femininity.

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