

Fanny Felixine

Dr. Bishop

ENGL - 4150

5th November, 2025

From Freddy to Ghostface: The Rise of Hypermodern Horror through *Scream*

In the 1970s, the slasher film market became so saturated that the genre almost disappeared completely. In the mid-1980s, there was a revival with the appearance of supernatural killers such as Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, followed by others such as Chucky in *Child's Play* and *Candyman*. It broadened the genre's codes, making it more comical and diverse. Though this shift paved the way for postmodern horror films such as 1996 *Scream* and built a conscious evolution of the horror genre that once again changed the rules.

According to Valerie Wee in "The Scream Trilogy, "Hyperpostmodernism," and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film," post modern films are characterized by the breakdown of boundaries, the decline of the master narrative, and the erosion of authority, all of which lead to hypermodernism. This is an advanced or heightened stage of postmodernism, with intertextual references and self-reflexive jokes. In *Scream*, for example, the characters talk on the phone about past horror films like *Halloween*. Thus, Ghostface, with his mask and voice-modifying technology, turns everyday communication into a weapon of terror, making the most basic thing like the telephone itself an instrument of persecution. This also implies to the murderer as they are brought back to their first function being human. Unlike previous slasher films, which relied on supernatural killers with inexplicable resilience, *Scream* features a very human serial killer who stumbles, gets hurt, and bleeds, anchoring the terror in brutal reality rather than fantasy.

Furthermore, what distinguishes *Scream* as truly postmodern is its acute awareness of the horror film tradition in which it is embedded. The characters openly reference the conventions of the genre, particularly through its influences from Italian giallo: the “whodunit” structure and the symbolic killer in black gloves who not only asks the question “who is killing,” but also “who is behind the mask.” The characters discuss the rules of horror films, debate who will survive, and analyze the very patterns they are experiencing. It is as if teenagers have become culturally literate both in the movie and in the real world, and therefore the slasher movie needs to reinvent itself in order to attract this new audience and keep the money coming in. This is particularly the case at the end of the film, with the revelation that there are two killers working together, a twist that breaks the fundamental slasher convention that there is usually only one antagonist.

Besides that, *Scream* intensifies the violence typical of 1990s horror films, showing murders explicitly rather than leaving them off-screen, and using techniques such as progressive slow motion to emphasize the brutality and physicality of each of them. This is particularly the case with Casey Becker and her murder in the first few minutes of the film. She is hung to a tree with her guts spilling out in the garden of her own home in full view of everyone. This detail also serves to highlight the incompetence and uselessness of her parents, because she had screamed for help before that. Therefore like it was mentioned in class, the film draws heavily on American slasher traditions and Italian giallo cinema. It had profoundly influenced the American approach to crime, zombie, and slasher films with their emphasis on mystery and stylized violence.

Ultimately, *Scream* represents the idyllic, pure period of postmodern slashers, a film so aware of its traditions that it can both honor and subvert them. It is influenced by movements as diverse as the French New Wave and Italian giallo, creating something that feels like both a remake of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and a completely original vision. The

genius of the film lies in the fact that it incorporates awareness itself into the horror: the characters know the rules, they recognize the patterns, and yet they die. In pure postmodern tradition, knowledge offers no protection, only the illusion of control. Indeed, this pattern is still followed in films today. Currently, this hypermodernism and its rules are part of daily life in 2025, yet murders still occur.

Works Cited

- Truffaut, François. "French New Wave - Wikipedia." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_New_Wave. Accessed 5 November 2025.
- Utichi, Joe. *Giallo - Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giallo>. Accessed 5 November 2025.
- Wee, Valerie. "'The Scream Trilogy,' 'Hyperpostmodernism,' and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,.'" *Journal of Film and Videos* 57.3, Fall 2005. Accessed 04 11 2025.