Essay 1: Lens-driven Analysis

In the beginning of the film, Laurie is shown in the midst of walking home with two of her friends discussing their plans for later that night. A few moments later, one of her friends walks to her house while the other friend is lost in her book bag when Laurie looks ahead and sees Michael Myers staring directly at her. Laurie tries to get her friend to look up and get a glimpse of Michael, but by the time she looks Michael is gone. Later, towards the end of the film, Laurie states that there is nothing to be scared of because she killed the boogeyman and Tommy exclaims, “you can’t kill the boogeyman.” A few moments later, Michael Myers attacks Laurie and she decides to hide in the closet. Then, while Michael is breaking through the closet trying to get to Laurie, she unwinds a wire hanger and stabs him in the eye with it. Using a lens based analysis and analyzing through the works of Jeffrey Cohen’s “Monster Culture” and Freud’s “The Uncanny,” both of these scenes convey a deeper narrative than they express.

Regarding the scene in the beginning of the film, one main idea from “Monster Culture” by Jeffrey Cohen is from Thesis III: The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis, more specifically, the monster always escapes because they cannot fit into categories. In the scene where Laurie is walking home with her friend and spots Michael staring at her in the distance, the scene merely seems to be about how her friend was not able to look up in time to spot
Michael. However, when analyzed through the lens of Cohen, the scene demonstrates that Michael always escapes because he cannot fit into a binary category, he is not like the rest. Michael Myers is an empty human, a lifeless body containing not a single emotion. Michael is an outlier with no judgement for what is right or wrong, and kills hopeless people in the film without the blink of an eye. Another key point from “Monster Culture” by Cohen is from Thesis I which states that “The Monsters Body is a Cultural Body,” more specifically, the monsters body is a sign that needs a reader. At first glance, this scene can simply be read as Laurie being the only one that was able to spot Michael in time, but looking through the lens of Cohen, this scene illustrates that Laurie, the final girl, is the only person able to get a chance to read Michael. It can be noted that it was not just a coincidence that Laurie was the only one able to see Michael in time, Laurie is the only person that is able to see Michael for who he is. Michael purposely stood there for a certain amount of time so that Laurie would be the only one that saw him.

Freud states in “The Uncanny” that the uncanny is “nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only in the process of repression.” This idea ties to this scene in a way such as walks home from school are supposed to be relatively safe and familiar for kids, nothing out of the ordinary. However, challenged through the lens of Freud, Michael disrupts that theory, showing up at that specific time to catch a glimpse of Laurie, frightening her. Using Freud as a lens, it is observed that Michael appears in places where he is not expected, in places in which people like Laurie travel on a daily basis.

Regarding the scene towards the end of the film, a key idea from “Monster Culture” by Jeffrey J. Cohen is from Thesis I which states that “The Monsters Body is a Cultural Body,” more specifically, the monsters body is a sign that needs a reader. At first glance, this scene can
simply be read as Laurie finding whatever object was nearest to her and using it to defend herself, stabbing Michael in the eye with the wire hanger allowing her to escape and giving her time to tell the kids to seek help. However, when interpreting this scene through the lens of Cohen, the fact that Laurie stabbed Michael in the eye with the hanger illustrates the main idea of Michael’s mask and everything it stands for. For Michael, the mask is used to express his blank face, lack of emotion, and dark lifeless body. However, when wearing the mask, the only part on Michaels body that is vulnerable are his eyes which Laurie utilizes when she used the hanger to attack that specific part of his body which made him distraught, enabling her to escape. When noticing this, it made me think deeper into how Laurie finally found a way to inflict paint onto Michael and display his vulnerability even through his mask. This lens helped interpret the main idea of the mask and how it symbolizes the dark emptiness within Michael and when looking closer at this scene, Laurie found a way to get through his mask, inflicting pain. Pain in which Michael has only done to others.

In terms of Freud, he states uncanny is “nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only in the process of repression.” While looking through the lens of Freud to analyze this scene, this scene demonstrates the safety and comfort surrounding a home. A home is generally known for being a safe haven for many people because it is theirs and they have control of whoever comes in and out in most instances. However, when analyzing through the lens of Freud, the home in which was once a safe haven, has now become just the opposite. When she notices that Michael will soon break in she becomes quick witted and finds an object she knows will inflict pain onto Michael. In doing so, it can be noted when analyzing through the lens of Freud, that Laurie seems to become
empowered for once in the film. Laurie uses the uncanny experience to allow her to muster up whatever courage she has left to stab Michael, allowing her to escape. Furthermore, Freud states in “The Uncanny” that in relation to infantile fears, the loss of eyes is symbolic of figurative castration. When analyzing this scene, the focus of the eyes is crucial for identifying the importance of Laurie stabbing Michael in the eye. The eyes are arguably the most important part of the human body. Without eyes, it is extremely difficult to go about life because the eyes are used for observing everything. Further, Michael wears a mask to conceal his face, illustrating his lack of emotion and lifeless body. When Laurie uses the wire hanger to stab Michael in the only exposed part of his body, his eye, it symbolizes a figurative castration. For the first time in the film, Michael feels vulnerable because Laurie was once again able to inflict pain onto Michael displaying his vulnerability.

Overall, both works by Jeffrey J. Cohen in “Monster Culture” and Freud’s “The Uncanny” offer a different analysis on these scenes from the film “Halloween,” and using a lens based analysis to analyze these scenes offers a different narrative than what the film illustrates. Using both the works of Cohen and Freud, elements from the scenes such as setting and specific details that would not otherwise be noted without a lens, help identify issues related to this course.
Works Cited

1. Freud’s “The Uncanny,” 1919