SCARING IT OUT OF US:
HOW CANDYMAN AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES CAN BE USED TO VIEW THE
DARKER SIDES OF OUR PERSONALITIES AND PERPETUATE THE SEARCH FOR
SELF-COMPLETION THROUGH CONFRONTING THE ‘OTHER’

by

Serena Foster

A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The University of Utah
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Honors Degree of Bachelor of Science

In
English

Approved:

Dr. Angela Smith                                Dr. Vincent Pecora
Supervisor Chair,                                Department of English

Dr. Mark Matheson                                Martha S. Bradley
Department Honors Advisor                        Dean, Honors College

August 2011
ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to offer a new perspective on why horror films exist and thrive within society. Using a combination of the analytical theories of Charles Horton Cooley, Jacques Lacan, and Carl Gustav Jung, this article considers the psychological function of mirrors in the development of human identity in relation to the mirroring apparatus found in many horror films. Cooley’s Looking-glass Self Theory joins Lacan’s Mirror Stage in the human development of conceptual identity as dependent upon like social creatures. This concept of identity is constructed by sifting through the human traits found in each person and either accepting or abjecting them in order to ‘fit in’ and appear as one desires to be seen by others. The mirroring apparatus can be used to explain how viewers attain a sort of recognition of their own identities when watching the interplay between male monsters and female victims in horror films. This article explains how horror films can be beneficial in representing the abjected sides of the human identity and used to reinforce the bonds between the people who watch them.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOURCES</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In ancient Rome, nameless masses of people gathered to cheer at staged battles between professional fighters known as gladiators. These fighters were pitted against ferocious beasts, hapless slaves, and criminals, when they were often just criminals themselves. The masses saw them lying in the sand, sweat, and gore left in their mock battle’s wake. This was real public entertainment. The spectators placed bets on who would live and who would die. They laughed. They jeered. But most importantly, they watched, captivated by the horrors taking place before them and not considering why they were both horrified and intrigued at their nearness to the collision between weapons and flesh, or the screams of the animals amidst their death throes. Each time, they found themselves drawing forward in their seats and listening to their entertainers choke on their own blood. In the aftermath, they averted their eyes from the bodies of the slaughtered as they were hauled away, while cheering for the winners in celebration of their triumph. You see, these battles offered a rare opportunity to envision something that was both disturbing, yet fed a mysterious and insatiable hunger and drew them back again and again.

These types of historical records stand as evidence that the human race has often taken pleasure in violent spectacle entertainments and exhibitions. So it seems almost expected that such horrors would find themselves evolving with the invention of the motion picture, transferring to the silver screen and bringing an unexplainably attracted fan-base to the arena of the movie theater. Douglas E. Winter wrote The Dark Fantastic, a biography on Clive Barker, the creator of The Forbidden (which is the inspiration for the horror film Candyman) where he details Barker’s perspective on the story. Winter
writes that the pull of the horrific tale is no different than the question of approaching Pandora’s Box because “its allure – the compelling question of why we approach the lid”, or in this case the screen of the horror film, is because we are “so certain of the terrors that wait inside, yet so eager to have it open” (Winter, 363). In reference to this question of drive, he asks if it could be that there is “a place, however small, reserved in every heart for the monstrous? … and if so, should it be denied, should we be made its victim – or should we accept its wisdom and burn brightly with the knowledge of how and why it holds us in its sway?” (Winter, 369).

There must be a reason why humans find themselves drawn to revisit death and darkness at times, or “why then would these stories be told” and retold throughout countless generations and through so many different means of expression? (Winter, 366) I suggest that viewers “surrender to the imagery of horror” not only because it is a “most seductive monster,” or simply because they love a good seduction as much as a good slaughter (Winter, 370; 373), but because in addition to this, mankind conceives of many binary distinctions that may or may not exist in order to gain a semblance of control over the world. The reason behind what horrifies us is therefore to be found in mankind’s effort to separate life into halves of things: “white and black, positive and negative, life and art” (Winter, 376). It is the act of projecting onto one thing a meaning of our own design, creating and then transforming such concepts as good and bad into “mirrors” of each other “some shining darkness, others light” (Winter, 376). By creating these contradictions, we conceive of a balance to things which are actually both chaotic and messy. We attempt to control their existence in an effort to achieve the illusion that we can control our own. In order to examine our fascination with the horrific, I suggest that
we turn to “the lore” and lure “of the looking-glass” and its uses within the horror genre (Winter, 371). Consider that perhaps our brief visits with terror are “in the natural history of the mind, the bright feathers that” draw our “species to mate with its secret self” (Winter, 367).

Consider the possibility that the reason behind humanity’s furtive infatuation with the grotesque has more to do with maintaining a complex balance of selfhood, rather than any other supposedly twisted indulgence or psychological infirmity that has previously been suggested. In horror films, a triangle of entities is collectively used as a mirroring apparatus: the characters, the screen, and the spectators who watch it. Visual tools such as doubling, mirroring, and projecting are used repeatedly as representation for the human penchant to project internal ideologies onto external bodies. The screen as a mirror is presented to the audience for the purpose of allowing it to envision two opposing sides of the human psyche as separate and autonomous within the bodies of the male monster and the female victim. In reality the characteristics segregated between these two characters are not separate but exist tangled within the conflicted body of the spectator. Being able to envision such opposing traits divided into two visually contradictory bodies gives the spectator the opportunity to view them as projected representations of the preferable versus the objectionable as determined by society. My argument focuses on the use of this apparatus within the film *Candyman*, (Dir. Bernard Rose, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1992). This particular film reveals this battle between socially constructed identities that are divided into binary opposites, and which is typically concealed within many horror films. It counters society’s perception that the merging of these opposites into the same body always results in a fatalistic outcome. In Candyman the opposites
unite and achieve immortality in their union. This outcome of powerful combination is left to the spectator to be viewed as beneficial or detrimental, according to their own socially constructed ideals. If what viewers find frightening is not becoming a monster or being made a victim, but rather the idea that they are already both at once, then the true explanation behind their infatuation with horror films is due to its ability to perfectly mirror an entire identity as it would exist without the constraints of society or language. Some horror films present the opposing sides of the human psyche and allow the spectator to briefly confront them both, but then re-bury the darker side in the end. In other horror films such as *Candyman*, this objectionable idea is used as a tool to display the complicity and hypocrisy of one’s social construction of an ideal ‘I’ through cathartic use of mirrors in whatever form they come in, and they choose to leave a remnant behind rather than bury this deception completely.

This concept of a balanced self is constructed in various socially oriented ways according to American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley who published a text in 1902 entitled *Human Nature and the Social Order*. Within this collection of research and observations regarding psychology and sociology he conceived a theory that became known as ‘The Looking-glass Self’. I will show the stages of Dr. Cooley’s theory and how it links logically with Jacques Lacan’s more recent theory about self development from his lecture entitled “The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience”, delivered at the 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis, Zurich, July 17, 1949. When applied to the structure of horror films, both theories connect and actually fortify each other’s assertions from across their respective fields. Additionally, Dr. Carl Gustav Jung’s suppositions regarding archetypes become
relevant when considering the construction of binary opposites within human bodies in
that they make a clear distinction between the opposing sides and give reason to the
repetitive use of the same types of body contrasts. Combining these theories and applying
them to the horror film *Candyman* can uncover some fascinating perspectives into the
minds of both characters and spectators alike.

Dr. Cooley’s theory focuses on the human drive or instinct to differentiate itself
and develop a singular personality within a society of like creatures, given the title of the
“Social Self” (Cooley, 179). The development of such a self begins in the first stages of
childhood. Every child develops a desire to realize the line between what it controls and
what it does not. Comprehension of this line is what assists the child in experiencing what
Cooley calls a sense of self differentiation from other individuals. It reinforces a feeling
of clear distinction and identity. To emphasize the collective human fear of the possible
loss of a clear identity, he states that within the space where “mental facts are
distinguished…there are no fences” and therefore the possibility exists for “one thing” to
merge “by degrees into another” (Cooley, 175). The existence of a unique self that is not
a physical body with tangible boundaries, but an internal concept, introduces the possible
threat of blurring its carefully encased contents with the contents of the outside world.
Because of this, the “Social Self” must constantly be “trying to impress itself upon the
minds of others” by repeatedly reinventing its ‘I’ identity in contrast to those that
surround it (Cooley, 181).

To wield the “I” that represents identity is to place all that one perceives them self
to be inside an interchangeable shell, a shell that is capable of being described only in
language, and which can be constantly added to or taken away from. Each time it is
utilized to describe a unique self, and its contents are never the same, making identity 
eternally indefinite. It is important to realize that this process is an exchange where both 
parties are affected in ways that cannot be perceived by the other. According to Dr. 
Cooley, “a self idea of this sort” has “three principal elements” in its process (Cooley, 
184). First of all an individual imagines its “appearance to” another person, responds with 
an “imagination of” that person’s “judgment of that appearance” and enacts a response of 
some kind “such as pride or shame”. He goes on to claim that this response is not moved 
by a “mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined 
effect of this reflection upon another’s mind”. Despite the fact that this cycle is merely an 
internal projection onto an external surface, it enacts a necessity for alteration to the self 
because “directly or indirectly the imagination of how we appear to others is a controlling 
force in all normal minds” (Cooley, 203). Through this “sympathetic impulse”, we 
subconsciously cast off and simultaneously adopt fragments of personalities depending 
on our reactions to seeing them reflected on bodies other than our own (Cooley, 209). 
Our constructed internal identity ”is very private” and is both “special” and treasured in 
its “antithesis to the rest of the world” (Cooley, 194).

Overall, Cooley suggests that an individual can only exist in its “relation to other 
individuals” because in their difference lies their distinction, their unique self (Cooley, 
210). We construct, piece by piece, this identity through self-driven projections onto 
others of what we think they think of us. Through each inverted encounter our image of 
our self changes based on who functions as a mirror for our projections, and how we 
interpret their reactions to us. We become, in a way, a sort of subconscious psychological 
chameleon.
While delving into these types of theories, there are various references to an ‘I’, and while each has a similar meaning, they should not always be taken as one in the same because of the different fields of study they originate from. Within this foreground, these differences meet on a common plane. Each individual has a unique and “instinctive self-feeling” of separateness from other individuals, and where the body exists as a physical barrier between two people, the word ‘I’ must serve as a psychological division between two selves (Cooley, 171). Where Cooley supposes that a constructed singular identity cannot exist without another to compare itself to, Jacques Lacan elaborates that this creates a lifelong drive to attain reassurance of our identities through others.

Lacan begins his discussion of “The Mirror Stage” in the published collection of his research entitled *Ecrits*, and fleshes out Cooley’s previous suppositions about the human process of psychological development through projections and reflections. Lacan focuses on the development of the psyche beginning with humans in their infantile stage. “The child” refers to a model child or representative of a stage of life that each human experiences (Lacan, 1). We are introduced to this child at the period where the ‘Mirror Stage’ begins approximately, which is between six and eighteen months of age. Within this particular window of time, the child “is for a time…outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence” yet it can “nevertheless already recognize” its “own image in a mirror” (Lacan, 1).

According to Lacan, the moment where the child recognizes its reflection is crucial in its development of its sense of self from that point forward. Where previously the child had no concept of singularity or separateness from anything else, it is presented with an image it recognizes as a representation of its self. The child attaches a conscious
ownership to this image because “in a series of gestures” it “experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment” and is suddenly fascinated with it (Lacan, 1). This attachment grows stronger with “the startling spectacle of the infant in front of the mirror” attempting to “hold” its reflected self in its “gaze” (Lacan, 2).

Further, Lacan argues that there is a quality of selfhood which every being instinctively believes should exist, a feeling of completeness or autonomy, something that should define them to others and themselves while leaving no room for incongruence between the internal self and the external one. Well-known psychologist Dr. Carl Gustav Jung states a similar sentiment in his research, collected within The Portable Jung, that a sense of inferiority “always indicates that the missing element is something which, to judge by this feeling about it, really ought not be missing, or which could be made conscious if only one took sufficient trouble” (Jung, C., 81). When this quality does not show itself, a desire to locate it arises. A search is instigated, reinforcing a feeling of incompleteness in the subject, and the belief that such a feeling of wholeness can be reached. It is this search that comes to drive all of our relationships, throughout the whole of our lives. Because our desired completeness seemingly does not exist within our individual self, and as Cooley asserts, we exist only in relation to each other, we then search each other for this quality that seemingly cannot be found internally. Dr. Jung reinforces the need for outside assistance by stating that “the most decisive qualities in a person are often unconscious and can be perceived only by others, or have to be laboriously discovered with outside help” (Jung, C., 142). Jacqueline Rose, in her editorial introduction II to Lacan’s Feminine Sexuality, states that at the particular
moment “when the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasied place of just such a knowledge or certainty…the Other” (Rose, 32). This “Other” is the nonexistent location of that which we desire above all else, the thing we feel we have lost, which we never actually possessed. More specifically, “the Other appears to hold the ‘truth’ of the subject and the power to make good its loss” (Rose, 32). Similarly, each sex tends to think that they can find their lost selves in their sexual counterparts, each side of sexuality and gender “coming to stand, mythically and exclusively, for that which could satisfy and complete the other” (Rose, 33). In actuality, the completion the subject seeks is nonexistent, which is why the ‘Mirror-Stage’ develops into a life-long process of ‘Looking-glass Self’ creations.

Prior to the moment of “identification with the Other”, the child’s formation of “‘I’ is precipitated in a primordial form” (Lacan, 2). Following this moment, the child conceives of its very own “Ideal-I”, its other self, or the representation of a whole and autonomous self in contrast with the much more disjointed one that the child feels is its actual state of being (Lacan, 2). The outcome of this discrepancy between the child’s interior perception of self and its exterior reflection of its self as an “organic” whole is one that sets the child upon a path of “succession of fantasies” that extend “from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality” (Lacan, 4). This succession is the “moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the Other” (Lacan, 5).

In this complex search for ‘Self’ discovery crucial facets of personality are often undiscovered. According to Dr. Jung, human nature carries with it a secret side which he refers to as “the shadow,” and he defines it as “the negative side of the personality”
As Carl Jung describes this phenomenon called the “shadow” of the human psyche, he also discusses two specific archetypes called the “Anima” and the “Animus” which erupt from a much deeper level of the human unconscious. These archetypes are much more complex than the Shadow because they “are much further away from the consciousness and in normal circumstances are seldom if ever realized” or confronted (Jung, C., 148). He references them as being an ultimate “source of projections” because where the Shadow “is always of the same sex as the subject,” these are almost always “contrasexual figures” to their specific subjects (Jung, C., 147). In other words, a woman would have a male figure, whereas a male would have a female one, “here we meet the animus of a woman and the anima of a man, two corresponding archetypes whose autonomy and unconsciousness explain…their projections” (Jung, C., 148). It is within the complexity of these archetypes that we find answers regarding the sides of ourselves that are most suppressed and abjected.

These assertions by Cooley, Lacan, and Jung, form a process that, when applied in conjunction to the human drive to view bizarre and monstrous images, shed light on the ‘shadows’ of human existence. Taken in the context of horror film and spectatorship, they can answer the question of why viewers need to be frightened and disgusted, and why they must confront such emotions throughout their lives (Winter, 368: 6).
Specifically, what is it about the relationship between male monsters and female victims that is so enthralling to spectators? As Fred Botting puts it in his article “Candygothic”, how are these archetypal characters used by spectators to satisfy a “need to recognize and celebrate” their “own monstrosities?” (Botting, 136:2)

Lacan and Cooley argue that each individual strives to attain a balance or equivalence between their inner and outer selves. Jung argues that becoming conscious of the entire self is vital in the process of this pursuit and that the use of projections is essential in coming to terms with one’s own self because “projections change the world into the replica of one’s own unknown face” (Jung, C., 146). In essence, viewers must recognize that they use other humans and outside entities to reflect their projections of that ‘unknown face’ which is not socially acceptable but unavoidably a part of them. The false attempt to exist autonomously is repudiated by this action, and the film Candyman can be most valuable in its revealing of this process in such a way that the spectator can actually see it. Through the act of watching, projecting onto, and recognizing the male, the female, the black, and the white characters within the film, the spectator can conceive of the existence of their own light and dark selves. They can then project their darker self onto the monster, their lighter onto the victim and set them free in a socially acceptable setting, satisfying their suppressed masculine and feminine personalities and maintaining the illusion of their ideal social ‘I’.

Within the growing collection of horror films there is one tale that actively seeks to bring this hidden urge to light: the tale of the Candyman (dir. Bernard Rose, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1992). There are two prominently paired images repeated within this film: the angelic feminine victim (Helen Lyle), and the masculine black monster (The
Candyman). This film seems to be about “racial and sexual difference, everywhere visible and embodied by Helen (Virginia Madsen) and the Candyman (Tony Todd),” yet this is not its primary message. Upon closer inspection viewers can learn to see these characters as standing “in place of an unpresentable and non-consumable Thing”, the hollow space left behind in their pursuit of a social self when socially undesirable fragments of their identities are cast off onto others (Botting, 141:1). In revealing this shadowy absence, created in their dependence for other bodies to project their dark selves onto, the false comfort of autonomy in their construction of an ideal social identity is revealed. This “story about stories … rejects the timeworn, and so very safe notion of horror fiction as the essence of escapism, reminding us of the truths … that burn at the heart of the fiction of fear” (Winter, 368). Helen and Candyman ask their viewers to consider their social existence through offering them an opportunity to take a look at the things they do not want to see, strangely enough, by directing their gazes toward a mirror and the reflections held captive within it.
The film *Candyman* is a journey through the darkest depths of human fear. Helen Lyle is a graduate student at the University of Illinois where her husband Trevor (Xander Berkley) lectures on folklore. Helen is conducting research for her thesis by studying urban legends, which according to her husband are really just a type of modern folklore. She winds up venturing into one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the projects of Chicago: Cabrini Green. This ghetto is where a local urban legend known as the ‘Candyman’ is rumored to haunt. On Helen’s first visit, accompanied by her research partner Bernadette (Kasi Lemmons), she meets a young black woman named Anne-Marie (Vanessa Williams). The young woman is raising her infant son, Anthony (Latesha Martin), whom she holds as she tells them about the gruesome murder of her old neighbor, Ruthie Jean. She claims that Ruthie was found sliced up the middle of her body after making several 911 calls that went unanswered from her apartment. She said that she heard someone trying to come through the wall, and she was afraid. Anne-Marie heard her screams, but both the police and the paramedics avoided the Projects because of the gangs, which is why no one came to help her.

After her first visit, Helen becomes obsessed with the ‘Candyman’ to the point of returning to Cabrini Green alone. This reckless solo return proves to be a very bad choice as Helen winds up being attacked by a local drug lord who calls himself Candyman (Terrence Riggins). She is brutally beaten and left for dead in a public restroom where authorities find her, thanks to a young boy from the complex whom she befriended named Jake (DeJuan Guy). She identifies the drug lord in a police lineup and testifies against him in order to ensure he gets put away for good. Standing up to this man is
something that none of the residents of the Projects had been able to accomplish because
the police could not offer them adequate protection.

Helen’s obsession with the legend of the Candyman only grows following her
attack. She finds herself haunted by the image of a different, more wraithlike Candyman
who beckons her to “be” his “victim” (Candyman, 45:19). In a moment of distraction in a
parking garage, she hears his voice and loses consciousness, only to wake up in a pool of
blood and gore in Anne-Marie’s apartment at Cabrini Green. She is attacked by a grief
stricken Anne-Marie, and grabs a hold of a butcher knife to protect herself. The police
arrive in time to find her covered in blood, holding the butcher knife over Anne-Marie,
and Anne-Marie’s massive guard dog beheaded on the floor. No one seems to believe her
as she tells the authorities of how she lost consciousness and woke up covered in blood.
She is arrested and then released while still under suspicion because the police cannot
find baby Anthony’s body.

Helen believes that she is innocent. The Candyman has become very real to her,
because he is all she remembers from before the incident. In a moment when she is home
alone, he breaks through her bathroom mirror and pursues her throughout her apartment.
It is obvious that he is no insubstantial ghost. She knows he is real. As she is trying to
fend him off with a kitchen knife, Bernadette knocks on the front door and Helen is
forced to watch her friend die a violent death by his hook. He rends her in two before
Helen’s eyes. Trevor returns home and Helen is once again discovered with a knife in her
hand, this time with the dead body of her friend at her feet. She is arrested and placed in a
psychiatric ward, tethered to her bed frame, and terrorized by a Candyman no one else
can see. A month later she wakes up and does not remember so much time passing. She is
brought before a psychiatrist, Dr. Burke (Stanley DeSantis), who challenges her to prove that Candyman is real. Unfortunately for him, she summons her Candyman and the doctor finds himself split in two. The Candyman shatters the office window and leaves her with a relatively easy escape route. She climbs out and runs home, dodging police officers on her way, only to find Trevor playing house with his new student girlfriend, Stacy (Carolyn Lowery). Helen finds them repainting the apartment that was her home and she realizes that she has been replaced. She has no one to turn to, just as Candyman seems to have intended, and so she goes back to Cabrini Green. She goes one last time, to confront the Candyman whose murderous presence has ruined her life. She rescues baby Anthony from his clutches and dies in the process, only to be reborn as the new Candyman, a murderous female both ethereal and vengeful.

The purpose of framing Helen and the Candyman as two opposing and inverted reflections of each other is to make them each into a binary opposite of the other. Helen represents the Other to the Candyman, who in turn represents the same Otherness for her.

In his article “An Introduction to the American Horror Film”, Robin Wood says that this ‘Other’ “functions not simply as something external to the culture or to the self, but also as what is repressed (but never destroyed) in the self and projected outwards in order to be hated and disowned” (Wood, 168). The portrayal of both victim and monster being aggressively drawn to one another, to the point of their own destruction, represents the constant battle of the human consciousness to accept or abject certain parts of itself according to social expectations. Helen and the Candyman embody the two opposing sides – the light and the dark, the
accepted and the abjected. The culminating event of a merging between the two simultaneously signifies the imagined horrific consequence of removing the social bridle that exists to restrain the abjected side of human nature and experience.

The concept of balance is emphasized within the first few moments of the film. The opening credits are dropped into the frame over a scene above a geometrically uniform and visually bland Chicago roadway. The viewer is given an aerial perspective moving evenly sideways across a series of straight, busy highways traversed by moving vehicles. This view from above gives the audience a feeling like someone is perusing the parallel world below, almost god-like in its silent observing gaze. The tiny people move about their business unaware of the prospect that someone is watching, waiting for a chance to step into their world.

The scene is dominated by the drab gray color of the highway and the concrete tops of buildings. The camera passes steadily over a vast terrain full of different uniformly shaped, manmade structures. There is a variation in the depth of objects in the field of vision, while the names of cast and crew, in plain white text, float evenly in and out on the sidelines. When the title of the film is dropped in, it settles in the center of the screen and dominates the frame. The centrally dominating title is the only aspect that differentiates it, though, because it is in the same font and color as the others, only larger. The other names moving in and out of the frame represent the process that Dr. Cooley claims human interactions occur, from moment to moment and person to person. For example, one name appears on the left or right of the screen and then another opposite it, and for a moment they are the only two in the frame. Then, once they align from their
respective sides, they both move out to be replaced by two others who follow the same type of systematic movement.

In the background there is a growing musical set of what sounds like a choir accented with an organ. The music sounds very ominous and somewhat reminiscent of *The Phantom of the Opera* (Dir. Dwight H. Little, 21st Century Film Corporation, 1989) as the player hammers from key to key in much the same fashion as the infamous Phantom (Robert Englund). The choir bellows out a series of notes, rather than words, giving the illusion of a group wailing in unison. Together, the feeling which this imagery and sound elicits is very menacing, and brings the audience to a state of edginess as they begin their journey down the proverbial rabbit-hole of Candyman’s gruesome gullet.

The scene from above Chicago cuts to one of an entire frame filled with thousands of tiny bees working at something unseen behind the frame. At first one can not quite tell what it is that one is looking at, but the buzzing of the bees grows, even as the camera draws closer to them. A harsh and steady male voice speaks disembodied to his audience “they will say that I have shed innocent blood. What’s blood for if not for shedding?” (Candyman, 2:12). Where the previous scene showed a far away view of humans going about their business, this view seems similar with its bees. Because of the distance from the ground, the humans looked indistinguishable from one another, as do the bees in this scene. They are all moving, climbing over one another giving the illusion of a giant mass, no one discernable from the next. This subtle comparison between honeybees and humans seems purposeless at first. However, the dual nature of both creatures is similar in the way that bees can create sweet honey as well as venomous pain, whereas humans can also mimic such double-sided characteristics in their daily lives. It is
this depiction of nameless and indistinguishable humans, followed by a giant mass of 
bees that mirrors the human need to distinguish itself from those that surround it. The 
bees are constantly bumping into one another, just as humans do, and each becomes 
indistinguishable from the next.

The disembodied voice continues its speech, saying “With my hook for a hand I 
will split you from your groin to your gullet” (Candyman, 2:25). This threat could be 
taken as representing one of evisceration, but it can also be used as a threat of 
enlightenment to the suppressed sides of human nature because he is threatening to 
literally split one into two. If it were not for the scene which is cut to next, this hidden 
threat would not be discernible. Suddenly the scene cuts to a blue sky populated by bees 
in unrestricted flight. Previously they appeared to be encapsulated within the dark frame, 
but now they fly on deafeningly loud wings through a clear blue sky. The Candyman’s 
threat can be taken one of two ways, the obvious one of physical violence and death, or 
the one less clear that refers to two divided halves of a whole. Viewers come to see his 
threat as an offer, that when accepted can effectively achieve the result of individual 
distinguish-ability that each human so craves. He offers fame, immortality even, yet these 
effective lures do not detail the price of such distinction from the general masses of 
humanity, the sacrifice that must be given in order to achieve it: death. The scene cuts to 
another aerial view, this time of downtown Chicago from the side and at a distance. As 
one watches the scene unfold, what looks like a massive cloud of bees sweeps in and 
settles over the city like a giant shadow. The voice of the Candyman speaks again, more 
intimately this time, while the face of a woman begins to fade in from behind the scene. 
She is beautiful, with short cherub-like blond curls, looking like some kind of angel
watching over the city. Her eyes appear to be half open as if she has just woken up or is about to fall asleep. “I came for you” says the male voice, as if to the woman whose image begins to take over the frame (Candyman, 2:55).

The imagery in these first few moments represents the dualities of human language and sexuality through its careful introduction of Helen. The disembodied voice viewers come to recognize as that of the Candyman. Carl Jung’s wife and fellow psychoanalyst Emma Jung, collected his research and conducted more, which culminated in the publishing of two essays in the book entitled *Animus and Anima*. She states that “it”, meaning the Animus “comes to us as a voice”, and in the film, so too does the Candyman’s possession of Helen begin (Jung, E., 20). The moment when viewers hear his voice overlapped with an image of Helen, an intimate connection is suggested. Her portrayal above the city combined with her angelic appearance gives the viewer a perspective of observing an actual angel or spiritual presence. The view of the city fades out completely and the woman’s eyes open fully as she takes a long drag from a cigarette. This first contrast between an ideal angelic Helen and the actual Helen smoking a cigarette, makes obvious “the incongruity between the image and the image-bearer” (Jung, E., 11). Here viewers see that imagery can easily misrepresent ideas and concepts, in the same way that language often misrepresents what they mean because what they mean cannot accurately be described in words.

Helen sits against an off-white background as a young female voice speaks to her. “This is the scariest story I’ve ever heard, and it’s totally true” says the girl (Candyman, 3:02). There is a sudden glimmer of interest in the Helen’s eyes as she leans in, listening intently to the story about a babysitter named Clara who was allegedly murdered in
Indiana. It begins in short segments, with the girl narrating it as it plays out on screen. Clara (Marianna Elliott) was both blond and attractive, strangely similar to Helen herself, but obviously younger. One evening, she was babysitting an infant at the Johnson’s house. After putting the baby to bed, she invited Billy over (Ted Raimi). Billy was a local bad boy type. He was not Clara’s boyfriend; her boyfriend’s name was Michael. But Clara had always “had the hots for Billy” because he was a bad boy, which implies that Michael, her boyfriend, was not (Candyman, 3:24). The story goes on, and on this particular night, she was “gonna give Billy what she never gave to Michael” (Candyman, 3:35). It is easy to tell what is meant by this statement because as it is said, viewers see Clara in her bra running up the stairs pursued by Billy. She intended to give her virginity to Billy. Immediately there is a tension created because according to a moral society, the audience should disagree with what Clara’s intentions are. Clara leads Billy into the bathroom upstairs, as if she intends something intimate there. Instead, she asks him if he has ever heard of the Candyman. He says no. With a gleam in her eyes and a certain excited tension, one can see that she is sexually excited, yet it is unclear why. It seems to be some combination between the story and what she plans to do with Billy.

Clara tells the story of the Candyman with the eagerness of a child. She talks about his hook being “jammed into his bloody stump”, as if it is an intensely erotic thing (Candyman 3:45). She goes on to tell the rumor that if a person says his name five times into a mirror, he will appear behind you “breathing down your neck” (Candyman 3:56). Even Billy seems to respond as if the story somehow appeals to him, leaning forward but not actively diverting her.
Clara is an example of a traditional gothic heroine because according to the construction of gothic tales such as the Candyman, women of a society struggle to realize, yet suppress their sexual identities within a male-dominated value structure that seems to discourage their having one. According to Cynthia Griffin Wolff in her article “The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A form for Feminine Sexuality”, women have been traditionally preferred by men to be nonsexual creatures who are “basically ‘pure’ and ‘passive’” (99, 104). The fact that they are not naturally just “passive spectators” within the sexual realm, but do actually have an inner sexual identity is a disturbing problem to the men who must cope with it in contrast to their own. The allure of the gothic tale was that such stories reinforced “a woman’s sense of herself as an essentially sexual creature, something that society has often been at pains to deny” while simultaneously presenting the heroine as an acceptable female specimen in the end (Wolff, 99). Because of such assertions, Clara comparatively believes that she, as the “heroine” of her own story, will become “someone” once “she is united with such a man” (Wolff, 105). However, in having sex with a bad boy, she accepts the social construct that feminine sexuality is something that is “both forbidden and dirty”, and that it is something to be suppressed and hidden (Wolff, 110). Her choice of a bad boy as her first lover also shows the more “primitive, narcissistic, amoral element of raw passion” that must be tamed in realizing her socially acceptable sexual identity (Wolff, 108). By veering away from having sex with her boyfriend Michael, she is attempting to gain access to a more passionate sexuality than is encouraged by her society. Further, her use of the tale of the Candyman as foreplay reinforces the idea that “he may well be seen as a projection of her own most primitive feelings” about sexual desires (Wolff, 109).
For Clara and Billy, there is something about the sex and violence coinciding that stimulates them. This horrific tale is actually a form of foreplay. It is possible that Clara imagines a sex act to be much the same as a hook being jammed into bleeding flesh, especially when compared to the Freudian female as having been born castrated and therefore lacking because she does not have a penis. The hook would first represent the penis, which through penetration would ‘complete’ the vaginal ‘stump’. Secondly, the hook would signify a phallic object, or the “Other” that might counteract her sense of lack (Rose, 32). Also, according to Elizabeth Young in her article “Here Comes the Bride”, she argues that the monster comes to represent “the explanatory force of male anxieties about castration and about the maternal body” (Young, 310). Billy’s interest can also be seen to represent his fearful fascination with the concept of feminine lack. The seemingly strange act of storytelling in this case actually makes sense because Clara has been trained to view her own sexuality as socially abjected. Billy’s interest in the story also shows his own undeniable fascination with the idea of feminine sexuality and the unknown Other that represents it. This act of storytelling may also exhibit the reason why Clara does not finish telling the legend of the Candyman and what becomes of his victims. She does not know what to expect once she has had sex with Billy.

Clara’s use of a horrific story to instigate her first intimate sexual encounter continues as she asks Billy if he wants to summon the Candyman. She approaches the bathroom mirror in her virginal white bra, accented by a small crucifix around her neck. Billy approaches her from behind and viewers see their reflections overlap each other. The reflection tells the story as their actual bodies, backs turned to the audience, dominate the screen. The viewer is forced to look at both their front, through the
reflection, and their backs at the forefront of the camera. This overlapping image of them simultaneously reflected on each other would not be possible without the use of the mirror.

Billy looks into the mirror and says “Candyman, Candyman…..” and as he says this, Clara moves his hands from her lower hips, up toward her breasts, exciting him and urging him on (Candyman 4:08). Billy’s eyes are closed as he continues from the second to the third ‘Candyman’, so he is not actually looking into the mirror or noticing its reflection. Clara, though, is gazing intensely at their reflection, urging Billy on by moving his hands further up her stomach. Just as he approaches the fifth repetition, he is fumbling to remove her bra. The strange part is that they are both gazing at their reflections now, as if mesmerized with a narcissistic fascination of their images framed in an overlap, each one attempting to dominate the other. As she suddenly turns around and looks at Billy, she tells him that “no one ever got past four” (Candyman, 4:26). She is metaphorically telling him that this is her first time. She tells him to go back downstairs because she has a surprise for him, which makes the viewer wonder why she brought him upstairs to begin with.

Billy finds himself sitting on the sofa downstairs swigging from a bottle of beer. The look on his face is amused, as if he does not understand what is going on. The film cuts to a scene of Clara still in the bathroom gazing at her reflection in the mirror again. She is alone, and as the story continues, “I do not know why, but she said his name the last time” (Candyman, 4:49). The viewers watch as Clara looks down in the mirror, and they see a band of gold on her left ring finger. Traditionally, wearing a ring on this particular finger would symbolize fidelity. In this case, her wearing it just mocks its
symbolism as she prepares to cheat on her boyfriend. It seems that for a moment, bad boy Billy is not quite enough, and so she invokes the bad boy to trump all bad boys – the Candyman. She looks back up at her reflection, tilts her head to the side seductively, and speaks the Candyman’s name the one remaining time to the mirror. It is as if she is daring him to be real, as she stares at her own reflection she is daring the prospect of completion to be real. There is a reason why Michael never got to this intimate point with her. She seems to be hoping or daring Billy to be different from Michael, to make her feel complete.

Clara looks away from the mirror to turn out the lights and go to Billy, but as she glances to the light switch the viewer alone sees the shadowy figure behind her reflection. It is that of a black male figure, almost like a shadow at first, with clear and bright eyes glaring menacingly at Clara’s back. Where the viewer can see Clara’s back and know she is real, they cannot see anything of this other figure but his reflection in the glass. Half of his reflected face is indistinguishable, separating him into two parts: the visible and the invisible. The scene cuts to Billy downstairs, synchronized with a blood-curdling scream from the unseen Clara. He looks up and sees blood bubbling through the ceiling and gushing downward through the hole that its pooling has created. Clara and the baby were gruesomely murdered by the Candyman, each of their bodies split down the middle by his hook. Billy got away, but what he saw that night caused him to go crazy. His whole head of bad boy hair supposedly went white from shock.

This stereotypical urban legend portrays a great deal of symbolism and metaphor about the human sense of identity and its socially conflicted nature. The carefully orchestrated placement of Clara in the forefront of the mirror’s reflection shows an
interesting comparison, first with Billy behind her as a symbol for what she desires, completion through the Other, and secondly with the shadow image of the Candyman behind her in the same location Billy previously occupied. The placement of both figures in the same position and proximity to Clara is crucial to the message being sent: Clara cannot see herself as complete as long as she believes that space must be filled. There is an Other in existence which will always remain near to her own perceived and desirable image of herself, and she will be more aware of her most desirable reflection than the shadow cast by it: her shadow self. She is so fascinated with her reflection that she only sees the part society wants her to see, and in so doing, misses the shadow which is inevitably attached to it. The Candyman’s depiction is a parody of the same analogy because half of his own face is in shadow as well, mimicking her own lack of recognition regarding certain hidden or suppressed aspects of herself, mainly her sexual identity.

The act of Clara telling a story over what should be her first intimate sexual encounter emphasizes her attempt at using language to contain her sexual identity, something which is inextricably impossible. The threat that the Candyman will “split you from your groin to your gullet” carries with it an insinuation of linking sexuality (figuratively represented by the groin) and language (figuratively represented by the gullet) through a penetrating Phallic bridge. Helen stops her tape recorder and concludes the interview as the girl says “my roommate’s boyfriend knows him” (Candyman 5:18). Helen smiles.

Moving into the film, the viewer can begin to see the similarities between the short story of Clara’s death and Helen’s various encounters with the Candyman. Each encounter begins with summoning him, which Helen does in her bathroom in the
company of Bernadette. This follows Helen’s discovery that Lincoln Village, her apartment building, was originally a housing project just like Cabrini Green. She identifies the exact structural likenesses between the two. In removing her bathroom mirror, she is trying to prove to Bernadette that it would have been easy for Ruthie Jean’s killer to enter through her medicine cabinet because it is the only thing separating each apartment from the other. Her neighboring condo is vacant. She pushes out the adjoining cabinet to show that the next apartment is identical to hers, and disturbingly easy to access. After proving her point and replacing her cabinet, she and Bernadette dare each other to summon the Candyman. They both alternate between looking at their own reflections in the mirror and that of their friend as they speak his name four times. Bernadette chickens out on the fifth and so Helen leans forward to win the dare. With a mischievous look in her eye, she speaks his name the final time while looking directly into the eyes of her reflection. The viewer expects that the Candyman will immediately appear to gut them both, but he does not. Yet.

The Candyman’s first appearance to Helen is one that is emphasized with short moments of disorientation. Once she and Bernadette make the connection between Cabrini Green and Lincoln Village, her own condo complex, they decide to visit the site of the murder to investigate further. They manage to locate Ruthie Jean’s old apartment and find that Helen’s expensive condo is a twin for this abandoned and dilapidated apartment in the ghetto. Helen moves into the bathroom and successfully removes the mirror to climb through the hole to the adjacent apartment. On the other side of the mirror, Helen walks quietly through a graffiti-covered apartment. She snaps photos every few moments, causing the screen to blank for just a moment each time. She climbs
through a hole in one of the walls and the viewer is shown a full screen shot of the other side of the wall which she is climbing through. Surrounding the hole which she is framed in, there is a gigantic image of a black man. The head is all that is portrayed, and the hole is his mouth raised up in a soundless scream. The whites of his eyes could portray pain or release, but the viewers are not sure which. In his mouth, the viewers see Helen struggle to crawl through, unaware of her placement within the illustration. Once she exits his gigantic mouth, she turns around and seems more intrigued than alarmed by where she has just been. She steps back and snaps a photo. The screen goes blank again. These moments have been described by Fred Botting, in his article “Candygothic” as a type of non-existence because at the moment when the camera flashes, everything ceases to be. As Helen takes in the state of refuse and deterioration between shots, she is merely a spectator, both present and not from one moment to the next. The momentarily white screen comes to represent our nonexistence through its whiteness, and simultaneously our constructed identities are revealed as meaningless frauds.

Each apartment is an inverted reflection of the other, a projection of everything which it is not. This graffiti covered apartment should be a mirror of the vacant one connected to Helen’s own condo through the hole behind her mirror. Although in contrast there is a definite presence here and Ruthie Jean’s apartment is empty, whereas Helen’s is not. This pair of doubles represents the human tendency to divide things that it perceives to be opposite, when they are actually just two halves of a whole. These two halves tend to be sectioned according to societal views of each with regard to good and bad. The bad is represented also as the undesirable or abjected. According to Julia Kristeva in her article “Powers of Horror,” the abject is represented by “a massive and sudden emergence
of uncanniness” (Kristeva, 2). Robin Wood emphasizes that racial others are ambiguously grouped into this category of ‘uncanniness’ where we project parts of our denied selves. With regard to Helen, the Candyman’s blackness, his bloody hook, and his unexplainable abilities at being wherever he wishes to be, “familiar” as they “might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries” her “as radically separate, loathsome” and so she cannot help but think that what he offers is “not me. Not that” yet simultaneously know that it is “not nothing, either” (Kristeva, 2). Lincoln Village, where Helen resides is representative of the white community, while Cabrini Green represents the black ghetto, its perceived social opposite. In this example racism comes into play in doubling. The black inhabitants of Cabrini come to symbolize the abject Other for the white community of Lincoln Village, and vice versa, the white inhabitants of Lincoln Village are the Other for Cabrini Green. As Robin Wood argues, these divisions between races become vehicles for projections. A difference of skin color becomes a representation of that which is not only different, but Other. In the same way that we confine undesirable social traits, we begin to associate them with anything or anyone else that is different from us, and therefore we project such traits onto these other bodies. This is where the issue of race becomes an issue of abjection, rather than just difference because being black becomes being less desirable, less socially ideal. Elizabeth Young states that “black men” tend to be “depicted as ‘subhuman and feral’…nameless characters setting out on a rampage”, hence the transformation of a person into a nightmare and a community into a ghetto when fundamentally they are actually the same as their perceived ideal white counterparts (Young, 322). This is a constructed social
delusion meant to contain the abject sides of human identity within a body that is and is not connected to it.

Helen stares at the eyes of the painting in a similar way to how she looked at her own when she spoke the Candyman’s name the fifth time. Suddenly she looks down and brings her hand to her forehead, as if in pain. She is shown in what appears to be a moment of disorientation as she looks at the figure on the wall. She pulls her eyes away from it and she looks around, stepping over piles of what looks like garbage and decaying furniture. She sees a pile of wrapped candy, laid out as if in an offering to the Candyman. She bends down and opens one of the candies to find a razorblade driven into the chocolate.

When Helen takes that perilous step through the hole in the wall, she unknowingly steps into the world of the ‘Candygothic’ (Botting, 133). This is the moment where she encounters that “locus of constitution and dissolution, pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, limit and transgression” (Botting, 136). This apartment full of graffiti, refuse, and candies riddled with razorblades represents the divided identity, it embodies the denied and abjected that is always connected somehow. Because this apartment stands as a mirror for the one that supposedly lies vacant and is connected to Helen’s own condo, the viewers could assume that such things would also exist there if she dared to venture into it. This is the darkness of someone else’s self, yet it simultaneously represents her own that she can only approach if it is projected outside of herself onto a seeming Other. This brusque illustration is her Animus projection given form. The repetitive use of language to describe ourselves in a way that someone else can
understand is futile. This is why her Animus is voiceless and impotent much the same as our pursuit of an effective way to convey our true and whole identities is, in our pursuit of the Phallic Other that we believe would complete its portrayal. The mythical depiction of the Candyman and the fact that there are offerings before it shows a desire to fill its emptiness, to sate its hunger, to say what we and the viewer can never quite manage to say because language itself is inadequate. This voiceless yet deafening illustration’s message can be seen to represent “the linguistic ‘I’” that “disappears with the cessation of speech”, as Norbert Wiley puts it in his article “The Self as Self-Fulfilling Prophecy” (Wiley, 509). The Candyman’s mouth represents the black hole where all our abjected traits are flung in hopes that they will disappear and leave us only with our ideal selves.

As Helen’s camera flashes cause even her own existence to cease for a moment, so does this open mouth cause language to cease eternally because it will never say what we and the viewer desire it to say. What we want it to say cannot be said because our ideal self only exists in the form of concepts, images, flashes of recognition that cannot be described. It doesn’t actually exist, in fact, in any place but our imaginations and because of this, defining the linguistic ‘I’ is impossible. Its meaning changes each and every time it is used because “all those features which are unknown or unconscious to the subject would be missing. A total picture would have to include these” and including them all is impossible (Jung, C., 142). Each time an attempt is made to convey our own definitions for ‘I’ there is something lacking, something unsaid and un-sayable in its declaration. The purpose behind such an image can be seen to emphasize the ‘I’s only alternative to “disclose something other, a space, an absence within representation” (Botting, 147). The empty space, the gullet Helen found herself passing through, “can be
defined as the ‘remainder’ of the subject, something which is always left over but which has no content as such” (*Feminine Sexuality*, Lacan, 32). It is the no-man’s land of language, the ‘I’ that has no true body, “the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known, the self” (Jung, C., 142).

Carl Jung argues that the self can never be truly known without knowing all of its parts, and in this scene the viewer can surmise that Helen begins to recognize one of the parts she did not account for: the Animus. This creature of our ego “seems to arise in the first place from the collision between the somatic factor and the environment, and once established as a subject, it goes on developing from further collisions with the outer world and the inner” (Jung, C., 141). Emma Jung states that the Animus embodies a woman’s spirituality, and that because of this, “to the purely feminine mind, the spirit stands for what is strange and unknown” (Jung, E., 28). In short, the female’s masculine identity becomes embodied wherever she projects her Animus. As in the past, women have used god figures or kings to project onto, now they have evolved to create a spiritual figure that meets their changing individual needs. As the story goes, Helen gazed at the image and “she knew him without doubt. She had known him all along” (Winter, 367). Her imagined foreknowledge of him is emphasized in her immediate response to the image, her consciousness was “fascinated by it, held captive, as if hypnotized” much in the same way as Lacan describes the infant in front of the mirror, which is drawn to its own reflected image (Jung, C., 155). “This state of being fascinated by another and wholly under his influence is well known under the term ‘transference,’ which is nothing else than projection,” especially when referring to the Animus character (Jung, E., 10). According to both Cooley and Lacan, these projections, which are seemingly made by
this specific part of our psyche, are what we use to solidify our own sense of identity. The Animus makes projections of its perceived self in order to draw the woman’s interest. Because “for the primitive in every woman, a man distinguished by physical prowess becomes an animus figure” (Jung, E., 3), Helen projects her Animus onto the form of the “phantasy figure” of the Candyman.

When Helen first visualizes the Candyman, she is transfixed in an almost painful way. The Candyman “appears as a marker of racial” as well as sexual “difference” (Young, 310). His blackness and masculinity come to represent Helen’s darkness and sexuality, which she has suppressed and abjected. This representation accentuates his monstrousness as being not only his blackness, but his brutality and strength because of it. If he is a reflection of Helen’s darker self, a representation of her sexuality, then her sexuality is seen through her eyes as monstrous in its own strength. Therefore, in the moments when these two characters meet eyes, it is “a moment of doubled self-recognition, whereby what the woman sees is really her own monstrosity, reflected back, medusa-like, in the figure of the monster” (Young, 328). She fears the power she could have if she did not abject these socially undesirable traits. She recognizes his difference, and in turn her own sexual difference, as being powerful beyond words.

Helen’s subconscious choice of the Candyman to project her Animus onto makes sense if one considers her frustration regarding the academic world, and her internal feelings of inadequacy to the male side of it. This frustration is demonstrated in a short scene where she is at dinner with her husband and his colleague, Professor Phillip Purcell. Professor Purcell must oversee Helen’s thesis, and when he offers his assistance, she tells him that she and Bernadette are about to “bury” him. Following this outburst of
over confidence, Professor Purcell replies with a series of questions regarding her study that bring to light the fact that he actually does have information she does not possess, and that it is extremely vital to her thesis. He condescendingly tells her the history of the Candyman, which is something she had yet to uncover, and his foreknowledge leaves her at a shameful disadvantage. This incident shows why she began to project all of her feelings of powerlessness onto the vibrant image of the Candyman, and why here is where her interplay with such a character began.

The myth of the Candyman is just a tale created after the horrible death of a real man named Daniel Robitaille. In the film he is referred to as the “son of a slave,” which logically means he was a black man (Candyman, 29:50). His family became rich when his father invented a “device for the mass producing of shoes,” and so he had more opportunity in life than most other black men of his time (Candyman, 29:55). He was said to be an accomplished artist and painted portraits for rich families. Apparently, “he was commissioned by a wealthy landowner to capture his daughter’s virginal beauty” and as the story goes, “they fell deeply in love and she became pregnant” (Candyman, 30:30-41). When the father found out about the lovers, he had several thugs capture Daniel. They sawed “off his right hand with a rusty blade” and jammed a hook into the bloody stump (Candyman, 31:08). Following an already terrible sequence of torture, they covered Daniel’s bleeding body in honey from a nearby apiary and smashed all of the hives so they would attack Daniel. He was then stung to death by thousands of angry bees. They burned him and scattered his ashes over Cabrini Green (Candyman 31:45). From these events sprang many various versions of the legend of the vengeful figure that springs from mirrors brandishing a bloody hook.
There are a few obvious reasons why Helen would subconsciously project her Animus figure onto the Candyman, for instance, his open mouth. Human mouths give form to language, and his mouth seems to encompass its entirety in one single, scream of disconnected futility. Despite his apparent silence, he conveys something that surpasses Helen’s own ability to express her identity. Through his silence he has acquired a level of dominion over language itself in his rejection of it when presenting himself, and as Emma Jung argues:

A man who rules over the ‘word’ or over ‘meaning’ represents an essentially intellectual tendency because word and meaning correspond par excellence to mental capacities. Such a man exemplifies the animus in the narrower sense, understood as being a spiritual guide and as representing the intellectual gifts of the woman (4).

Essentially, using the Candyman to project her Animus onto, offers Helen access to the deeper parts of herself. She will come to discover that through seeing those darker regions as projected onto such an exacting figure, they are magnified. Linda Williams asserts in her article “When the Woman Looks”,

The power and potency of the monster body in many classic horror films should not be interpreted as an eruption of the normally repressed animal sexuality of the civilized male (the monster as double for the male viewer and characters in the film), but as the feared power and potency of a different kind of sexuality (the monster as double for the woman) (20).

Because of their similar social status as lacking due to either skin color or gender, Helen and the Candyman function to mirror each other’s possible power in their difference. In other words, Helen comes face to face with the monstrousness that her sexual identity represents through the similarly socially subjected body of the black man. It is no mistake that earlier, an illustration of his open mouth literally produced Helen.
The fact that all of the men she struggles for equality with are white academics, her choice of a black male artist might also be because he is the opposite of what she wishes to compete with. However, her choice also emphasizes an “overvaluation of the masculine,” because her wish to gain the semblance of an equal footing with her male counterparts through engagement with a male animus figure simultaneously places masculinity in a more powerful position than femininity (Jung, E., 24). Her choice of the Candyman image to project upon symbolizes her recognition of a value system that is socially perpetuated. In addition, his blackness can be seen as representation of the unknown, which is strongly associated with the nature of the archetype of the Animus. Emma Jung elaborates on this moment of transference as follows:

Projection means not only the transference of an image to another person, but also of the activities that go with it, so that a man to whom the animus image has been transferred is expected to take over all the functions that have remained undeveloped in the woman in question, whether the thinking function, or the power to act, or responsibility toward the outside world (10).

Clearly, the Candyman fits Helen’s needs as an Animus figure, not just for the fact that he is contra sexual to Helen, but because his blackness emphasizes her own internal conflict with how she wants to be seen and treated by others (for instance, good as opposed to bad or intelligent as opposed to ignorant). He is the exact opposite of her perceived ideal image in all ways through his gender as male, his racial blackness, and his violent character. These are the intangible sides of her identity that she has abjected, and “the abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to ‘I’”, or what we perceive as our ideal ‘I’ (Kristeva, 1). Through embracing her own masculine traits, her rage at being treated as less intelligent, and her suppressed violent reactions to such treatment, she gains the ability to combat her feelings of inadequacy and shame.
Following her first encounter with the image of the Candyman, Helen returns to Cabrini Green alone in order to take more photographs. Unfortunately a local drug lord discovers her presence in a public restroom rumored to have been the scene of one of Candyman’s atrocities. Just after she photographs the restroom walls painted with fecal matter and other abhorrent substances, the drug lord and two other men beat her until she is left in a pool of blood on the dirty floor. She later identifies the man who beat her and has him jailed. When she was beaten, the camera she had been taking photographs with was smashed, but Bernadette managed to save some of the images. She leaves Helen walking to her car through a parking garage, peering at the slides as she walks. Suddenly, once she is completely alone in the garage, viewers hear a low, sensuous voice speaking her name.

He calls her name once from a distance, but she hears it as if he’s right behind her, “Helen...Helen” (Candyman, 43:56). She turns to address the person speaking and finds no one, but then she sees an indistinct figure across the garage. Just as if he were stepping out of her imagination, viewers see his polished leather shoes and the fur-trimmed hem of his overcoat. He speaks her name again and steps forward: “Helen, I came for you” (Candyman, 44:22). The act of him speaking her name shows his recognition of her and gives voice to her as an identity, a whole, because “a word, also, just like an idea, a thought, has the effect of reality upon undifferentiated minds” (Jung, E., 19). This naming of a person as an identity explains why speaking the Candyman’s name also brings him to life. This act of recognizing each other as autonomous beings is the root of their attraction to each other. Because of the types of social stereotypes Elizabeth Young identifies that are constructed around black men, characteristics such as
brutishness and physical strength, Helen sees in the Candyman the kind of superhuman strength she believes would put her above the men she is competing with. She also sees him as a vessel that contains the power over identity and sexuality that she so desires to attain which, she believes, would give her the ability to rise above the giant mass of undifferentiated minds that constantly engulf her in their shadow. Contrarily, the Candyman sees Helen as the vessel of his freedom and purpose. Through attaining Helen as his own, he believes he would re-confirm his own masculine power that he lost upon his brutal murder at the hands of the white man. She resembles the idol he coveted in life, and that he still covets in death, and he believes that in her he would finally achieve true immortality. The ultimate flaw in these two characters, as inverted mirrors of each other, is that what they believe they will find in the other is constructed by the social system that they desire to escape from. Helen only represents what the Candyman wants because she is what he is not, and vice versa, Helen is drawn to the Candyman because she believes he will complete her somehow. What neither of them wants to realize, is that these things they desire and wish to find in each other as the Other are simply their darker or lighter selves. They are the selves that complement and complete them, but have voluntarily been abjected and projected outward.

As he looks at Helen, she returns his gaze. Previously she looked away from the illustration of him on the wall, trying to fight its pull. In this moment the gaze cannot be diverted, because it shows them facing one another, “each the other’s unbearable inverted image” (Botting, 149). Just as the child is transfixed with its mirror image, so is the adult fixated upon its inner self projected outward. Helen asks “Do I know you?” Candyman responds saying “No…no. But you doubted me” (Candyman, 44:44). Despite the
seeming inability for the ego to realize their connection, these pieces of the psyche already “live in the illusion that they are related to one another in a most individual way” (Jung, C., 154). They recognize each other as opposites and this gives the illusion of an intimate connection.

The Candyman continues to walk forward, and as he draws closer, Helen is bombarded with lightening flash images. First she sees the gaping mouth from the graffiti painting of the Candyman in Ruthie Jean’s old apartment, simultaneously imprinted over the living figure of the mysterious black man approaching her. Second, viewers see flashes of a hostile, red-hued Helen shown on top of her current, pale look of confusion. He speaks her name, making her feel more real than she did before, because “sometimes a meaning is communicated to us directly from the unconscious, not through images or symbols, but through flashes of knowledge already formulated in words” (Jung, E., 27).

Helen tells him she has to go and he tells her she does not need to leave yet. She tells him that she is late for something. It is as if she is fighting his allure, but in the end she falls prey to it. Helen stands inactively, allowing him to approach. She seems more and more enthralled the closer he gets, almost as if she is seduced by him and his voice. He speaks to her, saying “You were not content with the stories...and so I was obliged to come” (Candyman, 45:05). He continues, asking a question she does not understand: “Be my victim” (Candyman, 45:17). At this moment, he reveals his hook, dripping with blood and protruding from a fleshy stump within the wide sleeve of his fur coat, representing him as literally lacking and castrated in relation to her male-perceived lack. He is very intent upon possessing her, resembling and playing the stereotypical brutish black man. Although, through revealing his disfigurement he is also putting himself and his very
existence up for her to respond to and possibly reject. He beckons her to come to him again, pleading "be my victim" (Candyman, 45:24). She does not seem to understand that for her to submit would entail her being ultimately possessed by her own Animus figure. There is a section of her personality asking her to submit to it, and another that warns her against doing so, because letting herself be possessed even for a moment produces “the most unwholesome effects” (Jung, E., 13).

In some instances of extraordinary tension, such as in Helen’s case, too much psychic energy is directed at her Animus when she desires to be considered equal to the men in her life. As Candyman continues his seduction of her, he says: “I am the writing on the wall. The whisper in the classroom. Without these things, I am nothing” (Candyman, 45:29). The scene cuts to the image of the swarming bees, working at that unseen thing behind the frame, as if they are in a frenzy to reveal it. This strategic cut to an image of imprisonment could be taken as his recognition that he is as an embodiment of the abjected sides of her personality struggling for freedom. It also reiterates her desire for distinction from the masses. The scene ends with him saying “now I will shed innocent blood. Come with me” as Helen blacks out (Candyman, 45:40).

The events that follow her loss of consciousness reflect her first active confrontation with the unbridled cruelty of the Candyman and how it relates to her own violence. She wakes up on Anne-Marie’s bathroom floor covered by her coat and lying in a pool of blood. She jumps up in a panic, checking her own body for signs of violence. She has disconnected and not able to tell if she is hurt badly enough for the blood to be hers. She opens the door to exit the room and discovers Anne-Marie’s massive guard dog’s severed head on the floor in a pool of its own blood. She hears Anne-Marie
screaming hysterically in the next room. Upon opening the door to the bedroom, Anne-Marie sees her and lunges at her from her bloody baby crib, and a room splattered in gore. Helen grabs a knife to subdue Anne-Marie, and just as she has her on the ground, the police break down the door. Helen is arrested and taken to the police station. She remembers nothing, aside from waking up on the floor and not knowing where she was. She comes to the conclusion that she could not be capable of such violence, and endeavors to prove it.

Helen is seated at home smoking, when she retrieves the box of slides from her purse, images that might provide some clarity on what is happening to her. She sets up her projector and begins to sift through them. After moving through a few, she realizes that all but the first few have been too damaged to be useful. She clicks back through the viable ones and comes to one where she took a photo of herself taking the photo, while looking directly into Ruthie Jean’s mirror. The mirror is covered in grime and fingerprint smudges, so that Helen’s reflection looks disfigured, and because the camera covers most of her face, one can only see her hair and her upper body. She sees something that bothers her, but cannot discern what it is. She focuses the projector closer onto her reflection in the mirror, and notices something behind her, reflected in the dirty glass. She brings the lens to focus on what looked like a shadow, and viewers see the frightening image of the Candyman emerge. This scene of Helen bringing the Candyman into focus is almost a perfect mirror of the earlier one of Clara looking at her own reflection but missing the Candyman intimately close to her within it. Here, Helen not only sees him, but recognizes him and is afraid of him. This fearful reaction is an evolution from the first tale of his appearance within Clara’s mirror. The fingerprints on Ruthie Jean’s
mirror, another symbol associated with identity, subtly highlight her recognition and identification with him as representing the ‘shadow’ attached to her personality.

The image of this spectre depicted behind her is accompanied by a feeling of familiarity that is altogether overwhelming for her consciousness. Helen steps away from the projector, opens the drapes to let in some light and finds herself staring down the hallway at her own bathroom mirror. As she begins to walk toward it, the perspective switches to that of the mirror reflecting her image approaching. This change is so subtle that the spectator almost does not realize it has happened, which is another clever way of allowing them to see things from a perspective they would not normally be able to access. Helen looks at her reflection, then at the areas of the mirror which her image does not dominate, as if she is looking for him there. As the spectator watches her scrutinize the mirror, it is important to consider why “the mirror image is central to Lacan’s account of subjectivity, because its apparent smoothness and totality is a myth” (Feminine Sexuality, Lacan, 30). Helen is capable of realizing that her reflection might show her more than she previously thought possible, that it might reflect something she is not aware of. She opens the cabinet that the mirror covers, and looks behind her as if afraid. Just as she turns back to the cabinet, the Candyman’s hooked arm erupts from behind it. She pushes back from it and runs out the door, shutting it behind her as if such a barrier would keep him trapped inside. She flees her apartment seeking help and finds him standing at the end of the hallway outside. “Be my victim”, he beckons, presenting his hook (Candyman 57:56). She retreats back into her apartment and locks the door. She attempts to call the police, and as she sits waiting for an answer grabs a kitchen knife identical to the one she was found in possession of at Anne-Marie’s. Behind her viewers see the Candyman standing
quietly, waiting for her to realize his presence there. She turns around and he asks “Do you believe in me?” (Candyman 58:13). She steps backward with the knife, and pleads “keep away from me!” (Candyman 58:16). He steps closer and she retreating further from him as he continues:

Your disbelief destroyed the faith of my congregation. Without them I am nothing. So I was obliged to come. And now I must kill you. Your death would be a tale to frighten children. To make lovers cling closer in their rapture…come with me and be immortal (58:29).

By the time he is finished with his speech, he has Helen cornered on the floor of the kitchen. He reaches around the nape of her neck with his grotesque hook and pierces the skin, causing blood to flow thickly. She cannot seem to act against him, and only keens in pain as his hook digs deeper. She is overpowered by him.

Helen sees the Candyman’s power and because she cannot fight against him, causes her desire for such power to grow. The scene cuts to Bernadette holding flowers and knocking on Helen’s door. Helen seems to be too weak to warn her away, although she is trying to in a rasping whisper from the floor. Candyman has successfully subdued her. Bernadette enters the apartment to find Helen bleeding, and as she turns around, she sees the Candyman between her and the exit. A look passes between them and she is afraid. It seems that he is burning his gaze into her, “trying to impress” himself upon her mind, just as Cooley argues we all do to each other throughout life in order to assert our identities (Cooley, 181). The Candyman disappears after leaving Helen with a proposal, that if she surrenders to him he will return baby Anthony unharmed. Trevor returns home to find Bernadette’s broken and bloody body lying in pieces on the floor. Helen is sprawled out a few feet away, spattered in blood, and waving the butcher knife in her
hand as if warding him off. It appears as if she has completely incoherent, and in an
attack of madness has murdered her best friend. He is horrified. She is arrested and taken
to the hospital in a state of delirium. As she lies on a gurney in shock, her hands are
bound together as Trevor walks beside her through a hallway. She clings to his hands as
if he is her lifesaver, but suddenly he lets go and two guards shut and lock a door she has
just been brought through. She yells for him, but he has left her. She struggles on the
gurney and the orderlies pushing her hold her down as they wheel her into a room. They
roll her from a gurney onto a hospital bed with leather wrist and ankle restraints. She is
tied down in an isolated room, and she begins to panic when the orderlies leave her alone.
“You can’t leave me here! I can’t defend myself!” she says (Candyman 1:03:40).
Suddenly the Candyman is there, suspended above her, and she becomes quiet and
sluggish for a moment as he speaks to her. “What do the good know? Except what the
bad teach them by their excesses?” She seems to be transfixed, her eyes moving too
slowly as he speaks. “Allow me just a kiss…just one exquisite kiss”, and with the request
she begins to yell for help. He has moved to hover beside her and then he rolls
underneath the bed. She is terrified and calls out “he’s under the bed” as if she is afraid of
the bogeyman, and yet instead of coming to her aid, they sedate her.

When Trevor abandons Helen she is powerless, and this intense vulnerability
drives her pursuit of the Candyman and her ultimate surrender to him. It leaves her even
more vulnerable and confused. Her inability to fend off the Candyman has nothing to do
with her being physically restrained, as was shown in her apartment when he attacked her
and killed Bernadette. She was not able to defend herself even when free. It is no accident
that she has been separated from Trevor and Bernadette, because he has separated her
from every person who was a grounding force in her life; now she is alone, except for his inescapable and consuming presence.

The Candyman’s appearance above her, parallel to her body, also emphasizes his status as a mirror or inversion of her. As he floats above her, he asks her his question about the good and the bad, and in the way he turns the phrase, he emphasizes their dependence upon each other. Because what is the concept of good worth without bad to contrast it? Then he asks for a kiss, a bridging of the gap between them, and she knows he is not asking for a simple kiss. She knows that “at the same time, ‘identity’ and ‘wholeness’ remain precisely at the level of fantasy”, and that if she gives in to him, she would lose the self she knows in favor of another one which she fears (*Feminine Sexuality*, Lacan, 32). His request for a kiss is what scares her out of her momentary shock, and brings her back to struggling. Once the orderlies come into the room, she cannot see him anymore, but she knows where he is. It does not matter, though, because the sedation kicks in and she loses consciousness.

Next, viewers find her waking up alone in the same room a month later once again powerless against everyone that surrounds her, and completely stripped of significance. She seems calm as the orderlies put her in a wheelchair where she is restrained again, and told she has going to see Dr. Burke (Stanley DeSantis), her clinical psychiatrist. He sits behind a desk and tells her that she has been in and out of consciousness for about a month as they stabilized her with thorazine. He also informs her that she has been charged with Bernadette’s murder. He then shows her the video footage of her first night at the hospital, where she was tormented by the floating Candyman. She watches herself struggle against the leather restraints on the bed and
hears herself yelling fanatically that he’s “under the bed” (Candyman 1:08:37). This video representation of her last memory is missing something. There is a lack in its story because the Candyman is unseen, yet she is certain that he was there. His absence within the frame of the video emphasizes even more, the idea that there is something omitted in the conversion of reality into film, just as there is something missing in our representation of ourselves to others. She is confronted with the idea that she has imagined the Candyman, and that if this is true, she is a delusional killer. However, in this context, her delusion is given a physical existence meant to give her something she is unable to find outside of her own imagination.

Dr. Burke challenges Helen to prove that she is “not capable” of murder despite the undertones of doubt in her own assertions (Candyman 1:09:23). There is substantial evidence against her but she says that “no matter what is going wrong, I know one thing – that no part of me, no matter how hidden – is capable of that. I can prove it” (Candyman 1:09:23). However, her proof depends on the momentarily questionable existence of the Candyman. Dr. Burke does not believe her, and so she turns to the cabinet mirror on the wall and looks at herself as she summons the Candyman once more. In the same way that Clara called his name that final time, as if daring him, now Helen is doing the same. She is daring him to be real, to prove she has not insane and to give her back a little bit of power. The proof she offers is not that she is not capable of murder exactly, but rather that someone else is guilty of it.

When Helen summoned the Candyman the first time, and he did not appear, it set the precedent that he might not show up this time as well. Even the audience doubts her sanity at this moment. Unfortunately for Dr. Burke, and despite a few moments of doubt
on Helen’s part, her Candyman appears in the act of gutting the doctor. He bows to her and tells her “you are mine now”, and she does seem to be at his mercy (Candyman 1:10:53). He tells her, “tonight our congregation shall witness a new miracle”, as he severs her restraints and frees her (Candyman 1:10:56). Then he is sucked out the window, leaving her a means of escape that she utilizes hastily, causing her to become a fugitive from the law. While he has freed her, the “Candyman is also implacable, a recurring nightmare who invades Helen’s fragile world again and again until all of its lies are revealed” (Winter, 373). She runs home only to find herself betrayed, this time by the one man she believed she could trust.

She finds Trevor repainting the condo with his new girlfriend Stacy, and Helen realizes that she has no home to return to. She frightens them both in her anger, telling Trevor that he was all she had had left. Then she leaves. She contemplates suicide as she stands on a bridge above a river, but restrains herself as she remembers the Candyman’s offer of a bargain. He whispers to her unseen, saying “they will all abandon you. All you have left is my desire for you” (Candyman 1:17:18). He knows that she is alone and that he is all she can run to, which is exactly the way that he wants it.

Helen returns one final time to Cabrini Green. She goes straight to the apartment next to Ruthie Jean’s, where she first saw the Candyman depicted in graffiti. She crawls through a series of holes, and each room is lit by small white candles. It almost seems romantic until her exploration reveals a chain baring several meat
hooks. The walls are spattered with blood and stand as evidence of the terrible things that have happened there. She grabs a hook and grips it in her right hand, as if it somehow makes her equal to the murderer she has come to confront. She walks alongside the cinderblock walls and comes to another mural. This painting details the story of the legend of the Candyman. It shows Daniel’s tortured last moments, and she pauses to look at it. Then she turns around and sees him laid out on a concrete slab, looking as if he’s asleep, or in some last repose. She approaches his body stealthily, and tries to stab him with her hook. Her hook is proven as only an illusion of power as it does not seem to affect him. He sits up unperturbed, removes it, and says “Helen, you came to me” (Candyman 1:21:15). She reminds him of the deal he offered her about returning baby Anthony in exchange for her surrender. He waltzes with her and then carries her to the stone slab. She does not fight, and it seems she is resigned to be a sacrifice. She tells him she is afraid. He asks, “do you fear the pain, or what is beyond…” and she says that she fears them both (Candyman 1:21:47). His response does not comfort her as he says “the pain, I can assure you, will be exquisite” but says nothing beyond that (Candyman 1:21:52). He continues his speech to her, saying “our names will be written on a thousand walls, our crimes told and retold by our faithful believers. We shall die together in front of their very eyes” and viewers know he means to destroy her, but not to kill her in the same way as his other victims (Candyman 1:22:00). “Come with me and be immortal” he tells her, immortality becoming a figurative representation of completion (Candyman 1:22:19). She does not fight his hold on her until she realizes there are bees swarming over her. She swats at them and then looks to him for help, only to find the bees swarming out of his mouth. He is ghastly and terrifying and she becomes frightened as he
suddenly steps back and unbuttons his coat. He reveals his exposed, skinless body to her and she is disgusted and horrified as she sees more bees originating from within his fleshy rib cage. She screams as he leans in to kiss her with his mouth full of bees, and suddenly she goes still in his arms. Viewers cannot see her face as he kisses her and then lays her still body down. She appears to be unconscious as the bees crawl over her. The Candyman leaves her body lying there and goes to get baby Anthony.

Helen awakens swatting at herself as if she still feels the bees unwelcome and uncomfortable presence on her, but she is alone. The Candyman is nowhere to be seen, and so she picks up her hook again, and notices that the mural on the wall has been defaced with an ugly scrawl. It says ‘it was always you Helen’, and viewers see a painted image of a woman who looks a great deal like Helen. Apparently she is a likeness to Daniel’s long lost love, or perhaps she has been reincarnated as Helen. In another light, though, it signifies that through his abjection, he recognizes himself as the match to her. She hears a baby crying from a distance and ventures outside to investigate.

Helen approaches the massive pile of garbage and broken pieces of wooden furniture that is an unlit bonfire for the community, unaware that she is soon to become their eternal beacon of meaning and significance. She hears the baby crying from somewhere within it and begins crawling into it in order to find and rescue him. The young boy Jake sees the hook she is carrying disappear into the mass, but does not see that it is Helen who carries it. He thinks it must be the Candyman, and he rallies the other residents to burn him up. Helen reaches baby Anthony in the center of the pile, and before she can make an escape, the Candyman is there. He holds her hostage in the pile as the residents of Cabrini Green set fire to it. He will not let her call for help, and intends
for her to die in the blaze, but the presence of the baby breaks their bargain. She will not let Anthony die. She grabs a burning stick and jabs it into the Candyman’s leg. As he howls in pain, she grabs the baby and begins making her way out of the fire. She fights through the fire, even as the Candyman howls her name and begs her to come back. She shields the baby with her own body, and finally makes her way out in an army crawl. Her body is burnt almost beyond recognition. Her angelic hair has melted off and her entire body is a mass of burnt flesh. The people surround her as she reveals the baby hidden beneath her coat, apparently unharmed at the expense of her own life. She looks back and watches the Candyman explode in a massive heat wave within the fire. His charred body held upright by his hook as he died. Then she lies back to give up her own ghost.

The film cuts to Helen’s funeral where all the people she was defeated by in life are there to oversee her death. She is arrayed in white, her ruined scalp crowned with a wreath of flowers. She looks like some sort of goddess. Trevor, Stacy and Professor Purcell stand witness as her casket is closed and lowered into the ground. The residents of Cabrini Green march onto the scene. They walked together to honor Helen’s fight for herself, that they believe has freed them in turn. They approach her casket, and Anne-Marie hands Jake the Candyman’s hook, recovered from the fire. He takes it and drops it irreverently into the grave. It clangs against the casket and falls into the dirt below.

After Helen’s funeral, viewers are shown an image of Trevor at home with Stacy, a lacking image meant to contrast with the earlier ones of Helen when she was domestically present and ideal. Trevor seems frustrated with Stacy as she tries to comfort him. He locks himself in the bathroom, and she leaves him there as she tries to prepare dinner with the finesse of a five year old. The viewers watch him standing in the dark,
staring at his reflection in the mirror, and looking very grieved. He chokes out a whispered “Helen,” tormented by her name (Candyman 1:34:12). As he wrings his hands and rubs his face, distraught, his eyes light up for a moment. He suddenly looks at his reflection and turns out the lights. He begins whispering her name again and again. It is as if he’s attempting to summon her, haphazardly, in the same way as she did the Candyman. This repetition of her name at his reflection could be just a way for him to mourn the loss of her. Yet it is more because Helen has come to represent what is most threatening to him, his denied fears about himself as a sexual oppressor. Where Stacey appears to be young and petulant, Helen has become the image of true womanhood to Trevor which he inherently feels threatened by. She is the potent woman whose existence jeopardizes his masculinity and his imagined possession of wholeness and power. He is as much tempted to summon her as Helen was to summon the Candyman. Stacy is still out in the kitchen, irritably hacking at a steak, when the scene cuts back to Trevor. As he says the fifth ‘Helen’, his dead wife miraculously appears behind him accented with flashes of soundless lightening. For a moment viewers are brought back to the moment when Helen first looked upon the Candyman in the parking garage, and she was bombarded with lightening-like image flashes as she recognized him. Trevor turns to face Helen as she looks directly at him, and they are no longer looking at reflections of each other, just as Clara and Billy did moments before her death. They are seeing the reality of each other. Trevor sees her disfigured scalp and burnt body, her still beautiful face, and then the hook she clutches. There is a short distance between them, which is different from the Candyman who appeared so intimately close behind his victims. She is not the Helen he knew. Her hair is gone and her face is a beatific mask of vengeance. He looks
down at the hook she is holding and realizes it is the same one she was buried with, the Candyman’s hook. She asks “What’s the matter Trevor? Afraid of something?” and then she guts him (Candyman 1:34:25). The fact that she looks directly at him, rather than at his reflection, is a serious signal that she has crossed the boundary and accepted her dark self, and that with it has come power she never imagined in life. The mirror behind Trevor casts no reflection of what is happening before it, as if it doesn’t work anymore.

This ethereal and compassionless female figure that looks like Helen reflects a magnified version of Trevor’s fears about the unknown feminine side of his personality. In much the same way that Clara invoked her perception of the ultimate bad boy to gain access to her sexual identity through the Candyman, here Trevor has done the same for himself in invoking what he has come to perceive as a real woman with a capital W - Woman. She is not reflected in the mirror as she glowers at her victim, showing that the unknown feminine in Trevor has found its way out and he will suffer no different fate than Clara did in invoking her darkest side. Clara, the first victim of this tale was victim to the Candyman and now Trevor, rather than Helen, becomes the victim of his worst nightmare – Helen at her most monstrous.

Stacy hears the commotion from the kitchen and enters the bathroom, only to find Trevor’s dead and mutilated body in the bathtub, the final result of his feared castration and lack. She screams and the scene cuts to a view of a new mural on the wall at Cabrini Green. The mural is now one of Helen, her head wreathed in fire rather than flowers. She wears a white gown, just as the figure who murdered Trevor wore. The lower half of her body is consumed by flames, but her expression looks peaceful. She has her head raised upward as if rising from the flames like a phoenix. She is surrounded by rays of light,
which emanate from her head like the halo of a saint. This painting would be a clear image of transcendence if it were not for the crack in the cinderblock that dissects its beatific face. The howling mouth of the Candyman had a similar crack in it, and this one appears to remind viewers of that shadow within each of them. It is an illustration that represents the existence of an empty space in every body. In the representation of Helen as a goddess or saintly figure bearing such a crack upon her head, of all places, viewers see the ultimate depiction of the sense of lack or absence in our identities. Despite our every endeavor to paint an ideal image of ourselves to others, such an illusion will always bear that crack, no matter how perfect or whole we may aspire to be. There is only an absence, because that absence is a part of each of us, a part of our identity. It is the part that cannot be known by anyone but ourselves and will remain forever undefined.
CONCLUSION

The ultimate message to be found within this film lies in its recurring presentation of the contrast between binary opposites through mirroring processes, coupled with such a production’s relationship to its spectators. The screen itself comes to function as an exaggerated mirror reflecting the internal struggle of a dual nature within the viewer. The witness’s pleasure or satisfaction is derived from watching such contrasting elements magnified by the screen-mirror. There is clearly a collection of deep and purposeful multiplicities at play in the use of these magnified reflections of projected and inverted images upon the spectator. The opening story of Clara’s death is a microcosmic version of Helen’s. Clara and Helen are contrasted by the Candyman’s blackness, their femininity by his masculinity, and their position as victims to his as monster. Following Helen’s martyr-like death, Trevor is the one victimized by the Candyman’s hook which has been taken up by his dead wife. The fact that Helen wields the hook displaces her from the position of victim into the driver’s seat of the monster. This transformation is completed with her sudden transference from inside the mirror to the world outside of it, showing that she no longer needs it to reflect herself. When she kills Trevor, the mirror bears no reflection of either of them, which shows that the horrific Candyman, and everything which his or her image represents, has escaped from it and the boundaries of projection and reflection.

Many horror films are meant to placate the fearful question of what might happen if the abject and the fantastic were to spill out of their cages and into the world outside by presenting the monster and the victim as forever in opposition, forever separate. The monster is always defeated in some way and the victim usually survives its encounter
with said monster. However, a select few choose to highlight something much more frightening, as we have seen in *Candyman* because it ends not with the defeat of the monster, but with the assimilation and merging of both female victim and male monster into one truly terrifying entity. This horror film reveals the façade of the concept of a solitary human existence, of a singular ideal identity, and in its revealing shows its participants their unknown need to reflect the pain of the suppression of their dark and abjected selves as each other’s Other.
SOURCES

Works Cited


Films Cited


Serena Foster: Honors Student

Birth Date: August 10, 1983

Birthplace: Payson, Utah

Address: 155 East Vine Street
East Unit
Murray, UT 84107