

**The object of horror: gaze and voice in Candyman
[abstract only]**

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The Object of Horror: Gaze and Voice in *Candyman*

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Abstract

Drawing from psychoanalytic theory, this paper will explore how the importance of the gaze in film studies occupies both an auditorial and visual significance for the horror genre. This significance can be identified in the genre’s unique relation to the cinematic object—the impossible Lacanian *objet petit a*—which is apparent in its employment of the gaze and voice. While working to dissolve the apparent separation of the spectator from the cinematic image—thus, laying bear our subjective desire and unconscious involvement—depictions of the gaze and voice offer a disturbing presence within film. This is apparent in ‘horror classics’, such as Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1963), as well as a number of recently released franchise sequels. Indeed, while this paper will draw from various horror examples (past and present), specific attention will be given to examining the effects of the gaze and voice in Bernard Rose (1992) and Nia DaCosta’s (2021) *Candyman* films.

In Rose’s *Candyman* (1992), examples of the voice occupy a key role in building the Candyman’s absent presence on-screen; yet it is only through comparing Rose’s

original with DaCosta's (2021) cinematic revival that examples of the voice are noticeably absent within DaCosta's film. Although uncanny encounters with mirrored reflections pave the way for the Candyman's deadly resurrection, DaCosta's take on the horror classic relies entirely upon its adoption of the gaze. This allows us to question: What impact does this move from voice to gaze present for *Candyman* and its 'legacy sequel'; and what does this change reveal about recent horror revivals, remakes, and sequels? By affording further reflection on the contemporary horror genre, the relation between gaze and voice will offer important conclusions regarding the *Candyman* legacy as well as the theoretical changes that this legacy brings to the genre.

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Jack Black is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University and affiliated with the Centre for Culture, Media and Society, where he is Research Lead for the 'Anti-Racism Research Group'. An interdisciplinary researcher, working within psychoanalysis, media, and cultural studies, Jack is the author of *Race, Racism and Political Correctness in Comedy – A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Routledge, 2021). His current research focuses on race, racism, and psychosis as well as online hate during international sporting events ('Tackling Online Hate in Football').