

Encoding the Oppositional Stance in *Candyman* (2021): an Ideological Analysis

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Theoretical Framework

- Horror is used to explore and create many fantastical ideas→ and point out that many scary things don't need to be made up
- Complex Magazine says "the horror genre is **whitewashed**" (Brown,2022).
- Minorities are often not casted in major roles, stereotypes are enforced, many are the first to die
- *Candyman*: transition from the original myth to the new storyline
- Housing projects like Cabrini Green are compared to modern day slavery by original Candyman actor, Tony Todd.



Methods

- Ideological analysis
 - Encoding: the media maker
 - Decoding: the audience
 - Sometimes these do not align
 - dominant/ preferred reading vs. oppositional stance
- Ideology lies in the gap between actuality and representation.
- Ideological analysis is the exploration of society's values, norms and views and how they are reflected in media highlighting power relations and social difference.

Analysis: Encoding and Decoding

- Encoding and decoding focus→ **oppositional stance**
 - Casting of minorities in major roles
 - Victimize the dominators
 - Flip societal norms (gender roles, social class expectations, etc)
 - Framing of the monster→ hero?
 - Dialogue surrounding racial and social injustices
- Arrangement of signs → social difference and power imbalances
 - Decoding: analyzed through audience and critic reviews
- reactions ranged from love to hate in response to the oppositional stance, what some viewers are calling "woke culture"

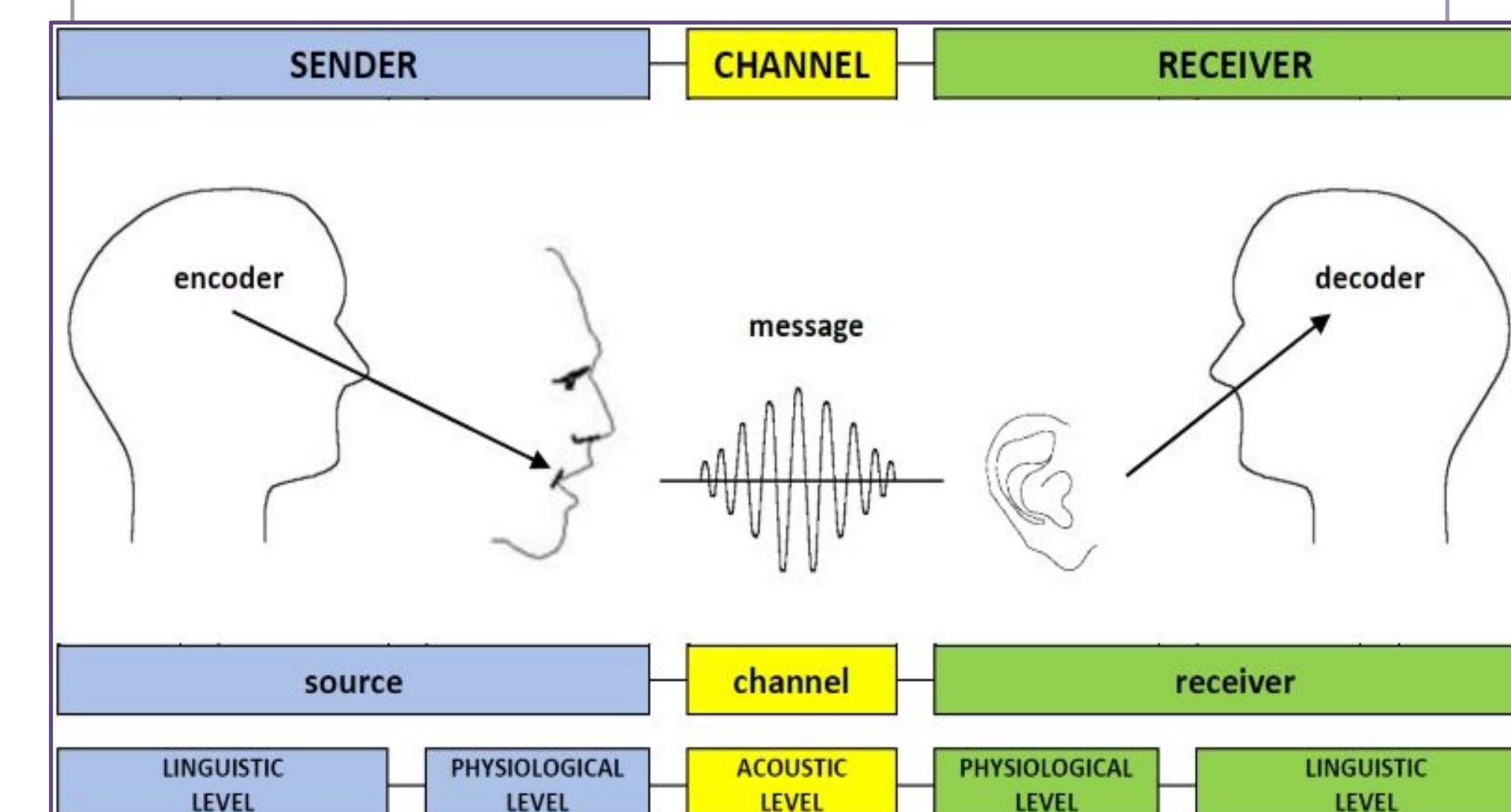
Thesis

The encoding of minorities in major roles, the victimization of mainly privileged white people as Candyman's targets, the flipping of preconceived societal norms, and the framing of the monster all work to bring light to low income, black communities' real life struggles while empowering them through these methods and embracing an opposition ideology throughout the film.



Conclusion

- Classic horror film patterns are starting to change and it is taking some getting used to for viewers.
- The encoded ideology of an oppositional stance was clearly received by everyone who saw the film: it was hard to miss.
- horror is changing for the better thanks to producers and directors paving the way.



Why does this matter?

- horror has historically portrayed the dominant ideology for far too long.
- It is important for this new wave of horror to come about in order to be more inclusive and tell stories that have been ignored or suppressed by the dominant group.
- Reflections on power and who has it are essential to shaping who will gain it or continue to hold it over others.