

Concrete Maternity: Late Capitalism and High-Rise Horror

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## Abstract

This research examines the coupling between residential towers and threatening and/or threatened female bodies in two films—David Cronenberg’s *Shivers* (1975), and Bernard Rose’s *Candyman* (1992)—locating in each productive engagements with different stages of neoliberalism and urban development. Negotiating the complex legacy of the association of the home with the realm of the feminine, I propose the concept of *concrete maternity*, which alludes to the residential tower as a new site that incubates anxieties related to the late capitalist transformation of social relations and its gendered formulations of unhomeliness. The dialectical oppositionality of the concrete, a harsh and industrial material, and the maternal, which evokes both intimacy and repression, enables a conceptualization of the cinematic abject in high-rise horror films as referring to a boundary breach for subjectivity. In treatment of the residential high-rise as womb-like, I understand the building as concrete, objective in its materiality, while envisioning its interiors to be experiential/embodied, thus open to subverting the logic of late capitalism from within.

## Keywords:

concrete maternity; abject; grotesque; gendered building; architecture; high-rise; late capitalism

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## I. Introduction: High-Rise Horror and Resident Evil

In her book on the role of gender in the modern horror film, Carol Clover discusses how the female body often translates as a metaphoric architecture for cinema, arguing that its penetrable yet opaque interiority becomes a perfect site for housing anxieties, fears, or what one would deem, following Freudian theory, the uncanny. This potentially disturbing correspondence between the uncanny feminine and architectural interiority finds its most overt articulation in horror films that take residential towers as their setting, with the precarity of female bodies highlighting the terrors that they give rise to.<sup>1</sup> What is interesting in these films is not just the fusion of spatial and gendered corporeal metaphors, but also their coming to prominence in the late 60s, the beginning of a period in which, for scholars like Fredric Jameson, the image of residential towers became symbolic of the “cultural logic of late capitalism” and its alarming disjunction of the body and its built environment (44). In other words, the correspondence between the uncanny feminine and architectural interiority have been made to speak for not just any terror, but the deterritorializing effects of the emerging neoliberal world order. Here, one can think of cinema as narratively working through how political bodies become at times entangled with, and sometimes porous to their increasingly convergent and affective built environment, taking into account its historical specificities. To demonstrate this argument, I examine the coupling between residential towers and threatening/threatened female bodies in two films—

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Polanski’s Apartment trilogy, featuring his now horror classic *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), and cult filmmaker Dario Argento produced Mexican horror *Demons 2* (1986) provide early examples of this trend. More recently, Ben Wheatley’s *High Rise* (2015) was released following a cluster of horror films which made residential towers a popular setting, including Joe Cornish’s *Attack the Block* (2011)—which was partly shot in the condemned Heygate Estate in Elephant and Castle—, Gareth Evans’s *The Raid* (2011), Ciaran Foy’s *Citadel* (2012), Pete Travis’s *Dredd* (2012), and Neil McEnery-West’s *Containment* (2015).

David Cronenberg's *Shivers* (1975) and Bernard Rose's *Candyman* (1992). Understanding buildings as mechanisms of representation, I argue that filmic architecture transcends "the neutrality of geometrically determined and physically defined" (Lico 30) structures and enclosures, presenting instead sites of lived life, where cultural processes, gender transactions, and socio-political anxieties are continually enacted.

In questioning the implications of the re-production of social dynamics through architecture and the metaphorical appropriation of the human body, I posit the residential tower as a monstrous object and/or abject. My understanding of the abject draws from Julia Kristeva, who in her seminal *Powers of Horror* speaks of it as a liminal figure, pointing to a kind of threatening breakdown between the subject and the object that causes feelings of disgust, horror, and confusion. In its co-articulation with the female body in horror films, the residential tower similarly becomes a confusing or terror-inducing site, signalling a breakdown of meaning and subjectivity. In this regard, it is not unrelated to the uncanny and its unsettling qualities.

For Freud, the uncanny belongs to an order of experience expressly "related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" (219). More explicitly, it is a specific subcategory of the dreadful in which "the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs* [...] something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (241). As such, the uncanny registers the defamiliarisation of the familiar: what the individual has tried to evacuate from their unconscious mind horribly re-materialises in a form that is both strange and threatening (235-238). Interestingly, Freud arrives at this formulation by establishing the womb as the ultimate uncanny venue, having "originally nothing terrifying at all," but become

unfamiliar through the process of repression. In other words, the primal scene for the uncanny or *unheimlich* is the maternal. For Kristeva's abject too, the womb or the maternal body (as the subject's origin in a place other than itself) is key to thinking about repressed familiarities that generate confusion about (and fascination with) the boundaries of identity; the uncanny and the abject are thus closely linked, yet the latter concept speaks to feelings that are of a much higher level of intensity. For me, filmic depictions of residential towers in horror films reveal an anxiety that goes far beyond responses to the antinomic nature of the home in a high-rise setting or even to the unknown other; they project the image of a defamiliarised familiar that is, like the maternal, deeply destabilising.

In *The Monstrous Feminine*, Barbara Creed takes the maternal logic in cinema further and reflects on what Freud refers to as "the phantasy... of intra-uterine existence" as an architectural blueprint for the dark and enclosed spaces that constitute Gothic horror's preferred venues (367). The "feminine" space of the womb is inextricably linked to the equally feminised space of the home. Among the numerous definitions in the etymology of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* cited by Freud in his essay *The Uncanny*, "homely" and "unhomely" are the most noticeably recurrent. Not unlike Freudian theory, postfeminist discourses have sometimes blurred the boundaries between the female body and the home. Of this symbolic convergence, Diane Negra points out that "new rhetorics of domestic practice symbolically extend the female body to include the home... [redressing] the crisis over the female body, subject as it is to intense, deeply anxious and often conflicting discourses" (130). Negotiating this complex legacy of the association of the home with the realm of the feminine, I propose the concept of *concrete maternity*, which alludes to the residential tower as a new site for the unhomely home. The dialectical oppositionality of the concrete, a harsh and industrial material, and the maternal, which evokes



both intimacy and repression, enables a conceptualization of the cinematic abject as a boundary breach housed within the structure of the residential tower and the logic of late capitalism. In treatment of the residential high-rise as womb-like, I understand the building as concrete, objective in its materiality, while envisioning its interiors to be experiential / embodied.

The idea of concrete maternity immediately triggers confusion as female bodies disrupt the common association of the high-rise with the realm of masculine hegemony in architecture. Lico argues that “architecture as a system of representation is saturated with meanings and values which contribute to our sense of *self* and our culturally contracted identity” (31) and these meanings and values, including the gendered dimensions of built environments are too often taken for granted. What interests me in *Shivers* and *Candyman* is that they help undo such normalised constructs of the cultural self and defamiliarise the familiar to allow room for discussion. The monstrosity of the feminine configurations within residential towers can be viewed as making a claim for deviance as well, in the post 70s’ cinematic context, from neoliberal co-optation of subjectivities and social relations. The image of the tower when entangled with the female body acts as a womb, one that cares for and nurtures, but also entraps and enables that which is in its entrails to fester. In agreement with Creed’s central thesis that “every encounter with horror, in the cinema, is an encounter with the maternal body” (166), I argue that it is when it adopts womb-like characteristics that the residential tower, at the intersection of the industrial-capitalist high-rise and the home, reveals itself as monstrous: a fertile space for the undermining of bodily and social certainties.

Moving in reverse chronological order, from the more recent *Candyman* to Cronenberg’s *Shivers*, each theoretical section of this major research paper takes up a single film, in order to

analyse how it renders visible the neoliberal cultural logic behind the different stages of late capitalism and formulations of the abject. In Rose's supernatural horror film *Candyman*, the maternal body appears as a metaphoric container for social anxieties and becomes a site for not only the uncanny but also the abject, especially in relation to the post-Reaganomics body politic. Cronenberg's dystopian thriller, *Shivers*, gestures towards ideas of containment, thus becoming a central aspect of my analysis of the film. Through a sustained consideration of 'infection' and 'isolation' as they appear in both of these films, I generate a more elastic conception of containment. Such an analysis opens up new angles of approach for biopolitical theorizing by foregrounding two figures—the reproductive body and the built environment—that embody generativity in excess of the now familiar biopolitical and social categories of citizenship within "high-rise horror," a subgenre or category of films that find in the figure of residential tower a setting for highlighting contemporary urban fears.

## **II. Public Housing and the Abject Womb in Rose's *Candyman* (1992)**

Differently from the speculative imaginary of other films of the same genre, *Candyman*'s engagement with the urban horror genre collapses the boundaries among the body, psyche, and space by referencing the real world. Instead of middle class high-rises and city apartments designed for optimal use, the film renders faulty spaces within public housing as sites of monstrosity and abjection. The film is inspired by true events, captured chillingly in the 1987 Chicago Reader article, "They Came in Through the Bathroom Mirror: A Murder in the

Projects,” by Steven Bogira.<sup>2</sup> The article describes the death of a 52-year-old resident of the Chicago based Cabrini-Green housing project, Ruthie Mae McCoy, whose killers had accessed her apartment by taking advantage of a bizarre architectural design flaw that essentially left a hole in the wall between adjacent apartments. This hole was filled by two medicine-cabinets, one in each unit. By removing a cabinet and pushing out the other, it was possible to gain access to the other apartment, which made medicine-cabinet break-ins a fairly common occurrence preceding the murder of McCoy.

This real-world design flaw of Chicago’s public housing developments ultimately found its way into Bernard Rose’s fictional horror film, *Candyman*, set in the same housing project. At the time that McCoy frantically called the police to report that “they [had] thrown the cabinet down,” she was living a moment upon which the urban horror film later got built—a violent transgression of the boundary between the outside and the inside, between self and the other. In the film, the experience of the transgression is left to Helen Lyle (Virginia Madsen), “a white graduate student at the University of Illinois”, researching an urban legend, which originates from the Cabrini-Green projects (Hester-Williams 2004). Through interviews, Helen becomes interested in the legend of a violent, hook-handed ghost of a murdered 19th century former slave. Candyman (Tony Todd) was formerly Daniel Robitaille, a talented artist, commissioned by a wealthy white landowner to paint a portrait of his daughter and brutally murdered after the father’s discovery that they had become lovers. Helen’s fascination with Robitaille’s story leads her to excavations inside the abandoned interiors of the building including the site’s most miserable spaces, notably public and private bathrooms (including those with the removable

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<sup>2</sup> Steven Bogira wrote a follow-up article, “How a story about the horrors of housing projects became part of a horror movie,” which was published in the Chicago Reader on March 14, 2014.

mirrored cabinet between units). She ultimately discovers that the art of Candyman has morphed over time into the graffiti of Cabrini-Green, thus becoming the virtual and violated body of the projects, its eyes, mouth, and face.

*Candyman* places much importance on the symbolism of the actual location of the Cabrini-Green, rather than relying on the common horror trope of a haunting secret deeply buried in an imaginary place. The protagonist's research and investigation of the history of the location is further foregrounded through the driving force of the narrative, which draws attention to the social and political importance of the housing project. This choice is poignant, considering that the film was produced in the 1990s, at the height of gang wars in Chicago and as the social safety net was being eroded by neoliberal policies focused on privatization, individualization, accountability, and risk management. Here, a note about what I mean by neoliberalism might be useful, as I see the film as marking a shift in its development. I use and understand the term as a specific mode of capitalist production via Marx, a form of governmentality via Foucault (Shaviro, 2015: 7), and as a theoretical shorthand to speak of the activities of social actors and institutions in the United States and Canada in the last four decades that correspond to the rise of globalization. As Alison Shonkwiler and Leigh Claire La Berge state,

Neoliberalism names those aspects of globalization that, under the auspices of the market, limit social functioning and naturalize structures of inequality. Its rise dating in most accounts from the early to mid-1970s, neoliberalism typically refers to an economic and political paradigm in which freedom is conceived almost entirely in market terms, as the ability to operate unhampered by state regulation or political interference, even as the production of the conditions of market organization and construction of citizenship that complements it are often seen as the state's proper function. (2014: 4-5)

These aspects of neoliberalism are also explored in the works of scholars like Ernst Mandel, David Harvey, Giovanni Arrighi, and Mark Fisher, especially in relation to the cultural and

representational logics of late capitalism, which get crystallized with the erosion of the social safety nets in the 1990s. While widely adopted and internalised, the oppressive features of late capitalism are still rendered observable in *Candyman*, mapped onto the urban grid as well the precarity of residents.

Now stigmatised, the first housing projects in, most notably, the United States and England were considered among the most desirable shelters for low- and low-middle-income citizens. They were also considered testing grounds for social welfare programs, inheriting their structural and ideological problems, including those related to their entanglement with forms of “public patriarchy” (Hearn 1992) and the feminization of poverty. Within the cultural imaginary, public housing was simultaneously viewed as an extension of public patriarchy (the grand scale restructuring of public life in ways that subordinated women to state control) and conferred a maternal dimension due to its association with care or nurturing from the state. Nancy Fraser predicted in 1987 that the “coming welfare wars” set off by Reaganism were going to be against the overwhelming majority of welfare program recipients: women. Relevantly, the conjunction of the fiscal crisis of the state and the feminization of poverty were going to make the struggles around social-welfare and the quality of housing projects increasingly focused for feminists (Fraser 103). Considering Raluca Livia Niculae’s argument that “every masculine building can be feminised through use” (Niculae 484), it is not hard to imagine why this turned out to be the case in the years that followed. Having become the principal subjects of the welfare state, women’s “beneficiary-social worker-caregiver nexus of roles” became constitutive of the social-welfare arena as well as housing projects, turning them into feminised terrain (Fraser 106).

In the context of *Candyman*, the housing project—and by extension the residential tower—

can be conceived as a similarly feminine (if not feminised) space. Aviva Briefel and Sianne Ngai reiterate the importance of Rose's presentation of Cabrini-Green as "an evacuated space, a hollow shell, [which] reinforces [its] image as just a body anticipating its inhabitation by a soul" (82). The maternal description here is perhaps not coincidental and can be further extended. At the very beginning of the film, it is indicated that Helen can see all of Chicago, including Cabrini-Green in the skyline, from her apartment as she gazes through the window. Sitting like a splinter at the side of the city's Gold Coast, we find out that the building in which she lives was designed according to the same plan as Cabrini-Green. Not only is the layout identical, but the architectural flaws within the structures are the same as well. It is significant that the protagonist lives in an upscale condo development the design of which reflects low income housing, thus acknowledging its analogous relationship to the housing project. This connection is not only key in establishing Cabrini-Green as the abject object, it also demonstrates the elasticity of this concrete maternity by revealing that the monstrosity of the residential tower is inherently tied to its very construction. For Freud, the impetus to return to the womb is also a longing to return to the home. The female womb is desired in part because of its power to create and comfort; it is something a man can never really understand except through speculative contemplation or aesthetic hauntings. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud writes that "the dwelling-house was a substitute for the mother's womb, the first lodging, for which in all likelihood man still longs, and in which he was safe and felt at ease" (37). The home, like a nest, is symbolic of the womb: it surrounds a space with safety, familiarity, richness and warmth—often protected by woman. As such, interiors are presumed to be governed by woman's perspective, giving them female features. For Nicolae, "gendering of space through use and sustained by the historical protection/projection binary [is that which] defines the indoor as the domestic and warm space of

femininity and the outdoor as the fierce public domain of the man” (489).

Throughout the film, the skyline of Chicago is ever-present and stands proud as it reiterates the segregation of spaces deemed unworthy for failing to fulfill the demands of the state. These demands are intrinsically tied to notions of individualism and self-sufficiency, and the upwardly mobile members of the middle class such as Helen and her university professor husband.

Whether the monster really exists or not becomes somewhat irrelevant, as we understand that the real horror resides in the housing projects. The “universe of *Candyman* is clearly divided” into spaces of the abject and of the grotesque, both appendages of concrete maternity (Kuhn 2000).

The abject can be found within the symbolic, predominantly white world of the University of Illinois and Lincoln Village, as well as in Helen’s Gold Coast neighbourhood. This middle-to-upper class world is flooded with light and perfectly structured: there are straight geometrical forms delimiting the locations and establishing their limits, which are in turn mirrored in the clear hierarchies that define people’s relationships to one another. Beyond the all-defining border of the film’s locations, the highway, lies Cabrini-Green and its notorious inner-city ghetto, which is populated in the film by seemingly poor, disenfranchised, and often criminalised African American inhabitants. When first encountering Cabrini-Green, poor lighting, filth and an overpowering stench dominate the space marked by graffiti, broken elevators, corners and dead ends. This signifies an overall climate of anarchy, degradation, and superstition—conditions that presumably explain the incomprehensible presence of Candyman. It also sets Cabrini-Green as a space of abjection that the symbolic world (the neoliberal world of upper class interests) to which Helen belongs is trying to negate and repress. However, as Helen finds out during her research of the history of the haunted ghetto, both settings turn out to be inextricably linked. We are told that Helen’s building was converted into upscale condos after city planners discovered

its proximity to the rich Gold Coast area and potential for gentrification. Thus, poverty and crime were pushed back behind the highway that became a barrier, a physical divider that marks spaces as either degenerate or respectable. The semiotic here literally becomes the blueprint for the very foundation of the symbolic. The highway no longer separates the two spheres but rather, it links them inseparably, serving as an umbilical cord that facilitates this exchange (Kuhn, 2000).

In *Managing the Monstrous Feminine: Regulating the Reproductive Body*, Jane Ussher echoes Kristeva as she discusses the need for ritual purification in dealing with the abject, claiming that, “film and art... offer the potential for inoculation against the danger and polluting power of the fecund body. Indeed, Julia Kristeva has argued that as societies become more secular, art has taken over from religion as a force of purification and catharsis” (Ussher 2). Tracing representations of women’s bodies through art history, Ussher helps to uncover the ways in which we struggle to come to terms with the abject feminine body. Evoking images of classical art, Ussher notes that “the female nude, icon of idealised feminine sexuality, most clearly transforms the base nature of woman’s nakedness into culture, into ‘art’, all abhorrent reminders of her fecund corporeality removed—secretions, pubic hair, genitals, and disfiguring veins or blemishes all left out of the frame” (3). Along the same lines, high-rise horror films often only allude to the traces of fecund corporeality when foregrounding the gendered contours of the architectural body. A desired return to the mother or a state of purity is best exemplified in the male-driven narrative of *Shivers*. While this film is discussed in detail in the following section of my paper, it is important here to highlight one key element in the scene that features the complex’s pleasure centre: the pool. Located in the lower stratum of the grotesque body-architecture of the high-rise, that is at the level of its sexual organs, the pool can be understood as a vagina through which the male protagonist can gain access to the amniotic sac. The



disembodied qualities of this “grotesque body [which] is emphasised as a mobile, split, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange.” (Stallybrass and White 22).

In *Candyman*, however, the grotesque body takes a different form. Helen only briefly seeks comfort in water when taking a bath at home. It is often argued that the return to the womb, from a male perspective, involves returning to an early, naïve and safe, singular state of being. For the female protagonist, however, returning to the womb is a dual state, for she is both container and contained. The return for Helen, then, precisely takes place at the moment she first encounters Candyman and understands that, by stepping through his mouth, she became contained within the body of Cabrini-Green and crossed a subject-object boundary.

The filming of this scene begins with the interiors of Cabrini-Green reflecting the qualities that Bakhtin attributes to the grotesque body. As he states, the grotesque body “is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits” (26). Helen’s act of wandering through Cabrini-Green’s most abject spaces, including the bathroom in which Ruthie May was murdered by Candyman, is treated as a separate and complete unit in the film. While meaningful, the act of entering these spaces through orifices are shown without any association to a larger world. When Helen finds herself facing a hole in the wall, the camera dolly out and tracks her movements from behind as she bends down to penetrate deeper within the concrete maternal. A cut to the reverse angle reveals Helen from the other room in a close-up shot. As her camera runs out of film, the diegetic sounds become muffled under the music. A dolly zoom shot reveals a gaping mouth, teeth surrounding the body of Helen as she enters the room through the mouth of Candyman. As she slowly turns around to look back, the camera cuts from a close-up of her face to that of an

extreme close-up of the graffiti rendering of the Candyman, rich in a texture that recalls his brutal fate. According to the legend, Candyman was stung to death after locals smeared him with honey stolen from an apiary—here, the skin of the building becomes akin to the monster's. In this shot reverse shot, Helen appears confused and disoriented as she stares into the eyes of the monster, her body casting a shadow on the wall. She quickly looks down and the camera becomes hand-held. She nearly completely disappears from the frame as she moves toward the floor. The action is continued but changes from a close up to a medium shot. Behind her, at the center of the image, we see the gaping mouth of the monster. The filmmaking in the scene allows for a continuously growing context that begins in this the first room—the bathroom, but quickly ventures out and becomes part of a larger world, the abject world of Candyman. Similarly, Candyman's grotesque bodily activities and functions are realities to be ignored in order to focus on Helen's perfect classic form, her classical body. It is ironically the grotesque body that will transgress the "perfect" boundaries of Helen's world and threaten the stability of her life. This recognition of the socially constructed sense of the body is at the core of the psychic contortions that have characterised portrayals of residential towers in film.

*Candyman* inscribes itself within what Monica Soare refers to as the "career-woman-in-peril thriller," which challenges mainstream theorizations around female spectatorship, female subjectivity, and the horror genre (88). In this way, Rose's *Candyman* suggests that the heroine's "seemingly masochistic attraction to fear is a creative wish to push her own subjectivity to the limits and thus cross the boundaries set on women" (85). The feminine subjectivity is the subjective "pushed beyond the limits of the human, exceeding its capacities, and highlight the importance of the sublime environment of the cityscape, which is also the Fatal Man's home, in the exploration of female subjectivity" (101). This argument is reflected in the film's opening

sequence in which a fading shot of Chicago's skyline is superimposed onto a close-up of Helen's face to the rhythm and sound of Philip Glass' now classic neo-Gothic score.

The grotesque appendage of concrete maternity in *Candyman* is due in part to the incompleteness of the body. The manifold concrete materiality houses the symbolic and semiotic, the abject and grotesque, and mirrors the dual nature of the woman's relationship to returning to the womb. Helen's frequent blackouts are infantilizing because these moments of forgetting in which she lacks responsibility, complements her research of the monster as an upper middle class white academic. This is our first true exposure to the grotesque body, that is the body in the process of excreting, an act in which the boundaries "between the body and the world are overcome" (Bakhtin 317). Similar to Bakhtin's notion of the carnival as a second life, Helen's actions as she becomes mesmerised are sanctioned by the "temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life" within the spaces she navigates (15). As Bakhtin points out, "exaggeration, hyperbolism, [and] excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style" (303). In this case, the grotesqueness of concrete maternity appears in opposition to the closed off and complete classical body. *Candyman* is crucial here because it demonstrates that the ties need not to be explicit under late capitalism. As Jameson writes, "[post modern] architecture [...] stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions." (38) As it is the case for the classical body, the residential high-rise is traditionally expected to be a closed system.

In this narrative, the grotesque body becomes the catalyst for the entire series of events

through which the role Helen becomes homologous to that of the housing project; the *feminine* interiors of Cabrini-Green can be conceived as the actual inner world or the subconscious fantasy of the woman, itself an extension of maternal state policies. As the plot intensifies, so do the interiors of the housing project. Helen penetrates Cabrini-Green's most abject spaces through holes in the walls, floors, and ceiling, as the bloody interiors of Candyman's lair create a pulsating womb. The movie still concludes with the repression of femininity from the diegetic symbolic world—femininity is inextricably linked to the 'biological' female's body, sealing the fate of both by sacrificing herself for the infant child that had been kidnapped by Candyman (Kuhn 2000). However, the film does offer something interesting as it does not represent the punishment of a strong independent woman resisting domesticity and space of respectability. Rather, we see a reframing of the emancipation narrative of the female character that hints at the power of the semiotic, which in turn allows for an interpretation of the final shot as a representation of the maternal as triumphant.

In not showing Helen as a passive martyr, *Candyman* demonstrates a different narrative strategy to regulate the monstrous-feminine. By representing the configurations of the maternal abject in architecture, the film gestures towards an urgency with which patriarchal culture has historically defined a woman's desire for power as monstrous, which in this case is shown through the figure of the Candyman. Having become the principal subjects of the welfare state, women's "nexus of roles is constitutive of the social-welfare arena, one might [refer to it] as feminised terrain" (Fraser 106). Specifically, following Reagan's drastic cuts in public housing funds:

The housing crisis for the poor reached a new level of severity under policies of deliberate cruelty during the Reagan and Bush administrations. From 1977 to 1980, during the Carter

administration, the federal government added an average of 290,000 new families each year to the list of those receiving housing assistance. However, after ousting Carter from the White House in 1980, Reagan slashed federal housing allocations from \$30 billion in fiscal year 1981 to barely \$8 billion in 1986. The number of available housing units dropped sharply in virtually every city (Marable 103).

Through this legislation, the elimination of sufficient housing exacerbated the quandary of deciding *where* to relocate these newly displaced individuals, while also obviously working to further disempower low-income level Americans. *Candyman*'s "insistence of on preserving the intactness of its middle-class control group of victims may also bear witness to an irrational fear of infiltration from those evicted from subsidised housing" (Briefel and Ngai 74). Released in 1992, at the height of neoliberalism and the year that officially marked the ending of the Reagan-Bush regime, the film straightforwardly acknowledges a social fear that has seldom been tackled in traditional horror films: the degradation of social life under late capitalism. As I mentioned earlier, the 1992 backdrop corresponds to a period marked by the destruction of safety nets, the actual impact of neoliberal policies becoming clear, and the everyday reality of violence in low-income neighbourhoods setting in. Therefore, *Candyman* can be interpreted as a film that reworks the high-rise horror genre to historicize the intensification and consequent failure of late capitalism's attempts at engineering the social.

### **III. Containing Capitalism: Island Ecologies and Disease as Potential in Cronenberg's *Shivers* (1975)**

David Cronenberg's *Shivers* opens with a narrated slideshow promoting a residential complex; a large underground garage, Olympic size heated swimming pool, and golf and tennis courts, as well as modern apartments with breathtaking views, establish a promise of luxury,

exceptional sanitation, and well-being. The advertisement for the offshore community Starliner Towers leads to the opening sequence in which a young couple excitedly arrives at what has been described as an “island paradise.” This narrative is, however, quickly disrupted as a sexual-behaviour-altering parasite, concocted and implanted in one of the residents by Dr. Emil Hobbes, is revealed to be spreading around venereally, ultimately leading to a contagion that cannot be contained. The film follows Starliner resident physician Dr. St-Luc (Paul Hampton) and his lover nurse Forsythe (Lynn Lowry) as they seek to understand what is unravelling in the towers and on the island, delving into Hobbes’ previous and ongoing research in the process.

From the cliché tropes of the American splatter to the kinds of aesthetics and narratives established by the Italian Giallo, *Shivers* makes ample references to the cinematic history of the horror film, but one can also place it within the lineage of “high-rise horror.” The cinematic depictions of residential towers have often been representative of stages of urban development and post-industrial capitalism; in many of the high-rise horror films, it further acts as a site for the germination of social ill and urban vices, which render it monstrous. In *Shivers*, however, this relationship is reversed. Cronenberg acknowledges the complex role that the figure of the residential tower has played in horror by making Starliner Towers a host to the cultural and political tensions associated with it, but presents the contamination and subsequent transformation of Starliner residents as a welcome change. This gives the film a revisionist twist: just who or what is deemed monstrous in the genre gets blurred if not redefined.

Unlike Cronenberg’s experimental features like *Stereo* (1969) or *Crimes of the Future* (1970), *Shivers*, released a year before Margaret Thatcher’s infamous speech hailing private capitalism (“There is only one economic system in the world, and that is capitalism”), is a

mainstream commercial film targeting a genre-based audience. The themes present in the director's previous works, such as the "disease with benefits"—an infection that acts as a liberating agent while causing mutation or obliterating some sense of will in the victims—are nonetheless present. As Allan MacInnis writes, "the horror of the parasites in *Shivers* is balance by the release of repressed energy they bring" (42). Reportedly, the original draft of the screenplay was titled "Orgy of the Blood Parasites," in keeping with the sensationalistic trend of 1970s' films and overtly highlighting the infection's subversive elements. However, the title *They Came from Within* has been ultimately used in America, invoking the mysterious aura of movies from the 1950s and leaving the film's revisionism to the imagination instead. The poster for the film features the tag line: "Terror beyond the power of priest or science to exorcise." Rather than hinting at a twist or alluding to the film's unconventional approach towards disease or monstrosity, this statement recalls the familiar horror genre trope, in which the inability of science or religion to explain external (and at times internal) threats becomes a source of terror. However, plot details reveal a more nuanced story. As an explanation for the indeterminate plague that is haunting the residents and causing the downfall of civilisation (or in this case of the utopian island community), Forsythe describes a dream in which she encountered a foul-smelling diseased old man, for example. She explains: "He tells me that even old flesh is erotic flesh, that disease is the love of two alien kinds of creatures for each other, that even dying is an act of eroticism."

As MacInnis argues, the speech "seems designed to persuade the audience that some of what they have been receiving as horrifying needs to be reevaluated" (38). The mention of eroticism here is indicative of a subversive attitude towards disease that goes beyond the terror it induces. The infectious architecture of the Starliner tower reveals an eroticism of this kind too:

one that points towards a formulation of sexuality that is constitutive of subjects and extends beyond providing pure pleasure. Its concrete maternity, as manifested in the habitus it provides, recalls Bataille's eroticism, which defines it as a transgression against subjectivity and humanity. Desire in eroticism, he writes, "is the desire that triumphs over the taboo. It presupposes man in conflict with himself" (256). What is meant by taboo here is cultural constructs about what sexuality means and triumphing over them requires subversion from the norms and resistance. For Bataille, "eroticism, unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest...eroticism is assenting to life even in death" (11). One could even think of his formulation of the concept in surrealist terms, locating in the erotic the possibility of exceeding the conceptual, reproductive, and material parameters of the body, or the possibility of allowing the libidinal body to expand. *Shivers* presents an eroticism that, belonging to the realm of most urgent desires, leads to the transgression of boundaries, as well as an ecstatic identification with the other, and ultimately a confrontation with the self.

Forsythe, in her dream, makes love with the stinking, decaying old man. What is implied here, perhaps, is that the decaying old man is a metaphor for society under late capitalism, with all its conventions and the insidious adverse effects, and it is now too late to ignore its presence (even if it only manifests itself as a repulsive thought that pops up in the abject spaces of the unconscious or dreams from time to time). As Laura Anne Stephens explains, in this moment, Forsythe reveals "her innermost desires and [...] seeing disease as erotic rather than repulsive, her psychological transformation [causes] a fascination in the abject", which brings to mind Creed's notion of the human fascination with the abject (22). Exacerbated by the lack of explicit visual signs of transgression, the neoliberal disease, not unlike the desire for old flesh, overwhelms. We have gone too far to go back; we should therefore not reject the difference we



find in our world, or push the abject/old man away. We should not deny nor reject the symptoms of the disease (of neoliberal culture), with its repression and fear of the other, as denying it was essentially the precursor to the downfall of the Strainer towers. The building was designed to shelter people from the city, remove people from the dirt and decay of the post-industrial world, and give them complete access to the illusion of bodily health through access to medical professionals. The film seems to suggest, however, that by placing themselves in this position, the tenants were conditioned to miss the opportunity to surrender themselves to change, which happens naturally in environments that are not so socially engineered, regardless of approval, acceptance, or willing participation of the subjects. Delaying the inevitable and resisting change, the residents of Starliner ultimately destroy their bodies by erecting psychological walls that only serve to preserve the status quo. They also force the residents to internalise neoliberalism, both mentally and physically as the bodies transmogrify by their irrational behaviour. Bodies conspicuously behave in ways that thwart the content of minds and desires; needs which go unfulfilled as anxieties around proper citizenship prevail.

*Shivers* offers an examination of three levels of containment: architectural containment as structurally embedded into the residential towers itself, the offshore island setting as an ecological container and isolator, and the human body acting first as a sterile container against and later as an incubator for the invasion of parasites. The fixed presence of a doctor and nurse in the residential setting suggests that the high-rise functions as a biopolitical apparatus, urging the dwellers to think of themselves as biological agents that need constant monitoring. It is not that by simply living in the Starliner Towers residents are guaranteed health, but rather they are reassured that their domestic environment is also a diagnostic one, establishing bodies as always already on the verge of sickness. The multi-purpose design of the high-rise offers the potential to

recognise the sickness much more quickly than they would be detected in traditional housing in the city. In such a setting, it is poignant then that the trouble starts with small parasites that have invaded some of the tenants' bodies, causing them to engage in disruptive behaviours. What the film wants to say, however, is that at the symbolic, figurative, and metaphorical level, these parasites are not the threat—the building is. *Shivers* departs from conventional contagion narratives as the disease is portrayed as a positive phenomenon, bringing about a welcome change in the residents and, by extension, society. Although violent and at times deadly, the infection is neither condemned nor idealised; it is depicted as the painful but necessary catalyst of a desirable metamorphosis. The liberation through contagion theme signals that the film engages with containment as a metaphor at multiple levels, ultimately presenting a critique of neoliberal capitalism.

Interestingly, the complex not only features all kinds of amenities such as restaurants, pharmacies, doctors and dentists but it also necessitates such complex infrastructure because of its isolated island location. Like a womb, the structure itself provides a self-sustaining protective enclosure. Its promises of shelter and sustenance are further amplified through the offshore setting as an island invokes feelings of exclusivity but also confinement, not unlike a residential tower that is delineated by a specific neighborhood. In other words, *Shivers* indicates that the interweaving of spatial containers and enframing arrangements, which is common to high-rise horror films (here one can think of the segregatory setting of Cabrini-Green in Rose's *Candyman* or the bourgeois entrapment), finds another formulation in island ecologies. *Shivers* presents a luxurious residential tower as reminiscent of the Garden of Eden; the tower becomes a sacred space or paradise in which residents are not only able to access pure and total pleasure, but also the illusion of a self-sufficient sustenance. The residential complex provides an escape from the

anxiety-inducing environment of the metropolis, yet remain accessible from the city, in this case, Montreal, so that residents can enjoy proximity to the urban fabric while being “protected” from its ailments. It acts as a bigger scale of incubator, in which the microorganisms are human lives and societal conventions are engineered. Compressed inside this structure, we find marriage, pregnancy, identities, social designations based on the residents’ career and income, classifications that create pressure to fulfil expectations.

This recalls Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of social capital. As Hayes points out, “Bourdieu expands the notion of capital beyond its economic conception which emphasizes material exchanges, to include “immaterial” and “non-economic” forms of capital, specifically cultural and symbolic capital.” Social capital, for Bourdieu is defined as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 119). The towers thus can be conceived as an architectural microcosm for the managerial structure of late capitalism in which the categories like class, gender, and identity, and what they represent regarding societal dynamics become co-opted for containment and control.

Unlike in other films of high-rise horror, it is not blood, guts, and gore that give *Shivers* its genre defining quality, instead it is indeterminacy that is the source of true horror. More specifically, the uncertainty regarding the origin of the parasites enable a division among characters who all hold different explanations as to how the monstrosity came to be. The story of *Shivers* is punctuated with speeches alternately by medical professionals, who offer attractive yet unsatisfactory scientific explanations, as well as by characters pitting religion against them. From

Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) to the more recent *28 Days Later* (2002), contagion-themed films often introduce scientific theories before presenting religious explanations. *Shivers*, however, is more subtle in its approach, seeming like it refuses to privilege either; it nevertheless culminates in a scene of (re)birth and union in the pool that call to mind the religious act of baptism. The comfort of revelations is only offered briefly, through the previously mentioned dream of the nurse, which recalls Slavoj Žižek's injunction to "Love your symptom as you love yourself!" Žižek, pushing Lacanian psychoanalysis beyond its limits, effectively moves away from clinical diagnoses and applies the French philosopher's fundamental concepts to American culture and late capitalism. His thorough examination of sacrifice and separation are especially relevant to my analysis of *Shivers*. Privileging Žižek's method of employing Lacanian terms to examine larger societal and cultural issues rather than restricting them to diagnostic use, one can highlight the material and corporeal dimensions of the concrete maternity of the residential tower as depicted in the film.

In the symbolic pool scene, Dr. St-Luc enters the indoor pool area and realises that the two women he encounters are infected. As he attempts to escape outdoors, he is confronted by a mob. Steady tracking shots initially display a deceptive sense of calm and stability, but are quickly interrupted by a shift to hand held camera, which presents a startling contrast. The mob incurs larger confusion. Rather than using transitions, Cronenberg here employs cuts to add to the chaos. The camera cuts again as Dr. St-Luc has retreated back to the confines of the pool area, as we have. Cronenberg manipulates the angle so that the viewer arrives at the location before St-Luc does; even before he has returned to the space, we occupy it. The editing and camerawork hint at our complicity: perhaps we knew all along he wouldn't escape. The opening and closing doors that lead to the pool enclosure, along with their evocation of penetration, can be

read, especially from a Freudian standpoint, as marking the erotic entry into the venerally infected body of the high-rise—the pool’s waters perhaps invoking vaginal or amniotic fluids. St-Luc here returns to the confines of the womb as he seeks shelter and comfort. Cronenberg, throughout the scene uses close-up shots to highlight the emotion of the doctor. When St-Luc is on his own, the stable cinematography has a methodical technicality that is strictly opposed to the destabilizing, hand-held subjective shots of the crowd. As the mob breaches the door and enters the pool’s seemingly sacred, sheltering space, a low angle close-up of St-Luc from the point-of-view of the pool.<sup>3</sup> Here, the camera angle suggests that it is the pool itself that is looking at its next victim, studying it as an organism.

The pool, the more conspicuously feminine appendage of the body-architecture of the high-rise, is depicted throughout the scene with stable shots. A shot of the zombie-like mob reveals that the door has been breached. Remaining static, the camera reminds us that the structure has a *maternity* that can easily turn monstrous or host monstrosity. The return of the residents to the pool establishes it as a ur-site or womb for the chaos. The camera cuts once again, revealing the infected Forsythe as she emerges from the water. The stationary shot presents her as somewhat stable amidst the madness, yet she remains off-centered, hinting at a decentering of her human subjectivity by the pool’s dominant/domineering nonhuman perspective. This heightens the tension of the moment; here woman is made monstrous by the disease prone waters of the pool, but also personifies or embodies it, which speaks to the internalization of social engineering’s ills by the residents within the high-rise and a vital

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<sup>3</sup> Considering the close-up to be a privileged mechanism that highlights physiognomic qualities of objects and subjects, film critic Béla Balázs writes, “close-ups are often dramatic revelations of what is really happening under the surface of appearances” (56).

blurring of boundaries or breaking down of subjectivity in productive ways. Cronenberg shifts to a slow-motion sequence as St-Luc gets infected by his lover. As residents gather around the union of the protagonists, a strident diegetic sound amplifies the beautiful and cathartic agony of the climax. Out of focus bodies are moving towards the couple as the image dissolves. Breaking the chain of harsh jump cuts, the scene fades from the deconstructed shot of the pool to the complete body of the building. While Cronenberg privileges cuts throughout the scene, the moment of infection leads to first out-of-focus imagery and then a transitioning fade, both stylistically emphasizing dissolving subject-object boundaries. The economy of image in the filmmaking and the choice of a limited vocabulary call attention to the transition from Dr. St-Luc's rationality to that of the pool, the embracing of the abject in the end providing the potential for a new, "transcorporeal" subjectivity (Alaimo 2010).

In positioning *Shivers* as a horror film and understanding the apartment complex as the central monstrous (and abject) object driving the narrative, an interesting assumption arises in that even though the disease originates from within the residents, the actual symptoms themselves are not terrible. As David Sanjek argues, "Dr. Hobbes's parasites constitute a positive form of disease and bring about a welcome change in the Starliner Towers' residents and, by extension, society at large" (61). While some people die, the tenants of the Starliner complex experience heightened sexual urges, which in turn enable a more direct transmission of the parasites and accelerates the spread of infection. In this instance, what is being passed on can be conceptualised as a liberation from societal pressures under the guise of a monstrous disease.

The move from containment to eroticization is central to a subversive analysis of this film—and arguably of my overall argument in this paper, as it enables an erotic alternative

reading or subversive interpretive framework. This allows viewers of *Shivers* to critically engage with the issues presented in the film. While the island provides a perfect setting for entrapment and exclusivity, as well as an escape from the anxiety-inducing environment of the metropolis, the building's bodily metaphors allow room for contamination or porousness, as sexual promiscuity and contagion fester within the structure. Quiet, guttural, and violent, Cronenberg's film is an intimate and full throttle engagement with uncertainty, ambiguity, and the estranging qualities of late capitalist urban modernity.

On a side note, the island ecology of the film resonates with German philosopher and cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk's analysis of spatial plurality in *Spheres III: Foams*. In *Foams*, Sloterdijk points out to the centrality of the island figure to literary and philosophical imaginations of capitalist expansion, as exemplified in the story of *Robinson Crusoe* as a "tale of the puritanical simpleton, who created a micro-commonwealth of British Christian cliches on a desert island in the Atlantic" (287). Island ecologies often serve as utopian sites for humans to test new world models, or as (un)natural immune systems, whose framing power offers protection from mainland living processes and factors that cannot be easily managed. In other words, island ecologies lend themselves easily into a metaphor for managerial dream worlds or a test tube for late capitalist culture.

In *Shivers*, spatial organization within the residential towers lead to an erosion of solidarity; as Sloterdijk argues, the "scandal of the modern habitation model is that it addresses above all the isolation and traffic needs of flexibilised individuals [...] who no longer seek their immunitary optimum in imaginary and real collectives or cosmic totalities (and the corresponding ideas of house, people, class, and state)" (Sloterdijk 500). Departing from his

concept of egosphere, which can be defined as space driven by the individualistic ego within the co-isolated environment instead of by models of solidarity, one can rethink how the maternal body as a metaphoric container for social anxieties becomes a site for not only the uncanny but also the abject, especially in relation to the body politic. Sloterdijk sees the private apartment as an “atomic or elementary egospheric form—as a “cellular world bubble.” As such, apartments or houses enable the control of every aspect of that space by the resident; thus these spaces become a direct representation of us. The egosphere, in the urban environment, is housed under the organic emerging structures, which enable what Sloterdijk identifies as a co-isolated environment to exist and flourish. Through this process, the egosphere becomes an essential piece of the larger network of our environment, which facilitates sharing and interaction between different bubbles.

The egosphere is the space all can relate to; however, we must recognise how our own egosphere depends on those of everyone else around us. What happens when a neoliberally structured egosphere, the figure of the residential tower, gets represented as a monstrous maternal structure? Such a configuration troubles the concept of coisolation, or the interconnectivity of all individualistic spaces. Beyond its role as a physical structure, the tower ultimately acts as a protective shell against the dirt of the urban fabric.

*Shivers* is only a horror film in a very superficial way. While it deals with horror conventions, its conceptualization of a residential tower as a womb-like incubator for social unrest and resistance, I would argue, uses horror as a critique of society’s grotesqueries. Cronenberg here offers a look at not only the ways in which society can imprison us but, more importantly, how society uses bodies and urban architecture in the service of producing ideas and



behaviours that run against non-homogenizing desires. *Shivers*, by featuring this disease, renders all residents equally inebriated, sexually promiscuous, thus allowing for a liberation that allows people to overcome their fear of difference; all become portals for pleasure. On embodied utopias, Grosz writes that “they always imply a movement of systems [...] beyond their own systemacity, and modes of containment that are unable to quite contain or control that which they draw into their circle of influence.” She adds, “utopias are the spaces of phantasmatically attainable political and personal ideals, the projection of idealised futures; embodiment, though, is that which has never had its place within utopias” (131). While the “productive relations between utopias and embodiment, which link together some elements of architectural discourse and practice” (132) have become a significant thread in theoretical discussions of the political concerns at the heart of body-architecture relations, films like *Shivers* point to the potential of rendering them cinematic.

The film ends with the tenants of the building jumping into the swimming pool and returning to the water, a going back to the primordial and biological stage from which we emerge. Emerging from the amniotic fluid of the womb, the residents collectively leave the Starliner tower or subvert its ills through a mode of embodiment that is not foreseen by the building’s social design. This return to the womb can be seen as a rewinding of neoliberalism’s standardizing effects—much like the way the return to a primordial, edenic Earth at the end of the recent space thriller *Gravity* subtly gestures towards a critique of techno-industrial modernity: “[a] reference to evolution and primordial times is significant in that the resolution of the narrative seems to involve an imaginary rewinding of civilization” (Kara 2016). In the final scenes of the film, the residents happily exit the residential towers in their cars. The viewer is left to wonder as to whether Hobbes’ plan to infect the world is underway or not. *Shivers* ends,

Sanjek writes, as “all the development’s surviving residents drive off towards the mainland from their abandoned homes as reports of widescale sexual assaults issue from a radio” (60). Here, the contagion is disrupting the community’s cohesion demanded by neoliberalism and enables a liberation, in ways that could not have been imagined. It also builds a connection between *Shivers* and *Candyman* as films that make the high-rise setting a porous container for late capitalism’s horrors.

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

Film provides a virtually risk-free environment in which to explore emotionally embodied architecture, a form of imaginative mental island where space and place are created as possible worlds. Since directors can practice architecture without the rules and regulations of daily life, filmic architecture becomes an architecture of meaning (Weihsmann 1995). Cinema offers the possibility of disrupting the patriarchal reframing of architectural spaces that undeniably privileges the masculine and its representation of the “social order, hierarchical progression, polarities, and stereotypical gender roles”; this is important as the maintenance of such ideology “sends ripples in the production of spaces, particularly in architecture and urban planning,” which in turn affects every facet of vernacular life (Lico 30). Film space is fundamentally an emotional space because of its ability to render the invisible visible, whilst translating on screen the functions of architecture into emotion, thus releasing the flux that is suppressed in the inert real world constructions.

Exploring contemporary cultural representations of built environments as they relate to

politics of social reproduction in the context of late capitalism and neoliberalism, I look at two films featuring residential towers as an essential element of horror produced at times which coincide with the discursive birth of neoliberalism in the mid 1970s and its explosion in the 1990s, problematizing this idealism stage whilst presenting the impetus behind its utopian goals. I conclude this project by returning to Cronenberg's mid-70s classic *Shivers*, a precursor of horror films utilizing the residential tower as a place and space of horror. The backdrop of the mid-1970s allows for a reframing of ideas of contagion and sickness that account for the political climate that would become instrumental in shaping the narratives of films such as *Candyman*. *Shivers* presents a building which "possesses a kind of sentience, directly manipulating the behaviour of its inhabitants" (Sellars 2015), an aspect of the residential high-rise conspicuously absent in Rose's 1990s horror classic. *Shivers*' luxurious high-rise, which tends to the residents' every wants and needs is a far cry from the infamous Chicago housing project Cabrini-Green. As such, *Candyman* demonstrates importance of the shift in the political climate of the time by centering the narrative the reciprocity between the residential tower to the housing project is key—while the protagonist lives in an upscale condo development, it is revealed that her building was once designed as low income housing, a relationship that is key in the reading of Cabrini-Green as abject as it demonstrates the elasticity of concrete maternity.

The distinction between the environment in these two films highlights the importance of the political and cultural climate in shaping our understanding of the built environment, which can account for a conceptualization of the monstrous-feminine in the residential tower by drawing connections between the womb and containment as they related to late capitalism. While the structure is obviously monstrous in *Candyman*, this relationship between the womb and the structure of the high-rise is made evident in the pool of *Shivers*. The role of the building

in the narrative of these films critically confronts the entanglement of state and architecture. Looking at the monstrous-feminine and abject, and establishing their connection to the reproductive body, I consider the role of the sublime, the grotesque, and the erotic in establishing those associations. Highlighting the concomitance between ideas of infection and fertility, I use these films as a way of establishing a lineage of horror films that engage with the elements that are key to the idea of concrete maternity by giving way to a provocative cinematic imagining of the cultural logic and psychic landscape of late capitalism.

Within the neoliberal framework, certain acts or behaviours are demanded of citizens while simultaneously constructing ‘good’ citizens and self-responsibility. In exploring cultural representations of the residential high-rise, I demonstrate how these portrayals translates into an idealized political participation through embodiment—in people and the built environment. Indeed, understanding these constructions within cinematic culture can help understand the constructions of citizenship and government at large. As such, this project highlights the ways in which *Candyman* and *Shivers* reflect and refract social and economic contradictions and conflicts that have been exacerbated by the proliferation of new social policies, urban development strategies, theories such as broken window policing, and, most importantly, the feminine reproductive labour power. My analysis accounts for how such films might be mined to constitute a philosophy of concrete maternity, a narrative that connects the ideology underlying economic and political decision making in the advanced capitalist era to the forms of genderings that characterise body-architecture theories in the contemporary moment. To this end, I privilege the feminist theory of concrete maternity that accounts for the maternal body as conceptualized through the filmic representation of the residential tower—and its many iterations, including the housing project—one which describe and clarify subjective experience, and narrate conflict, in

order to contribute to a theory of the constructed domestic space in film attentive to both social and cultural aspects of built environments.

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## VII. Filmography

*High-rise*. Dir. Ben Wheatley, StudioCanal, 2015. Film.

*Containment*. Dir. Neil McEnergy-West, Vision Films, 2015. Film.

*Citadel*. Dir. Ciaran Foy, Revolver Entertainment, 2012. Film.

*Dredd*. Dir. Pete Travis, Entertainment Film Distributors; Lionsgate, 2012. Film.

*Attack the Block*. Dir. Joe Cornish, Screen Gems, 2011. Film.

*The Raid*. Dir. Gareth Evans, Celluloid Nightmares (Worldwide); Sony Pictures Classics, Stage 6 Films (United States), 2011. Film.

*28 Days Later*. Dir. Danny Boyle, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2002. Film.

*Candyman*. Dir. Bernard Rose, TriStar Pictures; PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1992. Film.

*Demons 2*. Lamberto Bava, Titanus Distribuzione, 1986. Film.

*The Shock of the New*. Dir. Robert Hughes, BBC; Time-Life Films; PBS (US), 1980. Television documentary series.

*City of Towers*. Dir. Christopher Booker, BBC, 1979. Television documentary.

*Shivers*. Dir. David Cronenberg, Cinépix Film Properties Inc., 1975. Film.

*Crimes of the Future*. Dir. David Cronenberg, New Cinema Enterprises, 1970. Film.

*The Smithsons on Housing*. Dir. B.S Johnson, BBC Two, 1970. Documentary.

*Stereo*. Dir. David Cronenberg, Film Canada Presentations, 1969. Film.

*Night of the Living Dead*. Dir. George A. Romero, The Walter Reade Organization; Continental Distributing, 1968. Film.

*Rosemary's Baby*. Dir. Roman Polanski, Paramount Pictures, 1968. Film.