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Monstrous Resonance: Sexuality in the Horror Soundtrack (1968-1981)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Musicology

by

Morgan Fifield Woolsey

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Monstrous Resonance: Sexuality in the Horror Soundtrack (1968-1981)

by

Morgan Fifield Woolsey

Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Raymond L. Knapp, Co-Chair

Professor Mitchell Bryan Morris, Co-Chair

In this dissertation I argue for the importance of the film soundtrack as affective archive through

a consideration of the horror soundtrack. Long dismissed by scholars in both cinema media

studies and musicology as one of horror's many manipulative special effects employed in the

aesthetically and ideologically uncomplicated goal of arousing fear, the horror soundtrack is in

fact an invaluable resource for scholars seeking to historicize changes in cultural sensibilities and

public feelings about sexuality. I explore the critical potential of the horror soundtrack as

affective archive through formal and theoretical analysis of the role of music in the

representation of sexuality in the horror film. I focus on films consumed in the Unites States

during the 1970s, a decade marked by rapid shifts in both cultural understanding and cinematic

representation of sexuality.

My analyses proceed from an interdisciplinary theoretical framework animated by methods drawn from affect studies, American studies, feminist film theory, film music studies, queer of color critique, and queer theory. What is the relationship between public discourses of fear around gender, race, class, and sexuality, and the musical framing of sexuality as fearful in the horror film? I explore this central question through the examination of significant figures in the genre (the vampire, the mad scientist/creation dyad, and the slasher or serial killer) and the musical-affective economies in which they circulate. I argue that attention to the ways in which music interacts with moving images and narrative in the horror genre provides a new way of interrogating the political history of sexuality in the United States, one uniquely equipped to theorize and analyze areas of culture that are often left unanalyzed because of their close engagement with emotions and the body.

The dissertation of Morgan Fifield Woolsey is approved.

Olivia A. Bloechl

Robert W. Fink

Robynn J. Stilwell

Raymond L. Knapp, Committee Co-Chair

Mitchell Bryan Morris, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

To those who root for the Monsters.

To those who root for the Survivors.

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My co-chairs, Ray Knapp and Mitchell Morris, have enthusiastically supported every topic I've pushed past them, a quality I do not take for granted. Of course, without well-timed conversations in Mitchell's office, I may never have ended up in Musicology, and without Ray's gentle reassurance from day one to day 2,600 (approx.), I may never have finished. My brilliant and incisive mentors have let their light shine, enabling me to grow something truly my own, at my own pace. My gratitude cannot be measured.

Though she may not know it, Robynn Stilwell was one of the first film music scholars I would read as an undergraduate; my scholarship would not be possible without her foundational work. And while Robynn came on late in the process, she was always a lively and joyous interlocutor. Bob and Olivia's influences have, in many ways, bookended this project. Bob gamely travelled with me through every Academy Award-winning film score of the seventies before I started writing and provided truly heroic line edits as I finished. Olivia guided my theoretical thinking over the course of many transformative graduate seminars, and supported me personally and professionally as I transitioned to my new disciplinary home. Thank you. Finally, an honorary thanks goes to Allyson Nadia Field, whose generosity knows no bounds. She gave

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This project began to materialize sometime around my discovery that the bad feelings I associated with horror movies had diagnostic value, around age 11. Without the unflinching love and support of my parents, Claudia and David, it is unlikely that I would have undertaken this project. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my own path. I have been inspired by a long line of phenomenal music teachers: Cheryl Ciano Havens, Susan Daily, Inés Gómez-Ochoa, Peter Tavalin, Alex Ogle, Judith Serkin. Without them, my omnivorous approach to music might never have been. The instruction I received in writing—not academic writing but prose, poetry—has been central to the way I express my ideas about music. I am very grateful to Harry Bauld and Annie Boutelle for this care and attention. There are many professors, too, who guided me as an undergraduate struggling to make something meaningful in the spaces between three disciplines: film, music, and gender studies. Raphael Atlas, Lucretia Knapp, and Marilyn Schuster gave me license to explore my nascent ideas about music, horror, and gender. In directing my honors thesis, Ruth Solie and Elizabeth Young put their faith in me and my somewhat disreputable topic, an act of faith that fuels my pursuits to this day. Thank you, Linda Shaughnessy and Cathy Noess, for your support during my idyllic time at Sage Hall. I carry your warmth with me everywhere I go.

My nine years at UCLA are no less scattered with formative influences. I matriculated with a cohort that defies description; they quickly became my family. Dalal Alfares, Jacob Lau, Jessica Martinez-Tebbel, Naveen Minai, Jocelyn Thomas: thank you for your aggressive affirmation, tender challenges, and astounding acumen. Barbara Van Nostrand, thank you for safely shepherding me along when I jumped the Gender Studies ship for Musicology, and for

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My lifelong friends Kristin Palladino, Christina Padrón, Amanda Rogers, and Jenn Billingsley have supported me through many struggles and transitions, and there is comfort in knowing that writing this dissertation was just the latest in a long series of perhaps ill-advised schemes they've watched me carry out. Thanks to *Drag Race* club for the weekly shenanigans and discussions of writing that was not my own. Thanks to Taylor Parks, David Findlay, and Alaina and George Kommer for their affection and understanding. Myleen DeJesus—librarian of my heart, domestic co-conspirator, and true soul mate— were it in my power, I would bestow upon you the honorary PhD in transnational karaoke studies you so richly deserve. But since it is not I will simply say that over our eight years together you've provided insight, tough love, and more hilarity than I can ever hope to catalogue. Though our paths diverged just before I began my final climb, you made Los Angeles home, and I could not have done this without you.

I was told time and again that writing a dissertation pushes one past the common limits of human endurance: emotional, intellectual, even physical. Having watched dozens of friends and colleagues chewed up by this process I, terminal optimist, was still certain I could avoid many of the pitfalls I had observed over the years. Of course I couldn't; no one can. Instead, I managed to break my ankle in April, just as I was entering the home stretch, thereby consigning myself to a resentful dependency that probably burned as much energy as the writing itself. K Leenhouts carried out the Herculean task of loving me during this time, feathering our nest and holding everything together. My ideas are stronger for your persistent prodding, even when I protested. Thank you for your love, patience, and insight: for being a true partner in all ways.

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PUBLICATIONS

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2016 Music & the Moving Image: "Music, Camp & the Queer Creations of *Rocky Horror & Phantom of the Paradise.*" New York, NY, May 27-29.

2015 Society for Cinema Media Studies: "American International Pictures and the Rescoring of Mario Bava's Italian Co-Productions for the American Market." Montreal, Quebec. March 24-29.

2014	Contemporary Horrors: Destabilizing a Genre: "'They're All Gonna Laugh At You!' Gender in the Remade *Carrie* and Her Revived Musical Twin." Chicago, IL, April 24-26.
2012	EMP/International Association for the Study of Popular Music: "'Trying to Feel the Movie's Zither Vibrations': Film Music and the Construction of Subjectivity in William Friedkin's *Cruising*," New York, March 22-25.
2011	Feminist Theory & Music: "Bleeding Through: The Permeability of Sound, Body, and Subjectivity in *Rosemary's Baby*," Tempe, AZ, September 22-25.
2011	Society for Cinema Media Studies: "Towards a Theory of Music in Revolutionary Film," New Orleans, LA, March 10-13.
2010	Thinking Gender: "'I am Norman Bates'? Vocal and Musical Manifestations of the Maternal Acousmatic in *Psycho*." Los Angeles, CA, January 10.
2008	Screen: "'I am Norman Bates'? Vocal and Musical Manifestations of the Maternal Acousmatic in *Psycho*." Glasgow, Scotland, July 4-6.

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2013	Public Talk: Drive-In Movie Night. "The Sociopolitical Context of *Night of the Living Dead*." Otis College of Art & Design, Los Angeles, October 25.
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2017-2018	Graduate Student Representative/Assistant to the Chair (UCLA LGBTQ Studies)
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Chapter One: Introduction
Affective Economies of the Horror Soundtrack

I. Music, Ambivalence, and the Affective Economies of the Horror Film

> In the beginning, I felt confusion, revulsion, and fear. I must have been five years old
> when my father, who had read me stories out of a children's Bible, out of Robin Hood,
> out of the Brothers Grimm, who carefully instructed me never to say the word 'nigger,'
> one night sat me down in our living room to explain that there were 'perverts' in the
> world...There were not many such men in the world, but there were some, and they might
> wish to 'play' with my brother or me in ways that were unnatural. I was being told this so
> I might know about them, but I must not be afraid. A short while later I went to bed and
> dreamed about a tall thin man in a floppy hat, a black cape slung round his shoulders, his
> face turned away from me, who extended a bony long-nailed index finger out to touch my
> little brother's bared genitals. I woke screaming.
> - Joseph Epstein, "Homo/Hetero," *Harper's* (1970)

> Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;
> Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt.
> Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an!
> Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!
> - *Erlkönig*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1782)

In the United States, the horror film has long been a source of ambivalent representations of

sexuality; an unsurprising feature of the genre, if one considers its aesthetic-affective

investments in the arousal of bodily sensation and its concomitant role in purveying sexual

content under cover of supernatural fantasy. The genre has also been a reliable source for

sexualized representations of marginalized peoples—thinly veiled or otherwise—as the excerpt

from Joseph Epstein's opinion piece above suggests: the skeletal homosexual-as-pervert, clad in

black, preying upon the defenseless child. These imagined perverts occupy a fantastic and

mythical space in young Epstein's mind alongside Jesus, Robin Hood, and Hansel and Gretel,

while the adult writer links them to subjects of a highly-visible, but unjustly denigrated category

of real people, those he was taught never to call "niggers": characters in a present-day social

drama. These categories become entangled in his writing, and they define one another. He

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describes homosexuality as a "curse" even as he describes it as "a state of permanent niggerdom among men."[1]

The image young Epstein conjures subsequently—Nosferatu or the Wicked Witch of the West by way, perhaps, of *The Great Train Robbery* and its lasting "black hat" symbolism[2]—is quite clearly the result of interpreting sexual monstrosity and threat through cinematic lenses, and an enmeshment in what historian Michael Rogin helpfully calls "political demonology": "the creation of monsters as a continuing feature of American politics by the inflation, stigmatization, and dehumanization of political foes."[3] Epstein is resolute in his horror, his fear, and his disgust, recounting several tales of his encounters with homosexuality, the pitch of his panic steadily increasing until his closing declaration that:

> [i]f I had the power to do so, I would wish homosexuality off the face of this earth…
> *They are different from the rest of us*. Homosexuals are different, moreover, in a way that cuts deeper than other kinds of human differences—religious, class, racial—in a way that is, somehow, more fundamental. Cursed without clear cause, afflicted without apparent cure, they are an affront to our rationality, living evidence of our despair of ever finding a sensible, an explainable, design to the world.[4]

This dark confessional, the cover story for the September 1970 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, drew a response by Merle Miller in the *New York Times*, as well as an all-day sit-in by

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[1] Epstein, Joseph. "Homo/Hetero: The Struggle for Sexual Identity." *Harper's Magazine*; New York, N.Y. Vol. 241, Iss. 1444, (Sep 1, 1970): 37-51.

[2] Agnew, Jeremy. 2012. *The Old West in fact and film: history versus Hollywood*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland et Co., 131.

[3] Rogin, Michael Paul. 1988. *Ronald Reagan, the movie and other episodes in political demonology*. Berkeley: University of California Press. xiii.

[4] Epstein, "Homo/Hetero," 51.

the Gay Activists' Alliance.[5] It is striking how clearly Epstein designates sexual difference as a reason for "wish[ing] homosexuality off the face of this earth," one that "cuts deeper" than other kinds of human differences. He makes this point through a continued comparison with racial difference, a comparison that reinforces Black abjection but also places it in a protected and ennobled category of existence. While public tolerance for homosexuality and homosexuals may be on the rise, Epstein suggests, private acceptance of it among heterosexuals is a far-off mirage. "Nobody says, or at least I have never heard anyone say, 'Some of my best friends are homosexuals.'"[6] Consciously working not to demonize Black sexuality—at least Black masculinity—Epstein substitutes the sexuality in relation to which he observes a preponderance of demonization: homosexuality.

In this dissertation, I take up José Esteban Muñoz's project of developing "a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic, one that is calibrated to discern a multiplicity of interlocking identity components and the ways in which they affect the social."[7] It is my argument that the horror film soundtrack is a particularly rich generic field for the calibration of such a lens, due to horror's polymorphous conception of perversity and the soundtrack's affective and emotional roles in suturing audiences to films. Whether adhering to emotivist theories of musical affect that assert music's ability to arouse emotional responses directly or cognitivist theories that music can signify emotional meanings but cannot arouse

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[5] Miller, Merle. "What it Means To Be a Homosexual." *New York Times* (1923-Current file); Jan 17, 1971; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times*, 9.

[6] Epstein, "Homo/Hetero," 38.

[7] Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Disidentifications: queers of color and the performance of politics.* Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 8.

them, the scholar of film music generally acknowledges that emotional responsivity is central to the object of study's function.[8]

In the encounters Epstein describes so manipulatively, gender, sexuality, race, and age are interlocking and co-constructing. Through Epstein's manipulations, the dark and shadowy pervert is pitted against the very embodiment of innocence and vulnerability, the white (though perhaps marginally so due to Epstein's Jewishness) male child, and contrasted with the unjustly abject and absented Black figure. These categories seem to be particularly distinct for Epstein, his childhood affect of fear re-experienced retrospectively by an adult who recoils from those very memories and what they represent. Horror (described by William Ian Miller as an intense mixture of fear and disgust[9]) is central to the desired impact of the piece, and the vulnerability of the child (an indispensable figure in the political drama against homosexuality throughout the McCarthy era and well into the seventies by way of Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaigns) is central to that horror.

Fear of predatory and pedophilic sexuality of course reaches back much further than the McCarthy era. Reprintings of Robin Wood's introduction to *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film* have appeared in virtually every anthology devoted to the subject. In his introduction, Wood lays out a "simple and obvious basic formula for the horror film: normality is threatened by the Monster."[10] He argues that this formula, when deployed through the Marxist

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[8] See Smith, Jeff. "Movie Music as Moving Music," in *Passionate Views*, in Smith, Greg M., and Carl R. Plantinga. 2005. *Passionate views: film, cognition, and emotion*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 148.

[9] Miller, William Ian.1998. *The anatomy of disgust*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 25.

[10] Britton, Andrew and Robin Wood. 1979. *American nightmare: essays on the horror film*. Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 14.

and Freudian concepts of basic and surplus repression offers nothing short of "the material for a radical and diagnostic reading of [American] culture itself."[11] For Wood, the horror film allows cultural critics close-to-unobstructed access to representations of some of the most trenchant American—which is to say, capitalist and patriarchal—fears about its "Others" (women and children, sexual "deviants," the proletariat, ethnic groups, foreigners, alternative ideologies, and non-Christian religions).

These cinematic representations are deeply ambivalent in their depictions of both normality and the Monster, and this ambivalence often makes space for oppositional and even progressive readings of seemingly conservative texts. Films may demonize and even destroy Monsters, but often it is not the representative(s) of normality but the Monster that is the exciting and vital figure, the locus of our primary emotional investment, whatever that investment may be. A horror film may ask us to gaze, aghast, as the Monster threatens normality, "the heterosexual, monogamous couple, the family, and the social institutions (police, church, armed forces) that support and defend them,"[12] but it also expects us to revel in the Monster's destruction and triumphs.

Though he does not name his interest as such, in the introduction to *American Nightmare* and the various essays it would inspire, Wood explores the moods and tones—nebulous though they may be—that characterize these narratives. Specifically, he is interested in the circulation of affects through these ambivalent relations between Monster, normality, and audience, and in the ideological and political significance of those engagements in their immediate historical context:

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[11] Wood, Robin, "Neglected Nightmares," in Silver, Alain, and James Ursini. 2000. *The horror film reader*. 111.

[12] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 14.

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the seventies. Sexual repression under patriarchal capitalism, he argues, is at the center of these concerns. How do seventies horror films position their audiences in relation to Monsters and representations of normality? What is the erotic significance of these film-audience relations? Wood explores such questions through a taxonomy of "five recurrent motifs" of the decade's horror films: the Monster as human psychotic, the revenge of nature, Satanism, the Terrible Child, and cannibalism. Music, which often serves as the clearest embodiment of mood and tone in the horror film—is not among the elements he discusses.

However, Wood devotes his first short chapter of *American Nightmare* to a consideration of music: not music *in* the horror film, but "sentimental" (*Empfindsam*) art music of the early nineteenth century as a medium for the expression of horror's ambiguities. The chapter calls up another example of predation on a child by a shadowy pervert, a twin of the folk demons conjured by the young Epstein: the Elf King (*Erlkönig)* in Schubert's song of the same name (1815)*,* a setting of a 1782 poem by Goethe that narrates an otherworldly Monster's sexualized pursuit of a small boy. The song comprises four distinct speaking positions—the narrator, small boy, his father, and the *Erlkönig—*and shifts affect depending on which of the voices is in the foreground. Wood states that his choice of the song "is not to confuse two obviously disparate culture 'moments' (the Germany that produced Goethe and Schubert with the America that produced Hooper and Romero) but to insist on continuities within the development of Western patriarchal civilization."[13] But why *Der Erlkönig*? He could have chosen any number of cultural objects to fill this function, but it is clearly music in combination with narrative that Wood finds

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[13] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 29.

so compelling: "Schubert's magnificent realization both intensifies the poem's force and very precisely underlines implications on which I wish to dwell."[14]

These implications in question are explored through the ways in which music can contradict or undercut dominant readings of a text, making space for alternative readings of the monstrosity and normality within. The text of Goethe's poem stresses the child's terror and pain, and concludes with the abrupt revelation of the child's death, suggesting that the *Erlkönig* was real, but simply concealed from the father. But Wood argues that the *Erlkönig* could easily be interpreted as a figment of the child's imagination, and that therefore child has scared himself to death. If the latter is the case, he asks, "what forces have produced this figment,"[15] that is, what forces have produced this fear and what forces have repressed it?

His method for addressing this question includes textual analysis, but he also proceeds to analyze the musical setting of each voice, noting how the piano accompaniment serves to provide general atmosphere, and its relation to the text's distinct and multiple voices. Schubert utilizes "a minor key accompaniment that evokes both the galloping of the horse and a generalized, ominous tumult,"[16] dropping the listener into the narrative in media res. Wood ties the repetitive minor mode hammering of the piano to the child's fear, the galloping of the horse, and the insistence of patriarchal repression. The possessive and predatory *Erlkönig,* on the other hand, expresses himself in a major mode and inspires variation in the rhythmic patterns in the piano accompaniment, providing moments of relief from the repetition in the stanza sections where the father or child are speaking.

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[14] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 29.

[15] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 30.

[16] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 30.

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Ultimately, Wood asserts that while the possessiveness of the *Erlkönig* is terrifying to the child, "the lure of sensuality and relaxation"[17] he represents is attractive: the hammering piano accompaniment abates when the *Erlkönig* speaks to the child, replaced with a lilting dance melody. The song therefore "opposes two forms of energy: the strife of repression, the relaxation of play and dance"[18] in the relationship between the Monster (*Erlkönig*) and normality (the child and his father), and offers the audience at least two possible interpretations of this opposition: repression of the queer sensuality of the *Erlkönig* killed the child, or that queer sensuality itself did. Writing in 1979, Wood asks if it is possible to push for the former interpretation and works that invite it—to create a "positive" Monster—and if it possible to allow for a return of the repressed that will not obliterate those subjects oppressed in the service of this repression. This problem, he concludes, "reaches out far beyond the horror genre and the cinema: its resolution is central to the future of our civilization."[19] In short, for Wood the problem of the horror film and the "positive" Monster is one of sexual liberation, a problem knotted so tightly in Epstein's phobic meditation on the subject as to reject any consideration of an alternative configuration.

Monstrous Resonance, Minoritarian Negativity

In *Monstrous Resonance*, I, too, listen for this liberatory music. I argue for the horror soundtrack's importance as an affective archive in the documentation of histories of sexual repression and liberation and, by extension, what Muñoz designates "minoritarian" sexuality.[20]

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[17] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 30.

[18] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 32.

[19] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 32.

[20] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 8.

Film Monsters[21] have long encoded difference, usually an amalgamation of racial, sexual, and socio-economic difference, sometimes engaging localized differences (national, religious, political) that flow from the specificities of the narrative. This characteristic has endeared the Monster to a wide range of minoritarian forms of cultural analysis, artistic production, and activism. This dissertation asks the reader to consider the soundtrack as a crystallization of cultural attitudes and feelings about demonized minorities, and an important site of minoritarian identification.

The theories of identification in the horror film that guide this dissertation are mostly feminist in derivation and, considering that the decade under discussion in the following pages represented a major period of growth for that body of scholarly literature, therefore serve a dual function as guiding frameworks and primary sources. For example, Robin Wood's writing on the horror film in the last year of the seventies (following his *American Nightmare* film retrospective) and several pieces throughout the eighties, as well as Linda Williams' generative work on the topic which found its way into print in the early eighties. Even Carol J. Clover's groundbreaking *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, although not published until 1992, presents ideas about films she viewed in the seventies and the eighties. I follow the trajectory of feminist horror film theory, adapting its grandiose and sometimes single-mindedly-focused attempts to track desire and violence through coordinates psychoanalytic and cultural, and its intense concern with sexual victimization.

Queer theory forms another important node in my work. In his polemic call-to-theoretical-arms, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, for example, Lee Edelman suggests that rather than attempting to take on the mantle of reproductive futurity demanded by

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[21] I follow Wood by capitalizing the Monster, which I designate as a formal figure.

an Epsteinian heteronormativity, queers should use their sexuality, and the negativity freighted onto them because of it, as a site of resistance and refusal. That they should say "explicitly what Law and the Pope and the whole of the Symbolic order for which they stand hear anyway in each and every expression or manifestation of queer sexuality: Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized… fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop."[22] In short, the Queer as a Monster in the Symbolic should leverage that abject position to do some real damage to a system of politics in which everything, he argues, is concerned with the perpetuation of reproductive futurity.

We will find some resonance in Edelman's assertions in the sphere of liberation politics of the 1970s, in not only Gay Liberation but Black Power, Third World, and Women's Liberation movements as well. These groups, in the process of negotiating their oppressed positions, invoke the imagery of threat through which they are so often represented in names such as "The Lavender Menace" or "Yellow Peril," as well as slogans and chants emphasizing the supposed monstrosity their identities represented in the mainstream. For example, one offshoot of the radical feminist organization New York Radical Women (NYRW) embraced not only the generalized idea of threat as a conceptual framework for activism, but also a specific figure: the witch. Dubbing themselves WITCH (Women's International Terror Conspiracy from Hell), the group often orchestrated elaborate and theatrical "zaps" drawing on the negative, but powerful, connotations of the figure of the witch. [23]

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[22] Edelman, Lee. 2007. *No future queer theory and the death drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 29.

[23] Echols, Alice. *Daring to be bad: radical feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 76-77.

In spite of this evocative example, horror is not generally understood to be a utopian genre, a genre through which minoritarian subjects can imagine a liberated world or future. While cultural liberation movements such as Black Power have given birth to richly speculative practices such as Afrofuturism, horror does not seem to offer the same kind of empowering subjunctive. Science fiction takes pride of place in concretizing the desire for transformation espoused by liberation movements, imagining new worlds free (but perhaps not entirely divorced) from the constraints of the here and now. But scholars of genre often pair horror and science fiction, pointing out that both genres' most characteristic formulas and narratives are related in that they often hinge on the appearance of fantastic creatures.

Noel Carroll and Bruce Kawin, for example, set out to distinguish the fantastic creatures of horror from those of science fiction by evaluating their reception in typical narratives, and by the way in which those narratives conclude. Noel Carroll holds that "normal" people in horror stories respond to monsters with—no surprise—horror, while those in science fiction need not;[24] Bruce Kawin argues that that the "closed" worldview of horror differentiates it from the "open" worldview of science fiction.[25] In horror the Monster is met with fear and ultimately must be destroyed for normality to be restored, while even if the creatures of science fiction are regarded similarly, the conclusion of the narrative generally instills a sense of possibility. For them, this difference betrays horror's fundamentally paranoid orientation towards the Unknown.

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[24] Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The philosophy of horror, or, Paradoxes of the heart*. New York: Routledge.

[25] Kawin, Bruce. "The Mummy's Pool" in Grant, Barry Keith. 1984. *Planks of reason: essays on the horror film*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 3.

As Wood notes, in the seventies horror "enters its apocalyptic phase," turning to nihilistic narratives of terror without end.[26] Believing themselves to have escaped the clutches of evil vampires, protagonists discover a loved one transformed (*The Fearless Vampire Killers*); believing they have found help, protagonists flee directly back to their captors (*Texas Chain Saw Massacre*); eluding the forces of good, the Antichrist smiles directly into the camera before the credits roll (*The Omen*); seemingly dispatched "in real life," a superhuman killer pops from the lake or the grave in the protagonist's nightmares, a premonition of their inevitable return (*Halloween, Friday the 13th*). Wood's "apocalyptic" horror, then, is not so much "closed" in its worldview as it is antithetical to the possibility or desirability of closure *itself* following encounters with monstrosity. And if we follow Wood, minoritarian subjects, accustomed to seeing themselves represented as monstrous, might see apocalypse, the impossibility of a restored status quo, as empowering.

This minoritarian embrace of the monstrous is the interpretive ground on which my analyses take place, a strategy endorsed and encouraged by Edelman quite expressly in *No Future.* Edelman's thinking[27] has elicited a number of telling critiques, one of which, Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure,* will fundamentally shape my theoretical approach. Halberstam argues that the "real problem…with the antisocial turn in queer theory as exemplified by the work of Bersani, Edelman, and others has less to do with the meaning of

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[26] Wood, Robin. 1986. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 25.

[27] Along with Leo Bersani, D.A. Miller, and others whose work has been categorized as making up the "negative turn."

political negativity…and more to do with the excessively small archive that represents queer negativity."[28] Halberstam continues, in a passage worth quoting at length:

> On the one hand the gay male archive coincides with the canonical archive, and on the other hand it narrows that archive down to a select group of antisocial queer aesthetes and camp icons and texts…but it rarely mentions all kinds of antisocial writers, artists, and texts…Because it sticks to a short list of favored canonical writers, the gay male archive binds itself to a narrow range of affective responses. And so fatigue, ennui, boredom, indifference, ironic distancing, indiretness, arch dismissal, insincerity, and camp make up what Ann Cvetkovich has called 'an archive of feelings' associated with this form of antisocial theory. But this canon occludes another suite of affectivities associated with another kind of politics and a different form of negativity. In this other archive we can identify, for example, rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, overinvestment, incivility, brutal honesty, and disappointment. The first archive is a camp archive, a repertoire of formalized and often formulaic responses to the banality of straight culture and the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity. The second archive, however, is far more in keeping with the undisciplined kinds of responses that Leo Bersani at least seems to associate with sex and queer culture.[29]

The horror soundtrack, with its complex identificatory processes of empathy and anempathy, subjectivity and objectivity, offers a fascinating area for Halberstam's antisocial archival expansion. Since this dissertation considers sexuality across a wide range of identities, some considered queer, others not, in my reading the horror soundtrack offers an expansion to thinking about sexuality, applying "queer" as an analytic, not a label attaching to any particular form of sexual nonnormativity. In this way my thinking is influenced by Cathy Cohen's groundbreaking "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," which, during the AIDS crisis, argues for a coalitional politics and theory that would unite various marginalized subjects (in particular white gay men, gay men of color, intravenous drug users, woman-of-color sex

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[28] Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 109.

[29] Halberstam, The *Queer Art of Failure*, 109-110.

workers) demonized under the Reagan administration.[30] Each of the soundtracks under

consideration in this dissertation represents a public text of feeling and emotion from the

seventies that shapes the apprehension and self-recognition of minoritarian subjects in the public

sphere. These soundtracks orient audiences toward various Monsters—mad scientists and their

creations, vampires, slashers, sex criminals and serial killers, witches, wronged white women

and vengeful Black men—within a complex identificatory process that necessitates an analysis

the affective ambiguities Wood tracks through his discussion of the *Erlkönig* and the musical

strategies used to represent him.

I am particularly interested in the affective dynamics of the seventies because the decade

was a time of considerable change in both societal attitudes toward sexuality and the film

industry's depictions of it. Following the rash of political uprisings in the sixties—the Civil

Rights Movement, Women's Liberation, and Gay Liberation in particular—and the abandonment

of the Hays Code in 1968, the seventies are a crucial period in the cultural development and

representation of political identities, especially those crystallizing around sexuality or attempting

to rewrite how sexuality was deployed against those belonging to those identities. The first half

of the decade is seen by many to look back to the revolutionary 1960s, while the second half tilts

toward the reactionary politics of the 1980s. An analysis of the horror soundtrack as representing

an affective economy yields new insight into the crucible in which identity politics as we know

them were formed, during a time in which, according to musicologist Mitchell Morris, "it

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[30] Cohen, Cathy, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Potential of Radical Queer Politics," in Johnson, E. Patrick, and Mae Henderson. 2005. *Black queer studies: a critical anthology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

seemed that any number of marginalized communities could make a play to renegotiate the

representational contracts that had held them captive in American popular culture."[31]

This dissertation, then, is about cinematic bodies placed in fearful relation to one another

through the threat of sexual—or sexualized—violence, a project about Monsters and victims, and

how films secure relationships between them emotionally through the use of music and sound. In

Monstrous Resonance, I deploy an overlapping focus on the body and emotion (in horror, in film

music, in sexuality across minoritarian identities) to interrogate the complexities of sexuality in

the United States. I also fill gaps in the literature on the material production of horror

soundtracks and use film music scholarship to enrich affect studies.

Horror Soundtrack as Affective Economy

> Although the film score plays a number of narrative and structural functions, it is often
> assumed that its most important function is as a signifier of emotion. As a number of
> scholars point out, music in film frequently serves to represent the emotional states of
> characters, suggest the prevailing mood of a scene, and prompt an appropriate emotional
> response from spectators.
>   - Jeff Smith, "Movie Music as Moving Music," 147

The question of how music is connected to emotion is less fraught in film than in other contexts

since, as Jeff Smith points out, "most objections to the linkage between music and emotion are

premised on a notion of 'pure' music—in other words, music that makes no reference to any

object, property, or sensation outside itself. Film scores, however, clearly do not fit this

constraint."[32] Film music takes on a denotative meaning when counterpoised with images and

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[31] Morris, Mitchell. 2013. *The persistence of sentiment: display and feeling in popular music of the 1970s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 16.

[32] Smith, "Movie Music as Moving Music," 152.

narrative, but through Michel Chion's principle of "added value" it exceeds that meaning.[33] Film music regularly calls upon music's temporal unfolding and ebbs and flows of intensity to signal the moods of a given scene or character to the audience. By focusing on horror film music, I acknowledge the debates around these issues in musicological scholarship more broadly, but relegate them to the background.

As the epigraph above, also by Smith, suggests, music—and the score in particular—is an important signifier of emotion in film, responsible for "prompt[ing] an appropriate emotional response from spectators."[34] In light of this widely accepted view, it is remarkable to me that film music has not as a result been taken up with more frequency in the recent work on affect that seeks to historicize its circulation, to demystify the public and social production of emotion, and to build alternative archives in which to explore the experiences of marginalized peoples. What audiovisual strategies do films employ to prompt these responses? What makes an emotional response "appropriate"? What information can we glean from the desired or expected emotional response? In short, how can the film soundtrack be read as an affective archive, one that may be interpreted to gain insight into the public circulation of affect through the medium of film?

These questions have been inspired largely by Sara Ahmed's work on the "sociality of emotion."[35] In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed argues that while in our everyday language emotions are understood as moving from a subject's interior outwards (i.e. one "has"

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[33] Chion, Michel, Claudia Gorbman, and Walter Murch. 1994. *Audio-vision: sound on screen*. New York: Columbia University, 7.

[34] Smith, "Movie Music as Moving Music," 147.

[35] Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York, NY: Routledge. 8.

feelings about objects that exist in the external world), and in sociological language, as moving

from the outside in (i.e. one learns and absorbs feelings from the external world), both

understandings "assume the objectivity of the very distinction between inside and outside, the

individual and the social, the 'we' and the 'me.'"[36] Ahmed problematizes this distinction

throughout her book, arguing instead that "emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and

boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside to begin with."[37] For Ahmed,

emotions are not something we "have," they do not reside positively in a sign or an object—the

individual or the social—but instead are in constant circulation, constituting what she terms an

"affective economy." Ahmed uses the idea of the affective economy

> to suggest that objects of emotions circulate or are distributed across a social as well as a psychic field, borrowing from the Marxian critique of the logic of capital… Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs.[38]

The constitutive elements of horror, fear and disgust—aversive emotions and negative

affects—do not, in her analysis, reside positively in signs, but instead operate through a

relational system of difference and displacement in which affects bind certain bodies and

subjects together. These subjects are "nodes" in a broader network, not points of origin or

destination. She illustrates this in a discussion of a passage from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin,*

White Masks in which the author recounts a white child's expression of fear (of him, Fanon). He

states: "[m]y body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning on

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[36] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 9.

[37] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10.

[38] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 45.

that white winter day"[39] and responds by drawing into his own body. In Ahmed's description, "the black body is drawn tighter… the black body itself becomes enclosed by the fear, and comes to feel that fear as its own."[40]

Ahmed asks the reader to consider what causes fear, who gets to be afraid of whom, and what the effect of fear is on the bodies—bodies that fear and bodies that are feared—in question. Fear, she argues, is not contained within a body, moving outwards towards the objects it fears, but instead is more mobile, working to transform bodies into its subjects and objects.[41] In this way, the body designated fearful in this encounter (Fanon's, a Black masculine body) is secured in a relationship with the fearing body (the white boy's). The designation of a body as fearful often results, she argues, in a shrinking of that body's social space, and that body's mobility.

Approaching the issue from another side, Ahmed discusses another way in which fear shrinks social space and mobility through the example of women's access to public space. This access and mobility is restricted, she argues, through the circulation of narratives of feminine vulnerability: for women, home is presented as safe, outside as dangerous. "Such feelings of vulnerability and fear hence shape women's bodies as well as how those bodies inhabit space. Vulnerability is not an inherent characteristic of women's bodies; rather, it is an effect that works to secure femininity as a delimitation of movement in the public, and over-inhabitance in the private."[42] This is a highly sexualized phenomenon.

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[39] Fanon (1986: 113-4) in Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 63.

[40] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 62.

[41] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 62.

[42] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 70.

Feminist writer Amber Hollibaugh says broadly of the sexual experiences of women: "Women in [American] culture live with sexual fear like an extra skin. Each of us wears it differently depending on our race, class, sexual preference and community, but from birth we have all been taught our lessons well. Sexuality is dangerous. It is frightening, unexplored, threatening."[43] Ahmed goes on: "[a] common sense assumption might be that those who are the most afraid are the most vulnerable; fear could be viewed as a 'reasonable response' to vulnerability, whereby vulnerability itself would be perceived as an inherent quality or characteristic of some bodies…However…anxiety about crime is not correlated with degrees of victimisation: 'those least in danger are the most afraid.'"[44] Clover would argue that men— "those least in danger"—are invited by horror films to explore this disproportionate fear through the androgynous figure of the Final Girl.[45]

For Ahmed, fear is about a kind of performance of all one has to lose, but it is another affect, disgust, that she expressly labels performative: "Disgust reads the objects that are felt as disgusting: it is not just about bad objects that we are afraid to incorporate, but the very designation of 'badness' as a quality we assume to be inherent in those objects."[46] "Disgust does something, certainly: through disgust, bodies 'recoil' from their proximity, as a proximity that is felt as nakedness or as an exposure on the skin surface."[47] "We can certainly reflect upon the

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[43] Hollibaugh, Amber, "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure," in Vance, Carole S. 1993. *Pleasure and danger: exploring female sexuality*. London: Pandora, 401.

[44] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 68.

[45] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 27.

[46] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 82.

[47] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 83.

way in which disgust, as an intense bodily feeling of being sickened, is always directed towards an object. One does not feel disgust in the abstract; one feels disgusted by something in which the thing itself seems to repel us."[48] Horror, then—a combination of fear and disgust—involves both a kind of dispersal and focus, a push and a pull that is central to the ambiguity Wood locates at the center of horror and its progressive potential.

I have found it helpful in my theorization of the affective economy of the horror film to think about Wood's formula "normality is threatened by the Monster" in light of Ahmed's discussions of fear and disgust. Fearfulness does not reside positively in the Monster, but instead defines the particularities of the relationship between the Monster and normality, whereas disgust secures the Monster as disgusting as opposed to the Monster being inherently or essentially disgusting. Through the horror soundtrack, then, I explore not just Monsters, but the affective economies of fear that produce them as well, economies that bind those conceived of as dangerous and deviant (Monsters) to those conceived of as weak and in need of—deserving of— protection (victims).

Far from being discrete categories, Monsters and victims overlap with remarkable regularity, sometimes with a single character (or characters) containing elements of both, or playing both roles in turn. In a genre that has, since its inception, cast Monsters as victims (Frankenstein's monster, *Frankenstein*, dir. James Whale 1931), and employed a dramatic turn from victim to violent avenger (Dr. Werdegast, *The Black Cat*, dir. Edgar G. Ulmer, 1934), I am less interested in maintaining the purity of these categories than in exploring how music functions in their construction, and in the blurring of the lines between them.

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[48] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 85.

The clearest delineation of this relation as it operates in the horror film can be found Linda Williams' 1984 essay, "When the Woman Looks." In the essay, Williams explores the "punishment" a woman receives as a result of her investigative gaze: an eyeful of the "horrible body of the monster."[49] While "the woman's look of horror paralyzes her in such a way that distance is overcome; the monster or the freak's own spectacular appearance holds her originally active, curious look in a trancelike passivity that allows him to master her through *her* look," this look also "momentarily shifts the iconic center of the spectacle away from the woman to the monster."[50] In this look, then, Williams locates a kinship between the woman and Monster, a "flash of sympathetic identification," in their varying degrees of difference from the majoritarian subject.[51] This sympathetic identification condenses down to slightly different development in films post-*Psycho*, in which the Monster is increasingly human and (usually) less physically horrifying. In these scenarios, because of the adoption of a POV-style cinematography leading up to attacks, "the audience…is now asked to view the body of the woman victim as the only visible monster in the film. In other words, in these films the recognition of affinity between woman and monster of the classic horror film gives way to pure identity: she *is* the monster, her mutilated body is the only visible horror."[52] The horror film regularly dramatizes the similarity in structure between the Monster and victim, and connects them in ways that may seem counterintuitive initially.

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[49] Williams, Linda, "When the Woman Looks," in Grant, Keith B. 1996. *The dread of difference: gender and the horror film*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 19.

[50] Williams, "When the Woman Looks," 19-20.

[51] Williams, "When the Woman Looks," 19.

[52] Williams, "When the Woman Looks," 33.

Of course, as the complex, sometimes simultaneous relation of these figures might

suggest, fear and disgust are not the only affects engaged by horror films, and the extent to which

these other affects are engaged has implications for the ways in which the films in question are

situated within the representational renegotiation described by Morris. The intensity and

directness demanded of the horror soundtrack is much more central to its effect than in other

genres; according to Miller, horror that is not intense is no longer horror.[53] The margin for error

is therefore much, much wider, as anyone who has witnessed in person the raucous mixtures of

horror and laughter during moments of failed intensity knows. Laughter, too, is a common

audience tactic for diffusing tension. Additionally, horror is often highlighted in film by way of

contrast with an opposing emotion or affective mode: say, humor or joy. While this makes horror

particularly susceptible or amenable to camp interpretations, as I will outline in the following

chapter, it also makes it particularly conducive to the embodied transmission of a wide range of

other disjunctive sensibilities (sensibility being, in Susan Sontag's words, "not only [an era's]

most decisive but also its most perishable aspect"[54]).

II. A System of Excess in an Excessive Genre: The Horror Soundtrack as Body Genre

Much of my claim for the horror soundtrack's significance as an affective archive derives from

its double alliance with what film theorist Linda Williams calls "body genres," which she defines

as genres of film that showcase "the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or

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[53] Miller, *The anatomy of disgust*, 25.

[54] Sontag, Susan. "Notes on Camp," in Cleto, Fabio. 2008. *Camp: queer aesthetics and the performing subject ; a reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 65.

emotion."[55] Horror, melodrama, and pornography serve as her representative examples, and so the horror soundtrack, belonging to a body genre, can easily be assumed to embody traits belonging to the body genre film. But body genre or otherwise, film music is often considered to be its most immediate and excessive component. The horror soundtrack is a system of excess within an excessive genre.

Music is, therefore, best understood as one of the systems of excess that creates the *mimicry* Williams identifies as necessary for the body genre, noting that in these films, the distance between the screen and the audience is collapsed with the aim of creating a direct, mimetic response. Body genres elicit a physical response from their audiences in addition to the emotional one: shudders and screams for horror, tears for melodrama, and sexual arousal for pornography. The physicality of the responses elicited by these films "bracket[s] these particular genres from others [on account of] an apparent lack of proper esthetic distance, a sense of over-involvement in sensation and emotion. We feel manipulated by these texts."[56] Music is part of this "manipulation."

As a result of their inordinate focus on the body and the eliciting of visceral audience response, body genre films constantly undermine "the Classical Hollywood style."[57] Where the classical Hollywood film presents presumably "efficient, action-centered, goal-oriented linear narratives driven by the desire of a single protagonist, involving one or two lines of action, and

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[55] Williams, Linda. 1991. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess". *Film Quarterly*. 44 (4): 4.

[56] Williams, "Film Bodies," 5.

[57] See Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. 1985. *The classical Hollywood cinema: film style & mode of production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.

leading to definitive closure,"[58] the body genre film—and other genre films—pushes past these strictures with its "gratuitous" showcasing of sex, violence, and emotion. Williams quotes Altman saying: "[t]hese are the excesses in the classical narrative system that alert us to the existence of a competing logic, a second voice."[59] Williams seeks to explore this "second voice" in her piece; "the possibility that excess may itself be organized as a system."[60]

Let us explore how the horror soundtrack functions as a "second voice," and how it can therefore functions as an affective archive. We'll need to consider the horror soundtrack's challenge to the hegemony of the Classical Hollywood style of scoring, starting in the sixties and continuing into the seventies. What kinds of emotional assumptions were being overturned in these challenges? What kinds of continuity were maintained between old styles and new? I will begin with an overview of the horror soundtrack's position vis-à-vis the majoritarian establishment of Hollywood, and its allegiance to body genre traits. I will then proceed to a discussion of the infamous 1972 film *Last House on the Left* (directed by Wes Craven, music by David Hess and Steve Chapin) as an embodiment of the horror soundtrack's marginality and oppositionality.

The horror soundtrack has always had something of a marginal relationship to soundtracks of other genres, for much the same reason that horror itself has occupied a marginal position in Hollywood. Unsurprisingly, then, only very rarely has the Academy Award for Best

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[58] Williams, "Film Bodies," 3.

[59] Altman cited in Williams, "Film Bodies," 3.

[60] Williams, "Film Bodies," 3.

Original Score gone to a horror score.[61] Until *The Shape of Water* swept the Academy Awards

this year, of the nine others nominated,[62] only two had won this award: *Jaws* (John Williams,

1975) and *The Omen* (Jerry Goldsmith, 1976). These were also the first horror scores to be

nominated since *Rebecca* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1940 and 1941 respectively, making

Jaws, in possession of perhaps one of the most recognizable themes in U.S. film history, the first

horror film to win.

The institutional recognition seemed to unleash the floodgates briefly, with another three

horror scores nominated between 1979-1982—*The Amityville Horror, Altered States,* and

Poltergeist—though none would take home the prize. And while horror films would continue to

garner recognition in other categories (film and sound editing, visual effects, cinematography,

and acting), more than half of the genre's nominations for Best Score and two of the three wins

occurred during the period of time spanning 1975-1982. Horror (and its music) was having a

moment, both in the massive proliferation of independently-produced works (e.g. *Night of the

Living Dead, Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Halloween*) that are historicized as horror's second

"Golden Age" in the U.S., and in the migration of its characteristic subjects and strategies into

other genres as well.[63]

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[61] Of course the Academy has only very rarely recognized horror films in general: 39 films have been nominated for some kind of award, and only 8 for Best Picture, with *Rebecca* (1940) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) as the only recipients of this award.

[62] *Rebecca* (1940), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941), *Jaws* (1975), *The Omen* (1976), *The Amityville Horror* (1979), *Altered States* (1980), *Poltergeist* (1982), *Interview with a Vampire* (1994), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *The Shape of Water* (2017).

[63] Even Disney and children's films were not immune, with scary fare like *The Black Hole* (1979) and *The Watcher in the Woods* (1980) popping up at the end of the decade.

Jaws and *The Omen* feature highly traditional soundtracks, though: the former both in its evocation of Studio Era late-romanticism and its adherence to established norms of placement and function (the "parallel" approach), and the latter—though straying into the musically alienating realms of modal medievalism and atonal modernism—maintaining a firm commitment to the traditional roles and functions of the horror score. Adorno and Eisler unsurprisingly advocated uses of "the new musical resources" of musical modernism to disrupt the system of clichés on which Classical Hollywood film scoring depended. Autonomous, not yoked to a system of signification in the same way as functional harmony and tonality, the new musical resources could be applied to forge new meanings. Though they acknowledge the applicability of the "expressive potentialities [of the new musical resources]…to the realm of fear and horror," the problem they fail to address is that this music ("the dissonances of Schoenberg") that signifies "a historical dread, a sense of impending doom," will likely avail itself easily to the representation of horror and go no further.[64] And just so, modernist music to this day signifies horror, and is used only very rarely in the way the pair might have liked. Goldsmith's score for *The Omen* can therefore be seen as operating wholly in the realm of the Classical Hollywood score, even though it incorporates music of which Adorno and Eisler might have approved in a different context.

A few years earlier, though, the soundtrack for *The Exorcist* was nominated for and won the Academy Award for Best Sound Editing; it is considered by many to be the first horror film to be nominated for the award for Best Picture, though it did not win. The film did not feature an original score, but one consisting of pre-existing music: the minimalist-inspired progressive rock

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[64] Adorno, Theodor W., Hanns Eisler, and Graham McCann. 2007. *Composing for the films*. London: Continuum, 24.

track "Tubular Bells" Oldfield released earlier that year by British musician Mike, and a collection of modernist art music (Penderecki, Webern) stitched together by less than two minutes of original music by music editor Jack Nitzsche, brought on board to clean things up after the rejection of Lalo Schifrin's score. Though what the composer had provided was much the same as the music Friedkin eventually used, it seems they had a miscommunication about how *much* music there should be. Schifrin approached the project with a traditional "wall-to-wall" approach, while Friedkin wanted something much sparser. The soundtrack of *The Exorcist* was nonetheless honored, even though it broke with tradition musically. Its music thus remained unrecognized, classified instead as "sound editing."

I use the term "soundtrack," then, to both honor the musical focus implied by the term's colloquial use, and the particularity of the way in which music in horror film music sits on a continuum that includes all of the other sound that exists in a horror film. More than any other genre, the music in a horror film is constantly entangled with the other sounds of the *mise-en-bande*. While it can be argued that music in *all* genres of film sits on such a continuum, horror film music consistently blurs the line between music and sound effects. Together, music and sound have great power to set mood and create atmosphere. Donnelly classifies the sound world of horror as manifesting "a distinctive and enveloping 'sound architecture' or ambience." He goes on:

> Horror films are created as whole environments that the audience enters, equating a mental state with a sonic construct. Indeed, more than any other film genre, they construct a whole sound system, a musicscape, as well as embodying a distinct sound effects iconography of horror… the horror film is often seen as a coherent atmospheric package that embraces both music and sound effects.[65]

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[65] Donnelly, Kevin, J. 2005. *The spectre of sound: music in film and television*. London: BFI, 93-94.

The "sound architecture" of the horror film, made up of the relations among music, sound effects, and all manner of human and animal sounds, is the aesthetic embodiment of an affective economy as defined by Ahmed, and therefore a critically under-utilized archive in the study of marginalized social groups, and the study of sexuality.

Of horror's many visceral and embodied effects, its music is often singled out for being particularly direct and physical, which often leads to its dismissal *as* music, thanks to its onomatopoetic incorporation of certain musical gestures that mimic natural sounds, or are operationalized on the basis of dynamics or abrupt attack to startle the audience. In this way, horror music can be thought of as functioning through both "conscious and semi-conscious linguistic codes…[while also possibly] hav[ing] a 'direct access' to the listener, producing physiological effects that bypass learned structures, and arguably inserting frames of mind and attitude much like a direct injection."[66] Film composer Christopher Young argues that the genre's central emotion, fear, is "a very two-dimensional, rudimentary feeling—I don't even want to call it an emotion. It's a very primal, simple thing. You're afraid or you're not afraid."[67] Here, Young is perhaps referring to the directness highlighted by Donnelly, music's ability to engage the audience on a physiological level, but also to a "feeling" that is simultaneously simple and hard to reproduce on cue.

Joe Tompkins' entry on music in the recent *A Companion to the Horror Film,* illustrates quite plainly the delicacy of attempting to scare an audience musically. He begins by outlining an ominous scene unfolding on a dark city street. The sonic details he provides—"quavering sounds

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[66] Donnelly, *The spectre of sound,* 88.

[67] Tompkins, Joe, "Mellifluous Terror," in Benshoff, Harry M. 2017. *A companion to the horror film*, 193.

of some high-pitched string music and an incessant piano loop…Suddenly a discordant blast ruptures forth onto the soundtrack…The music intensifies: an atonal din of brass and strings, high and low"—are a neat summary of some of the musical devices in which the genre often traffics, but in a quick reversal, he reveals that he is describing a scene from an episode of *Seinfeld*.[68]

What the scene he describes satirizes is the instant recognizability of the horror soundtrack, both a necessity of its function and the center of an aesthetic and narrative challenge. The meaning of music in film must be instantly recognizable to an audience, it must work immediately, but the affective intensity of "horror" demands a foreground status for the music, a loudness and presence generally eschewed in other genres that demand music be "unheard" to be effective.[69] The stakes, therefore, are a bit higher than in other genres. Most horror films make use of the same affective strategies in order to convey a generally 'suitable' tone that corresponds with our (culturally constructed) 'sense of moral and musical right and wrong'— with what we imagine we should hear when confronted with violent imagery and horrific situations. Within this context, horror music is often considered as a signifier of emotion, a culturally specific approach to musical "mood" conventions.[70]

In many ways, horror music condenses and focuses many of the critiques leveled at film music in general, yoked as it is to a genre that revels unabashedly in stratagems for manipulating emotions and bodies rather than attempting to conceal them. Film music operates within an aesthetic world whose express purpose is to reliably engage the audience on the seemingly

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[68] Tompkins, "Mellifluous Terror," 186.

[69] Gorbman, Claudia. 1988. *Unheard melodies: narrative film movies*. London: BFI, 8.

[70] Tompkins, "Mellifluous Terror," 191.

immediate and automated level of affect. That it acts on a level understood to be pre-conscious only intensifies the anxiety over the propriety of film music from Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler's *Composing for the Films* through the present day. Activating affective responsiveness through musical clichés, horror music captions the scenarios depicted, telling the audience how they ought to feel about it instead of letting them come to their own conclusions. Of course, every aesthetic element in a (non-experimental) film can be interpreted as telling an audience how to feel, but the soundtrack, in particular the composed score, tends to attract such criticism more than other framing structures that determine affect, such as editing or *mise-en-scène*.

Adorno and Eisler saw music as "*par excellence* the medium in which irrationality can be practiced rationally…Such a rationally planned irrationality is the very essence of the amusement industry in all its branches. Music perfectly fits the pattern."[71] Following centuries of *Affektenlehre* in Western music, classic Hollywood scores attempted to codify the irrationality of emotion by rendering the complexity of both music *and* emotion into immediately recognizable gestural forms. The very qualities that made the score so immediately legible and effective were "bad habits and prejudices" shaped by industry practice and catering to the "indolent" human ear. Their ninefold list serves as a succinct, if crotchety, catalogue of common devices and functions of music by which the Hollywood score rationalizes the irrationality of emotional response: the *leitmotif, melody, unobtrusiveness, visual justification, illustration, geography/history, stock music, clichés,* and *standardized interpretation.*[72]

The leitmotif was particularly offensive to them. Unlike opera, cinema strives for realism and—therefore the symbolic interplay of sharply etched musical motives, invented so that

[71] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films,* 14-15.

[72] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films,* 1-12.

listeners could recognize their development easily in the context of, say, a five-hour abstract

Musikdrama—is completely superfluous. In cinema, the leitmotif is denigrated to the status of a

signature tune, a "musical lackey who announces his master with an important air even though

the eminent personage is clearly recognizable to everyone."[73] But in order for music to perform

its functions, as designated by the "everyday practice" of the film industry, it had to be

immediately and imperceptibly comprehensible to an audience that lacked a musical background.

Adorno and Eisler would like to let the image "speak" for itself, for leaving the audience free to

interpret that image without an incidental score functioning like an affective voiceover, dictating

the mood or tone of a scene. They lament the ossification of music in film, its pseudo-

rationalization of what should be spontaneous and irrational. The nine bad habits and prejudices

short-circuit emotional responsivity for legibility's sake, resulting in the affective deadlock of

cliché.

The way in which the horror genre's musical legibility can be seen as an encapsulation of

a general critique of film music more broadly becomes clear through Adorno and Eisler's attack

on the clichés which make the genre work. As an example, they complain of the "standardized

methods of arousing suspense…[that] correspond to cliché effects in music."[74] They theorize

broadly, covering all types of motion pictures, but suspense is the central example in this part of

their discussion:

> [M]usic is often brought into play at the very point where particularly characteristic
> effects are sought for the sake of 'atmosphere' or suspense. The powerful effect does not
> come off, because the listener has been made familiar with the stimulus by innumerable
> analogous passages. Psychologically, the whole phenomenon is ambiguous. If the screen
> shows a peaceful country house while the music produces familiar sinister sounds, the

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[73] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films,* 3.

[74] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films,* 9.

spectator knows at once something terrible is about to happen, and thus the musical accompaniment both intensifies the suspense and nullifies it by betraying the sequel.[75]

This tension between signifying threat enough to generate the appropriate emotional response in the audience without drawing the scorn of an audience at its obviousness is perhaps one of the most central challenges of the horror soundtrack, one on which the success or failure of the film to be authentically frightening hinges.

There are many problems with the Adorno-Eisler assessment, but we can already see that music in film operates in a tenuous position, balancing the need for its codes and conventions to be immediately recognizable, and thus immediately effective, with the likely prospect of those devices freezing into clichés that draw attention to themselves and thereby lose their former power. The tension is especially high in the horror score, which depends on the visceral immediacy of reactions to music. Not just horror film music, but *all* film music has thus been seen as disreputable for many of the same reasons as the horror film itself: for its power to "manipulate" an audience through techniques that somehow evade the cognitive faculties and going straight for the gut (or jugular, as it were). But film music can also come as close to achieving the status of a concrete, denotative—as opposed to abstract, connotative—sign system as any music can come. Denotation and directness set film music in general and horror film music in particular apart from other types of music, and from the debates in representation, emotion, and meaning that tend to cohere around them. The horror film and the film soundtrack, then, are both regarded as exceptionally direct and uncomplicated in their aesthetic language; the horror soundtrack is thus doubly marked as a system of excess (the soundtrack) *within* a system of excess (the horror film).

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[75] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films,* 9-10.

III. "Now You're All Alone": Musical An/Empathy and Identification

I will now lay out some of my key concepts for thinking through musical identification in horror

and the connection between the basic affective dichotomy of an/empathy and film music

scholarship's equally basic dichotomy of cinematic musical space, diegetic versus nondiegetic,

itself often aligned with the realms of object and subject. In "Sympathy with the devil? Music of

the psycho post-*Psycho*," Stan Link imagines the function of empathetic music and anempathetic

music as either fusion or fission. Empathetic *fusion* occurs during scenes in which all of the

emotional perspectives contained within a scene blend together. His example is "The Knife,"

Bernard Herrmann's iconic, shrieking cue from *Psycho*'s shower scene (dir. Alfred Hitchcock,

1960), in which "affects such as the victim's fear, the attacker's rage and the shock of the

audience become interchangeable, resonating in the same music…Momentarily at least, there is

an amalgamation of emotional experiences."[76] Anempathetic *fission*, on the other hand, occurs

during scenes in which the music of a given scene articulates a single emotional perspective, and

one that upsets audience expectation. Here he examines multiple examples,[77] arguing that

"[m]usical anempathy opens a 'separate space' through which we avoid the homogenization

inherent in musical descriptions that focus on pathological *aggression* rather than on pathological

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[76] Link, Stan. 2004. "Sympathy with the devil? Music of the psycho post-Psycho". *Screen : the Journal of the Society for Education in Film and Television.* 45 (1): 3.

[77] Hannibal Lecter and *The Goldberg Variations* in *Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Jonathan Demme, 1992); Mr. Blonde and "Stuck in the Middle with You" in *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1992); Alex and Beethoven in *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971); Booth and "In Dreams" in *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986); Mickey and Mallory and Carl Stalling's cartoon music for Warner Brothers in *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994); Patrick Bateman and "Hip to Be Square" in *American Psycho* (2000).

characters."[78] Musical selections in his examples allow the audience a glimpse into the psyches of these characters—they demonstrate something about their tastes and proclivities—as opposed to simply signifying fear or aggression in the overdetermined manner of the nondiegetic Hollywood score.

As Robynn Stilwell points out, there is something of an "alliance" between empathy and nondiegetic music, and anempathy and diegetic music, though this alliance is not monolithic: scores can be anempathetic and source music can be empathetic. But this alliance is due in part to something of an understanding that diegetic music is "objective" in a way that nondiegetic music is not. Nondiegetic music does not belong to the world of the film and is therefore inherently subjective, an authorial intervention deliberately interpreting the film for an audience. With the rejection of the score starting in the late fifties, cresting in the sixties and seventies with direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* styles migrating into narrative film, the "subjectivity" of other cinematic elements was not subject to such harsh criticism because it was simply not as noticeable.

An/empathy is not always synonymous with objectivity/subjectivity, though. As Stilwell summarizes, the former pair describes a possible relationship as perceived by the audience: are they being invited—coerced?—to lose themselves in the perspective of the characters in the scene or not? Does the film itself seem to be articulating that point of view or another? The question of objectivity versus subjectivity, on the other hand, is for Stilwell "more intense and more enveloping. Anempathy can be 'objective,' an observation and even understanding of a character's feeling, but it can also be a rejection or abjection of those feelings—neither closer to

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[78] Link, "Sympathy with the Devil?" 11.

nor further from the character's feelings (on the objective/subjective axis), but rather perpendicular to them."[79]

She, too, uses the example of *Silence of the Lambs* to tease out what she means: a scene in which Hannibal Lecter—a serial killer and cannibal—listens to Bach's *Goldberg Variations* while murdering a guard. There is a layering of nondiegetic score in the foreground over the diegetic tape music, which fades into the background. As explicated by Link, the use of Bach here is used to illustrate Lecter's specific pathology—his elite narcissism, his ghastly calm and control—so the diegetic functions in what could be described as a subjective way, though it contrasts with the actions depicted in the scene and could therefore be described as anempathetic. The conflict is internal to the scene itself, between the character and the actions he is committing, and the score invites the audience to look on that conflict, to feel it, with a sense of awe and fear at Lecter's calm in his acts of brutality.

These are, Stilwell acknowledges, "extreme, and rare, example[s]… Filmmakers rarely aim for rejection of their characters—indeed, the paradoxical appeal of Hannibal Lecter and other charismatic villains is in part achieved by a push-pull of empathy and abjection."[80] But Lecter is a Monster, and this "push-pull" is central to *all* identification in the horror film, to horror's essential ambiguity in relation to Monsters and to their victims as well. As I will argue in the following section, this push-pull can create the space for identification with what Wood might describe as "positive Monsters."[81]

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[79] Stilwell, Robynn, "The Fantastical Gap," in Goldmark, Daniel, and Rick Altman. 2009. *Beyond the soundtrack: representing music in cinema*. Berkeley, Calif: Univ. of California Press, 190-191.

[80] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 192.

[81] Wood, *The American Nightmare,* 14.

Contradicting what the audience has been conditioned to expect in realistic narrative film, musical anempathy, especially in the instances Link and Stilwell discuss, can sound ironic—though, as Link points out, "its effects are paradoxically far from insincere."[82] The anempathetic treatment of horrifying events is not simply about ironizing graphic violence, but also "undermining or mocking the magical thinking that finds redemptive powers in a spectator's sympathy. Without a partner in suffering—without intimacy—the prey is left truly alone."[83] In instances where the audience is sutured to a "psycho" or a "charismatic villain" by musical choices and taste, Link is arguing that the audience is invited to take part in an ambiguous pleasure, and thus being implicated in the concomitant violence. The scene from *Silence of the Lambs* discussed by Link and Stilwell is such an instance, in which empathy and attraction towards a character to whom we have been sutured coexists with abjection and rejection of that character's monstrosity.

Consider another example focusing on the subjectivity of a serial killer. In *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), Stilwell analyzes a moment of convergence into the *metadiegetic*, which she defines as music that "pertain[s] to narration by a secondary character"[84] and is therefore "a kind of represented subjectivity: music clearly situated (through framing, dialogue, acting, lighting, sound design, or other cinematic process) in a character who forms a particularly strong point of identification/location for the audience."[85] In *Manhunter,* the diegetic song "In a Gadda da Vida" by Iron Butterfly occupies all three spaces: diegetic, nondiegetic, symbolically

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[82] Link, "Sympathy with the Devil?" 18.

[83] Link, "Sympathy with the Devil?" 20.

[84] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 194.

[85] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 196.

metadiegetic. The lengthy song has been cued up by the killer—Dollarhyde, the "Red Dragon"—

within the diegesis to mask his movements, and it plays throughout a scene during which the

protagonist, Will Graham, is closing in on him. Stilwell describes the song as "forming a

miasmic connection between Dollarhyde and Graham, while musically functioning like

nondiegetic score, building tension toward the long-delayed return to the tonic bass riff, the exact

moment when Graham literally bursts through the glass wall between nondiegetic and diegetic,

into the red dragon's metadiegetic lair."[86]

This moment of suture and synchronicity fits well within Link's description of the way

empathetic music amalgamates media and collapses distance, engaging the body and emotions

directly, enveloping the audience. It is indicative that both of Stilwell's examples come from

horror, concerned as she is with the (e)motions of the audience while their identifications and

relationship to a particular scene and its characters shift along several axes simultaneously.

Horror invites this kind of mobile identification more than perhaps any other genre, as

foundational feminist work in horror and identification indicates. Stilwell goes on:

> When music takes the foreground, it can, literally and metaphorically, seem to spill out
> over/from behind the screen and envelop the audience, creating a particularly intense
> connection. Although film studies may still be debating the precise psychological effect
> of 'subjectivity,' and whether it creates a real form of identification between a character
> and the individual audience members, whether empathy is assumed or genuinely felt, we
> do not generally debate those fine distinctions while experiencing a film. We are more
> likely to feel that the connection is weak or strong, and music is one of the most powerful
> forces forging that connection. The metadiegetic might be conceived as a kind of musical
> 'direct address,' threatening to breach the fourth wall that is the screen.[87]

In horror the presumed point of identification is the victim, with the empathetic score

serving to suture the audience to that victim by both representing the victim's fear, and

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[86] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 199.

[87] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 197.

attempting to stimulate that fear directly in the audience through particularly direct and denotative scoring conventions that, by the seventies, were easily recognized and in danger of denigrating into cliché. Anempathetic and ironic uses of music were meant to shock audiences into a new reception of screen violence, a process of aesthetic change that opened up monstrous figures to new identifications as much as it complicated the familiar identification with victims and "innocence."

The Last House on the Left

In 1972, Wes Craven and Sean Cunningham produced a low-budget exploitation film titled *The Last House on the Left*, what director Craven calls "the primal scream of [his] cinema."[88] An uncommonly brutal rape revenge film,[89] the film is based loosely on Ingmar Bergman's *Jungfrukällan* (*The Virgin Spring,* 1960), itself a retelling of a 13th century Swedish ballad, *Töres döttrar i Wänge* (*Töre's Daughters in Wänge*). In *Last House*, Mari (Sandra Peabody) and Phyllis (Lucy Grantham), two suburban teenage girls, are kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by a gang of criminals: Krug Stillo (David A. Hess), Weasel (Fred Lincoln), Sadie (Jeramie Rain), and Junior Stillo (Marc Sheffler). After killing her, the gang stumbles upon Mari's house, where her parents are worrying about their daughter's absence. Upon discovering that the gang has murdered their daughter, the parents turn on them with booby traps, teeth, knives, and finally a chainsaw. The film concludes with an extended revenge murder sequence in which the respectable, middle-class parents transform into killers no less vicious than their daughter's murderers.

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[88] Lowenstein, Adam. 2005. *Shocking representation: historical trauma, national cinema, and the modern horror film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 113.

Last House opened in a string of suburban movie theaters during the fall of 1972—places

like New Castle, Pennsylvania, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and Green Bay, Wisconsin—

immediately attracting negative attention on the basis of its graphic depictions of sexual

violence, physical torture, and scenarios of Baroque retribution. Championed first by the

management of the Paris Cinema in Wethersfield, Connecticut (who chose to continue to show

the movie in spite of being "deluged with complaints due to the explicit gore and violence in this

film"[90]) and then Roger Ebert in *The Chicago Sun*, the film, made for roughly $87,000, would go

on to rack up $31 million at the domestic box office, becoming an instant cult classic.

Today, it is seen as an encapsulation of a generation's grappling with "the senseless

violence and inhuman cruelty that has become so much a part of the times in which we live,"[91] as

one ad puts it. The film, like many others of its time period, uses the visual language of

documentary to problematize Hollywood's magical treatment of violence. In interviews, Craven

continually ties the unflinching depiction of violence in the *Last House* to a project of

demystifying the sanitized "good guy/bad guy" logic he felt legitimized U.S. violence in

Vietnam, and at home in places like Kent State.[92]

But a large part of this demystifying project is carried out via music and sound, which

alternates between denying the audience the comfort of "appropriate emotional responses" cued

by recognizable scoring conventions as well as any recourse to the magical and subjective

thinking bespoken by the presence of an empathetic orchestral score, and assaulting them with

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[90] "Open Letter to the Critics of *The Last House on the Left*," *The Hartford Courant*, Sept 7, 1972, 74.

[91] Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation,* 114.

[92] Szulkin, David A. 2000. *Wes Craven's Last house on the left: the making of a cult classic*. Guildford: FAB, 9.

horror's traditional musical devices—stingers, drones, dissonance—in the depthless timbral world of the ARP2600 and the Moog.[93] The film is remembered most for several songs written and performed by David A. Hess, songs that are often described as anempathetic, as characterized by their "detached quality [that] promotes a distancing or alienating effect…which disrupts and renders difficult the reception (and voyeuristic appeal) of screen violence."[94]

The first third of the soundtrack consists of conspicuously and upsettingly jaunty music as well as a mournful folk ballad that nonetheless feels completely out of place, and occasional stretches of improvised acoustic percussion, all of which undercut or expose the violence in the narrative. The songs in *Last House* are, along with songs in the body of Quentin Tarantino's work, among the most frequently cited in discussions of "anempathetic" music in film: music that doesn't match the mood of a given scene. The most prominent examples are "Sadie and Krug," and "Now You're All Alone." These numbers occupy a strange space vis-à-vis the diegesis, commenting on the action on screen in a manner not unlike a voiceover, a voiceover whose tone contrasts sharply with what we would expect for the events unfolding on screen.

The boisterous "Sadie and Krug"—which appears in an instrumental arrangement under the title "Baddies' Theme," several times throughout the film and occurs for the first time with lyrics as the Stillo gang is absconding into the country with Mari and Phyllis bound and gagged in the trunk—gleefully recounts, from an omniscient, third-person perspective, the ways in which the gang will murder the girls at the end of the day. A kazoo toots out the melody before it

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[93] See Dickinson, Kay. 2008. "Troubling Synthesis: The Horrific Sights and Incompatible Sounds of 'Video Nasties,'" in *Off key: when film and music won't work together*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 119-154.

[94] Tompkins, Joe, "Pop Goes the Horror Score," in ed. Lerner, Neil William. 2008. *Music in the horror film: listening to fear*. New York: Routledge, 100.

is sung by Hess, at which time the audience will likely be struck by the contrast between the character of the music and the content of the lyrics ("Let's have some fun with those two lovely children and off 'em as soon as we're done"). "Now You're All Alone," by contrast, seems to match the affect of the scene, but it comments on the rape and subsequent murder of Mari in a way that is too literal, a literalness that trivializes the horror of those events. It features a clichéd rhyme scheme ("And you're looking for someone to hold your hand / Someone who understands") dragged farther and farther from its functional harmonic course by a series of secondary dominants too frequently occuring to let the audience take each one seriously. The song ends abruptly when Krug shoots Mari who has descended, Ophelia-like, into a pond to wash herself after the rape. The tone of the song is correct, but it lacks the seriousness such a scene would traditionally demand.

Craven has described the tone of the film as "cynical" and "ironic," that it is a film that doesn't "allow you to have fun at all,"[95] and music plays a significant role in the establishment of this tone. This caustic style can be compared to that of psychedelic rock groups like Country Joe and the Fish in satirical songs like the "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag," which likewise provides cheerful settings of lyrics that mock patriotic sentiment with refrains of "Whoopee we're all gonna die!" Craven further explicates:

> The contrast between the song and those characters was sort of like showing an image of the village getting napalmed and then saying 'Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke'… that type of humor was very specific to the era of the early 70s, and, I think, terribly cynical.[96]

What Craven's description addresses is the way in which the application of the song to the scene of the Stillo gang joyriding out into the country, Mari and Phyllis bound and gagged in

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[95] Craven quoted in Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left,* 9.

[96] Craven quoted in Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left*, 120.

trunk, is also anempathetic; it blocks the audience from the usual musical avenues to their expected reaction of horror. As stated by Joe Tompkins in his encyclopedia entry on music in the horror film: "most horror films make use of the same affective strategies in order to convey a generally 'suitable' tone that corresponds with our (culturally constructed) 'sense of moral and musical right and wrong'—with what we imagine we should hear when confronted with violent imagery and horrific situations."[97] Following Link, *Last House* denies the audience any relief in the form of a recognizable affective environment created by the music, Link's amalgamating emotional environment in which our sympathies align with the victim. But it doesn't align us fully with the Stillo gang either. It leaves us somewhere in the middle, "alone," perhaps, as the song suggests. The problem here is that the description Tompkins provides does not address songs that are already anempathetic internally, and that this intramusical anempathy actually is quite consonant with the anempathy of the film itself, as Hess describes: "[Sadie and Krug] is consistent with the movie."[98]

In short, the case of the music in *Last House* is far more involved than one would suspect when understood in relation to traditional formulations of the audiovisual principle of anempathy. *Last House*'s anempathy operates on multiple levels within the film. The songs are sarcastic in and of themselves, they are not simply cheerful while the scene would seem to call for a somber mood. It is not that the songs are clashing with the scenes, it is that the songs are clashing internally. And while the soundtrack is most often cited for its anempathetic deployment of music, in actuality it shifts from scenes that simply deny the audience the usual amalgamating

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[97] Tompkins, "Mellifluous Terror," 191.

[98] Hess quoted in Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left*, 120.

empathy with the victims through an eschewal of music altogether, to scenes of anempathy, to scenes of fairly traditional empathy.

The film's ironic musical devices disappear, for example, for about seven minutes, the seven minutes Hallmark Releasing Corporation was likely preparing audiences for in its lurid advertising campaign that advised audiences: "to avoid fainting keep repeating, it's only a movie, it's only a movie, it's only a movie..."[99] This occurs about forty minutes in, with a drastic shift in musical profile. In the moments leading up to this shift, Phyllis is fleeing her captors through the forest. The sound editing sutures the audience to her by means of the prominence of her labored breathing and movements through the brush in the soundtrack. In a well-worn horror sound cliché, timpani mimic the listing "lub-dub" rhythm of a human heart while other scattered percussion interjections mingle with the sounds of the natural environment. As Phyllis slows to a desperate walk, the percussion thins down to the heartbeat/timpani alone, and the sound of Phyllis breathing, before the timpani, too, drops out. She finds herself at the edge of a graveyard, and breathing heavily, makes her way towards it. She spots the road, cued to it by the sound of a passing car, but just as she reaches the edge of the trees a machete jabs into the frame, startling both Phyllis and audience, punctuated by a queasy downward glissando in a timbre completely new to the film's sound world: the ARP2600.[100]

It is at this point in the narrative that the music reverts to something resembling the codes and conventions favored by Hollywood for representing violence, if not the orchestral instrumentation through which they are manifested: arrhythmic and atonal stingers in the ARP2600 to punctuate Phyllis' brutal stabbing and disembowelment, and Mari's torture and

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[99] Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left,* 120.

[100] Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left,* 122.

rape. As soon as the rape concludes, though, the music snaps back into its formerly anempathetic mode, this time with the meandering "Now You're All Alone," also written and performed by Hess, which can be seen more easily as anempathetic. The placement of this song violates Tompkins' "sense of moral and musical right and wrong"[101] by allowing the space for the audience to contemplate with whom the lyrics ("Now you're all alone / Feeling that nobody wants you / And you're looking for someone to hold your hand / Someone who will understand") are sympathizing, victim or perpetrators, and via gently arpeggiated guitar chords instead of appropriately inconspicuous and somber music, fading into respectful silence. The banality of the lyrics renders the violence routine, more akin to a broken heart.

Unlike many rape revenge films that would follow, *Last House* leaves the revenge to someone other than the victims who, because they have been killed, cannot transform and avenge themselves. These are not Clover's "Final Girls," characters who might offer a wide range of audience members—majoritarian and minoritarian—avenues for identification. The girls represent, to turn to Coleman Means' formulation, the "triumvirate of purity" (youth, whiteness, femininity)[102] the violation of which seems to necessitate a severe response. As Hess saw it, the film was "really about the girls, which is why that lyric 'the road that leads to nowhere' [in "Wait for the Rain"] is a central part of the score. The road *does* lead to nowhere, unless we get our act together. But there is always going to be a road, and there are always going to be kids taking that road… the fact that those two girls dies in the movie is immaterial."[103]

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[101] Tompkins, "Mellifluous Terror," 191.

[102] Means Coleman, *Horror Noire,* 24.

[103] Hess in Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last house on the left,* 126.

Film scholar Adam Lowenstein concurs: *Last House* "locates the grim consequences of profound social upheavals…on the body of a teenage girl. It is this body, imagined as innocent and exposed to the risk of rape, which serves as the locus for anxieties concerning the nation as feminized and susceptible to violation in the Vietnam era."[104] *Last House* does nothing to shift the categories of Monster and victim (both are set in Classical Hollywood's Manichean mold), but encourages the audience to receive them differently, to counteridentify with the entire diegesis.

Last House is illustrates the complexity of music's position in horror's processes of identification. While Link and others may assert that music can either "match" the mood of a scene or not—usually via adherence to Classical Hollywood conventions—the actual situation is far more complex, as their discussions indicate. There are in fact many ways for music to match the mood of a scene, and many ways for it to exist in tension with the scene. Horror's particular tendency to create ambiguity through fusion/fission is a large part of why I have chosen to analyze it in relation to sexuality. In the following section, I will delineate some of the ways in which queer theory and queer of color critique offer compelling models for unpacking minoritarian modes of reception where these ambiguous and ambivalent representations are concerned.

IV. Minoritarian Identifications: Reparative and Paranoid, Dis- and Counter-

The modes of address and identification enabled by the disjunctive use of music in *Last House*—alternating from a variety of anempathetic and distancing affects to immediacy-inducing sound effects and empathetic cues scored in the likewise-alienating Moog and ARP2600—were clearly intended by Craven and Hess, who have spoken at length about the cynicism and bitterness that

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[104] Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation,* 114.

motivated the making of the film. Partaking of a particularly dark strain of countercultural satire, *Last House* creates its effects by alternating between humor and horror, critiquing Hollywood's voyeuristic treatment of violence while relating that violence to broader disillusionment with American politics and society. This strategy, correctly described by Tompkins as "Brechtian," denies the usual avenues for audience identification, forcing an emotional distance that paradoxically increased audience vulnerability to the violence of the film (as played upon in its publicity). In its explicit depiction of the violence visited upon the teenage girls and the gruesome retribution of Mari's parents, *Last House* represents a fairly straightforward example of majoritarian *counteridentification*: with both the Hollywood aesthetic and America's militarist ideology. The film disallows the audience its usual cinematic enjoyments; it denies the easy possibilities for identification and catharsis.

Identification, as psychoanalytically theorized by Laplanche and Pontalis and summarized by Muñoz, is a "psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides."[105] Counteridentification, on the other hand, as theorized by Pêcheux and summarized by Muñoz, is a process in which the subject "resist[s] and attempt[s] to reject the images and identificatory sites offered by dominant ideology and proceed[s] to rebel, to 'counteridentify' and turn against this symbolic system."[106] Direct counteridentification with dominant ideology is not equally available to all subjects equally, however: "Although the various processes of identification are fraught, those subjects who are hailed by more than one minority identity

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[105] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 7.

[106] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 11.

component have an especially arduous time of it. Subjects who are outside the purview of dominant public spheres encounter obstacles in enacting identifications."[107]

By way of illustration, Muñoz discusses the drag queen Vaginal Crème Davis' development of a connection to militant Black Power politics via the figure of Angela Davis, as opposed to the more dominant representation of Black counteridentification, the Black Panthers, a move blocked by Davis' queerness: "[u]nable to pass as heterosexual black militant through simple counteridentification, Vaginal Davis instead disidentified with Black Power by selecting Angela and *not* the Panthers as a site of self-fashioning and political formation."[108] This process is described by Pêcheux as "disidentification," a process that guides Muñoz's consideration of queer of color identification throughout his book of the same name:

> Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this 'working on and against' is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local and everyday struggles of resistance.[109]

Last House, as an example of a majoritarian subject taking a critical position vis-à-vis dominant ideology, is still not quite the kind of counteridentification described here: the film's use of anempathetic or inappropriate music does not seem to attempt "to break free of [dominant ideology's] inescapable sphere," so much as it floats somewhere in its gravitational pull, observing it from thousands of miles. This has to do with the film's cynicism and bitterness .

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[107] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 8.

[108] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 99.

[109] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 11.

Returning to Pêcheux, Muñoz states that the danger he "sees in [counteridentification] would be the counterdetermination that such a system installs, a structure that validates the dominant ideology by reinforcing its dominance through the controlled symmetry of 'counterdetermination.'"[110] Disidentification, on the other hand, "is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture."[111]

For the cultural critic, the examination of these strategies need not prescribe a particular analytic approach but, in fact, as Eve K. Sedgwick points out in *Touching Feeling,* often are both interpreted in the "paranoid" mode by academics. Sedgwick highlights the ways in which the dominant critical mode for antihomophobic theory is one of paranoia—it relies on demystification, denaturalization, and constant anticipation, and is motivated by a desire to avoid unpleasant surprises—and wonders if there are other ways to explore that still acknowledge the oppressive structures that govern [queer] lives. She labels one such alternative mode, drawing on Melanie Klein, "reparative." Where the paranoid impulse sees only the critical and homophobic forces shaping disidentification, "[t]he desire of a reparative impulse, on the other hand, is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self."[112] She argues that to analyze camp, for example, only in

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[110] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 11.

[111] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* 31.

[112] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Adam Frank, *Touching feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 149-50.

the paranoid mode would be a mistake, and that assuming a "reparative" mode reveals different

affects and provides the outline of a different affective archive:

> to view camp as, among other things, the communal, historically dense exploration of a variety of reparative practices is to do better justice to many of the defining elements of classic camp performance: the startling, juicy displays of excess erudition, for example; the passionate, often hilarious antiquarianism, the prodigal production of alternative historiographies, the 'over'-attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste, or leftover products; the rich, highly interruptive affective variety; the irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation, the disorienting juxtapositions of present with past, and popular with high culture.[113]

As the relentless counteridentification of *Last House* suggests, horror is very rarely

considered a potential location of reparative engagement. The film's nasty and bleak

characterization of minoritarian sexualities offers little in the way of Wood's desired "positive"

Monster, and little material for such reparative engagement. This is because the film leverages

the genre's ambiguities to suggest continuity between Monsters and normality, that normality

itself is monstrous. This is a counteridentificatory view, one that does not easily lend itself to a

reparative mode. The films I explore in this dissertation, however, leverage horror's ambiguities

in ways more amenable to such use and interpretation.

Providing all that it provides (a direct and denotative musical vocabulary for arousing

affect, an intimacy and immediacy specific to "body genre" film and the systems of "excess"

within them, complex and ambivalent depictions of minoritarian sexuality that inspire myriad

forms of identification, counteridentification, and disidentification), the horror genre should, I

argue, be interpreted after Sedgwick's reparative model much more rigorously. We hear echoes

here of Wood, who struggles to find the possibility of a "positive" Monster, a figure who must be

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[113] Sedgwick, *Touching feeling,* 149-50.

approached via disidentification, and often is by the minoritarian subjects that Monster represents.

V. Sexual Monsters as Affective Archives: Outline of Chapters

I focus on the representation of several categories of people whose embodied presences structure public discourses of sexual fear and threat around sexuality. Unsurprisingly, these structures pair victims and victimizers: (white) femininity and (Black) masculinity, gender conformity and gender nonconformity, sexual pathology and sexual health. These dynamics exert influence even when violence does not directly involve violence between individuals from those pairs is not directly represented. Fearfulness attributed to bodies draws violence to them all on its own (as with the passage from Fanon discussed by Ahmed), while vulnerability attributed to bodies seems to do the same. Fear, as Ahmed argues, works to define and delimit these bodies. Each chapter in this dissertation maps a different affective terrain through a representative monstrous figure from the seventies, but I hope that the reader will also make connections between chapters, thinking about the ways in which sexuality can be understood across and among the identities under discussion, the ways in which the affective economies of each character type and representative narratives are mutually constituted and should be understood relationally.

Chapter 2, "Makers: Monstrous Genre, Monstrous Gender, and the Cult Sensibility in the Horror Film Musical," explores the confluence of counteridentification and disidentification in the well-worn concept of camp, as well as the adjacent concepts of satire and paracinema, which I subsume under the heading of an ironic "cult" sensibility. I read two film musical renderings of monstrous queerness—in both gender and sexuality—in the mad scientist/creation dyad (*Phantom of the Paradise* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*) as being constituted by an

overlap in sensibilities, the campy and the cultish, that are shaped by contradictory circuits of contempt that move in and through discourses of femininity and binary sex. While both films exhibit a self-conscious theatrical and ironic performance style most commonly associated with musicals and by extension effeminate gay men and camp, they also lend themselves quite well to what Jeffrey Sconce has labeled a *paracinematic* mode of reception, characteristic of what come to be called "cult" films: equally ironic and self-conscious, but largely marked as a (hetero)masculine mode. The affectively divided soundscapes of these "camp/cult" horror film musicals allow for an examination of attitudes around femininity as applied to and performed by those not assigned female at birth, and an examination of the debates around cis- and transsexuality that unfolded over the course of the decade.

Chapter 3, "Monsters: Consciousness Raising and the Message Sensibility in the Minoritarian Vampire Film," explores the minoritarian vampire as both transmitter and receiver of sexually dangerous ideology, a representation that, in the seventies, tackled feelings of ambivalence around the new potential of women's autonomy. I here track the cinematic voice of both the lesbian vampire (*Daughters of Darkness*) and the Black vampire (*Ganja and Hess*) within their respective exploitation/experimental soundscapes. Pervasive aural features of the body genre, drawing from both the "low" exploitative horror/pornography and the "high" avant-garde experimentalism, create a Gothic intimacy and proximity of address that allows for the rapid toggling between sexual and political registers of seduction, as opposed to the more "mainstream" sexploitation vampire film's blending of supernatural and hypersexual seduction. I aim to pull political responsivity into the orbit of the body genre, arguing that the confluence of "high" and "low" techniques in the context of a self-consciously "artistic" or "experimental"

vampire film offers a particularly rich audiovisual environment for the consciousness raising specific to the seventies.

In Chapter 4, "Killers: Masculinity and the *Concrète Sensibility in the Slasher Film,*" I turn to a pair of films that garnered attention on a nationwide scale (*Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Cruising*) for their depictions of psychotic queer killers at a time when the "slasher" was a commonly worried-over pop culture development. Like *Last House* and unlike the other films in my analytical survey, these contrasting "slasher" films did not feature a fantastic soundscape, but instead sought to bring some version of documentary-style realism to their depictions of pathological sexuality and graphic violence. This aspirational *vérité* aesthetic gives me the chance to explore the twinned discourses of realness, musical and sexual, circulating in the debates around gay representation during this time. I conclude with a discussion of the potential explorations the combined victim/Monster figure might offer, and a summary of my project's significance.

Chapter Two: Makers
Monstrous Genre, Monstrous Gender, and the Cult Sensibility in the Horror Film Musical

I. Introduction

Counteridentification, Disidentification, and Parodic Forms

In many ways, the most intuitive starting point for my exploration of music, sexuality, and the affective economies of the horror film is the horror film musical. After all, horror film musicals foreground both music and horror, and the specific elements in their constitutive genres (musicals, horror films) that tend to mark moments during which Williams' "secondary voice" of excess comes to the fore.[1] But in many ways, it is also the least intuitive starting point for this exploration, since horror film musicals are not concerned primarily with producing an affect of horror, but instead route that affect through the sentimentality and theatricality of musical comedy for ironic effect.[2]

The instant recognizability of horror's characteristic musical devices and formulas creates many opportunities for music-based camp humor on its own (as Tompkins' *Seinfeld* example, discussed in the previous chapter, demonstrated), but almost any combination of the starkly contrasting intensities of horror and the musical is incipient camp. If the horror film and the musical offer characteristic solutions to characteristic conflicts, the incongruity produced by resolving a horror film's characteristic conflicts with the musical's characteristic solutions or vice versa is enough to undermine the horror film's pretensions to intensity and seriousness.

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[1] Williams, "Film Bodies," 3.

[2] There are exceptions, *Sweeney Todd,* for example, but generally the kinds of musicals under consideration here, *Little Shop of Horrors,* etc., are meant as parodies.

Unsurprisingly, the horror film musical is generally a humorous hybrid of horror and the musical in which the latter parodies the former.

The tone that results from this kind of genre blending tends to be labeled as "campy"—comprised, as it is, by Esther Newton's incongruity, theatricality, and humor[3]—but, as I will suggest in this chapter, not all genre-blended films are best grouped under this heading. Camp has a solid heritage in the tastes and sensibilities of gender non-conforming gay men and is for better or worse the most-discussed example of queer negativity's ambivalent manifestation in and orientation towards media. The camp archive is, in Halberstam's words, a "gay male archive…a repertoire of formalized and often formulaic responses to the banality of straight culture and the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity."[4] However, during the seventies—thanks, many gay critics would say, to an "outing" by Susan Sontag's 1964 "Notes on Camp"—a minoritarian interpretive strategy found itself "degayified"[5] and absorbed into the parodic practices of majoritarian creators and audiences. This complicated an already-complex situation where the relationship of gender and sexuality was concerned, as new masculinist majoritarian parodies mingled with already existing effeminate minoritarian parodies.

Traditional effeminate gay male camp has long thrived in the context of the musical, but it also has roots in horror, which has long used monstrosity to represent sexual deviance and

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[3] Newton, Esther. 2001. *Mother camp: Female impersonators in America ; [with a new preface]*. Chicago, Ill. [u.a.]: Univ. of Chicago Press.

[4] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure,* 110.

[5] Cleto, *Camp Reader*, 10

depravity.[6] The camp sensibility can thus be read as an example of Muñozian disidentification, a mode by which queer subjects interface with potentially toxic cultural objects, tactically misrecognizing the ways in which they are being interpellated and creating a double discourse that speaks to two (or more) audiences simultaneously. The majoritarian or mainstream[7] forms of ironic parody with which camp can be grouped are generally forward-facing engagements involving counteridentification or identification. Satire, for example, responds to dominant ideology with a level of overt contempt rarely found in camp, which mingles the bitter and the sweet in maneuvers that, while they may implicitly critique majoritarian ideology, tend to be focused inward. Satire, according to Miller, "expos[es] and admonish[es]" the socially high with a degree of bitterness related to the satirist's own acceptance of the values that the high profess but do not adhere to."[8] It is therefore "usually the bailiwick not of the utterly disempowered but of the middling and ministerial sorts."[9]

In light of the dark quotations from Craven in the previous chapter, the cynical, majoritarian bitterness of the left so characteristic of the early seventies can be seen as derived from a specifically majoritarian dissatisfaction with the state of the American nation. With the rise of new styles of filmmaking and forms of production and distribution came many production, distribution, and reception paradigms that were conscious counteridentifications with

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[6] Benshoff, Harry M. 1998. *Monsters in the closet: homosexuality and the horror film*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.

[7] In this chapter I will use "majoritarian" to designate hegemonic identity (white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, or all of the above) and "mainstream" to designate hegemonic aesthetics (understood as "popular").

[8] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust,* 222.

[9] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust,* 222.

mainstream Hollywood. One such paradigm can be seen unfolding in the flourishing of the cult

reception phenomenon of the so-called "midnight movie." This phenomenon, according to film

historian Barry Keith Grant, worked "against the logic of 'prime-time' exhibition."[10]

Screenings of films like *El Topo* (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 1970), *Pink Flamingos* (John

Waters, 1972), and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975) at midnight in seedy

urban locations, publicized by word-of-mouth, were central to cult's construction as

transgressive and counteridentificatory. Parody in cult films often *feels* quite different from

traditional camp, more consummately critical or more aggressively "bad" and offensive. And

while gay filmmakers such as Jack Smith and John Waters represented a vibrant strand of this

late-night genre, the discourse surrounding such films is still predominantly male (whether

majoritarian or not, masculine or effeminate). The midnight movie's counteridentification with

dominant ideology as realized in mainstream film culture, and camp's disidentification with that

same ideology and cinematic culture are related but distinct, with drastically different

orientations towards the sex/gender system. In the interest of exploring seventies' sexual

sensibilities, it is therefore important to locate and untangle these ironic impulses.

My case study for this untangling project is the comparison of two horror film musicals

that share a leap-frogging production timeline and were released within a year of one another.

Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974, songs by Paul Williams) and Jim Sharman's

The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975, written by Richard O'Brien) appear to be cut from the

same parodic cloth: glam rock musicals in which the myriad queernesses of Mary Shelley's

nonheterosexual maker/monster pair, Dr. Frankenstein and his Monster, play a vital role. In

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[10] Cited in Jancovich, Mark. 2008. *Defining cult movies: the cultural politics of oppositional taste*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press. 19.

reality, however, the two are quite far apart in affective language. Both films infuse gothic archetypes with glam rock, two cinematic and musical genres with overlapping investments in queerness and processes of creation that occur outside of the heterosexual dyad. But they do *not* have the same configuration of counteridentification and disidentification. This difference has profound implications for the structure of the affective economy in each film. As we shall see, their different structural understanding of queerness can be read quite clearly in the way each film conceptualizes, locates, and exploits music.

With camp's mainstreaming comes a number of shifts in the way femininity is parodied. This shift will be of particular interest to scholars of nonnormative gender identity and gender variance, as the cult films in question rely not on camp's usual theatrical femininity and effeminacy, but on a simultaneous theatricalizing of masculinity and femininity, what Chris Straayer labels a "bi-sexed" aesthetic,[11] in musicality and musical performance. While *Rocky Horror* retains something resembling traditional gay male camp's affection and dual self-mockery/self-protection in O'Brien's misfit adoration of fifties B-movies, it nonetheless articulates a different subject position, one that uses not just gender parody but genre parody as well, parody that operates largely through affectionate contempt.

Phantom, on the other hand, uses musical performance in a way that evokes traditional gay male camp obliquely, through heterosexual Paul Williams' affectionate parodies of the masculinities of dated popular music styles, while retaining majoritarian ideas about gender and musical talent (as well as a resolutely cynical and mean-spirited satirical affective profile). Contempt for femininity throughout the seventies, a time of the mainstreaming of camp's queerly

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[11] Straayer, Chris. 1996. "The She-Man: Postmodern Bi-Sexed Performance in Film and Video." *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-orientations in Film and Video.* New York: Columbia University Press, 79-101.

affectionate self-deprecation and of a sharp satirical turn on hegemonic social and cultural institutions, is dually constituted in the cult film, both through the feminized connotations of the mainstream, and the representations and performances of femininity within the films themselves.

I will begin by summarizing the ways in which Shelley's Frankenstein and his "hideous progeny" have been interpreted by queer critics, before giving a brief introduction to the two films under discussion. I will then delineate what I am labeling a "cult" sensibility: a parodic sensibility comprising contradictory circuits of affection and contempt that move in and through discourses of femininity, sex essentialism, and sexual difference, embodying counteridentificatory and disidentificatory strategies. In the final sections of the chapter, I will diagnose these circuits and strategies in the music and critical receptions of the two films.

Queer Makers, Queer Monsters

As Harry M. Benshoff demonstrates in the first chapter of *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality in the Horror Film*, a camp sensibility was thoroughly embedded in the initial flowering of the horror genre in Hollywood (roughly defined as the period between 1930-1936). While this might be chalked up to the prominent success of one gay filmmaker in particular, James Whale, Benshoff also traces a bevy of queer tropes in films made by majoritarian filmmakers. He sorts these narratives into two basic categories according to whether they feature "domestic" or "sadomasochistic" queer couplings. The first category encompasses three main types: the vampire and servant; the "normal" man with a hidden, monstrous self; the mad scientist and creation. Benshoff highlights the "master/servant dynamics of devotion" in narratives that are "easily read as queer: the secret experiments [the domestic queer couple]

conduct together are chronicled in private diaries and kept locked away in closed cupboards and

closets."[12] Whale's *Frankenstein* films are characteristic of this category.

> The stories usually chronicle the exploits of a single male gothic villain (or even more
> readily this figure and his male companion) who alone or together exhibit some form of
> queer sexuality—that is to say, sexuality which deviates from the standard
> heterosexualized drive.[13]

The sadomasochistic queer couple, on the other hand, can be found throughout the film

collaborations of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. Here the queer couple "unlike their domestic

counterparts, was not interested in creating life together but rather in torturing one another to

death."[14] Still other films from the thirties blurred these discourses of homosexuality with those

of sexual deviance more broadly, as well as those of race, gender, and colonialism. As Wood's

description suggests, concepts of monstrosity in film are based in majoritarian ideology's Others,

and often the concepts of sex and sexuality that animate these concepts have a tendency to blur

lines between those categories of otherness. Benshoff demonstrates the ways in which this

blurring may have been enabled by the Production Code, which grouped all deviations from the

heterosexual norm under the heading of "sex perversion." Colin Clive was therefore lauded for

his performance as the "mentally perverted Frankenstein," yet "exactly which perversion this

might have been was never named."[15]

Benshoff's work illustrates the significance the *Frankenstein* films have had for the

representation of gay male sexuality. However, this is not the only queer lens through which the

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[12] Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet,* 48.

[13] Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet,* 36.

[14] Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet,* 61.

[15] Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet,* 56.

narrative can be, and has been, apprehended. In 1993, historian Susan Stryker presented a piece

she called "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix," a performance

that critically examined transgender rage through the figure of Dr. Frankenstein and his

creation.[16] But where Whale's depiction of the queer domestic couple is read by Benshoff as

emphasizing the homoerotic potential of perverse scientific experimentation and parthogenetic

reproduction, Stryker's invocation emphasizes the "unnaturalness" of the creature in a way

particular to transsexual identity and experience. Stryker's performance was meant to explore

transgender rage and embodiment via a transgender aesthetic: in the case of her performance a

confrontational "genderfuck" style of dress meant to synchronically represent the "abrupt, often

jarring transitions between genders"[17] experienced by many transgender people, and the

subsequent misgendering that results in the failure to conform visually to majoritarian concepts

of cissexual gender.

> The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a
> technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other
> than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between
> myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like the
> monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my
> embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels deep
> and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I
> must struggle to exist.[18]

Where Benshoff locates the queer meaning of the *Frankenstein* narrative in the

relationship between the maker and his creation, Stryker points to the Monster's intimate

relationship with medical science and technological construction, as well as the Monster's

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[16] Stryker, Susan. 1994. "My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of
Chamounix," *GLQ (New York, N.Y.).* 1: 237-254.

[17] Stryker, "My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix," 237.

[18] Stryker, "My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix," 238.

disjunctive (by cisnormative standards) visual aesthetic, both of which she associates with

institutional and quotidian experiences of transgender people (trans women, in particular).

Stryker points out that she is not the first to make such an association. The figure of Frankenstein

and his Monster are cited in two prominent cultural feminist texts of the seventies: Mary Daly's

Gyn/Ecology (1978) and her protégé Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* (1979). In these

texts, exemplifying what Judith Butler labels "moral" feminism generally,[19] but which

specifically hail from the discipline of theology, the Maker figure and his Monster are emblems

of a "necrophilic" invasion of femininity and women's reproductive powers, likened to rape by

both Daly and Raymond. Daly argues, in a section labeled "Boundary Violation and the

Frankenstein Phenomenon" in *Gyn/Ecology* (1978):

> Mary Shelley displayed prophetic insight when she wrote *Frankenstein,* foretelling the
> technological fathers' fusion of male mother-miming and necrophilia in a boundary
> violation that ultimately points toward the total elimination of women. Her main
> character, Doctor Frankenstein, expressed a bizarre necrophilic 'maternal instinct' in
> making the monster whom he later repudiated, fled from in terror, and was destroyed by
> in agony… Today the Frankenstein phenomenon is omnipresent not only in religious
> myth, but in its offspring, phallocratic technology…Transsexualism is an example of
> male surgical siring which invades the female world with substitutes. Male-mothered
> genetic engineering is an attempt to 'create' without women.[20]

Raymond echoes many of Daly's main points, claiming that trans women "rape" cis women's

bodies by "reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for

themselves,"[21] and going on to draw parallels between the medical procedures and processes for

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[19] Butler, Judy, "Lesbian S&M: The Politics of Dis-Illusion," in Linden, Robin Ruth.
1982. *Against sadomasochism: a radical feminist analysis*. San Fransisco: Frog in the Well. 170.

[20] Daly, Mary. 1979. *Gyn/ecology: the metaethics of radical feminism*. London: Women's Press,
70-71.

[21] Raymond, Janice G. 1979. *The transsexual empire: the making of the she-male*. Boston:
Beacon Press.

creating this "appropriated" femininity and the Nazi quest for Aryan perfection through eugenics and genocide.

As this example demonstrates, anxiety in feminist writings about the oppressiveness of both dominant femininity and its appropriation by majoritarian-seeming subjects intensifies early in the seventies, when transgressions of gendered norms via the adoption of traditionally feminine styles of hair and dress by men became increasingly visible in the context of the anti-war movement. Stryker correlates these gender transgressions with advances for transgender people, trans women in particular: "It should not be surprising that the period when male-to-female transgender people made their most significant political gains overlapped with a period in which public gender transgression by nontransgendered men had the broadest and deepest sense of political urgency."[22] This made space, she argues, for the ascendance of a "transgender aesthetic" that would move from the margins of society to the center:

> On the cultural fringe, avant-garde transgender theatrical and musical acts such as the Cockettes and Sylvester (on the West Coast), and Wayne (late Jayne) County and the New York Dolls (on the East Coast), inspired the better-known gender-bending styles of glam rocker David Bowie and filmmaker John Waters's cult movie star Divine. High art and lowlife swirled around pop artist Andy Warhol's Factory, generating countercultural icons such as Lou Reed and the transgender Warhol superstars Candy Darling and Holly Woodlawn, infusing the glam, glitter, and early punk music scenes in venues such as Max's Kansas City and CBGB.[23]

It is against this backdrop that *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* explore the bi-sexed aesthetic. As the examples by Benshoff and Stryker demonstrate, the queerness of the Maker/Monster narrative resonates with at least two subjectivities, gay effeminate and trans feminine, that have distinct

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[22] Stryker, Susan. 2008. *Transgender history*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 95.

[23] Stryker, *Transgender History,* 91-92.

relationships with majoritarian conceptions of femininity, and this resonance produces a new sensibility regarding gender in the cult films under discussion.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

The stage version of *The Rocky Horror Show* (written by Richard O'Brien) ran for six years in London (1973-1979) after an initial booking for a three-week run in London. Lou Adler saw this in early 1974, and the producer undertook to bring the show to Los Angeles, where it had a very successful first run in March of that year. The original cast album was recorded at A&M's studios, and Fox agreed to invest $1 million to adapt the show for the screen (it was simultaneously financing *Young Frankenstein* and had just purchased *Phantom*). The stage show made its Broadway premiere and flopped, but by then preproduction for the film was already underway. The eight-week shoot took place in the UK starting in October, 1974, just days before the premiere of *Phantom*. *Rocky Horror* itself premiered almost a year later in Los Angeles (September, 1975), but by the end of the year it had made only $58,000.[24] When it first played at the Waverley in Manhattan as the midnight movie of 1976, the audience breathed new life into it, turning it into the most intricate and involved of "cult" film phenomena.

The plot of *Rocky Horror* follows "All-American" sweethearts Brad Majors and Janet Weiss as they visit their professor, Dr. Scott, to inform him of their engagement. When their car breaks down in the middle of nowhere, they seek shelter and help at a nearby mansion. The estate is inhabited by Dr. Frank-n-Furter, an extraterrestrial transvestite mad scientist from Transsexual, Transylvania, along with his servants Riff Raff and Magenta, and various groupies, convened to celebrate his creation of the perfect man, Rocky. Over the course of the evening, the

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[24] Whittaker, Jim. 1998. *Cosmic light: the birth of a cult classic*. Altoona, PA: Acme Books.

straight-laced Brad and Janet are exposed to a wide range of sexual perversities, and are ultimately seduced by Frank. A joyful corseted and garter-belted orgy in a swimming pool is interrupted, however, when Riff Raff and Magenta turn the tables on their "master" by shooting him, and Rocky, before returning to their home planet Transsexual, Transylvania. The humans are left in the wreckage left by the departed mansion/spaceship.

Rocky Horror inhabits a traditional musically-enhance reality in which characters sing as an extension of their subjectivity unremarked-upon by others in the diegesis (with the exception of Eddie's outburst and the "floor show" sequence at the end). Richard O'Brien, who plays Riff Raff, wrote the songs for both stage and screen. According to film genre scholar Jeffrey Weinstock, the show "is clearly defined by its extreme intertextual awareness. From start to finish, it alludes to and combines elements from other movies,"[25] including classic horror from the thirties and fifties with popular music from the fifties and the nascent glam *aka* glitter rock scene in the UK and the US. As summarized by Jim Whittaker in his comprehensive chronicle of the show and film, *Cosmic Light: The Birth of a Cult Classic*:

> The initial idea O'Brien had for a theme was to combine rock with horror movies and humor, the way Alice Cooper did. The simplest way to proceed was to deal with the most identifiable clichés of horror: Dracula and Frankenstein. O'Brien thought that if Doctor Frankenstein was a sexy, androgynous glam rocker like Cooper, he would create a man simply for his own sexual pleasure rather than for the good of mankind.[26]

Phantom of the Paradise

Phantom premiered and flopped in October 1974, just as the film version of *Rocky Horror* was going into production. Director Brian De Palma had pitched both *Phantom* and another film,

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[25] Weinstock, Jeffrey. 2007. *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. London & New York: Wallflower Press*,* 81.

[26] Whittaker, *Cosmic Light,* 19.

Sisters, to American International Pictures in 1971, but only *Sisters* would be made, allowing

him to raise some of the funds for the production of a rock musical project that would satirize the

music industry. DePalma approached record companies for financial backing when film studios

failed to show interest, including Michael Arciaga at A&M, who would introduce the director to

songwriter Paul Williams. Williams wrote the songs for the film, provided some incidental

scoring, and would eventually be cast as its central antagonist, Swan: a corrupt record producer

whose character blends elements of Frankenstein, Dorian Gray, Faust, and the Devil.

The plot follows luckless singer-songwriter Winslow Leach as he tries to bring his

Faustian rock "cantata" to the world. First swindled by Swan into giving up excerpts of the

cantata (he refuses to call them "songs"), Winslow is then framed by the producer and

wrongfully imprisoned so that Swan's company, Death Records, can record inferior versions of

his music with impunity. During his time in prison, Winslow's teeth are replaced with metal

dentures. One day, enraged by hearing his music on the radio—butchered by Swan's latest

group, the Beach Bums—he goes berserk and escapes the prison. He goes directly to Death

Records, where he is disfigured while trying to destroy Swan's debased recording, thus

becoming the Phantom who will terrorize the Paradise (Swan's concert venue). Swan seduces the

Phantom once more with the promise that if they work together, he can choose the artists to

perform his music at the opening of the Paradise. He naively signs a contract in blood binding

him to Swan in perpetuity. Ultimately Swan goes behind The Phantom's back and replaces his

singer of choice, Phoenix, with the glitter rocker Beef. The Phantom kills Beef during the

opening of the Paradise, and Phoenix must take his place. She quickly becomes a star and shuts

the Phantom out. He tries to kill himself but Swan informs him that the contract terminates when

Swan does. Furthermore, Swan plans to wed Phoenix on air and have her assassinated during the

ceremony because "that's entertainment." The Phantom discovers this plan and intervenes; having learned that he can kill Swan if he destroys the tape on which Swan's contract with the devil is contained.

De Palma was very adamant that *Phantom* was "not a musical where people burst into song. This is a movie in which all the songs are performed as a group would perform them."[27] Though this is not precisely true—some songs play in an almost metadiegetic or voiceover space—the film is very much a backstage musical, and the majority of the music does indeed occur diegetically. This makes sense, as the film is built around the "idea of the distortion of idealistic song into pap you hear in a Muzak elevator."[28] *Phantom* sets its sights on the "nostalgia craze" and glam rock, not Muzak, using exaggerated performances to parody trends and fads in the music industry. Paul Williams, who was at the time mostly known for what he calls his "codependent anthems" for The Carpenters and other Adult Contemporary acts, and would go on to write lyrics for themes for shows like *The Love Boat* and *It Takes Two,* and songs for *The Muppets*, wrote songs for the film that cover a wide range of styles and eras. He felt that he was an "odd choice" for the job, but in interviews reveals that he had a lot of fun satirizing the music of his youth—Jeff Barry and the Beach Boys in particular—and trying to write the "music of the future" for Beef.[29] He also scored the final wedding sequence. Additional cues for piano and strings were provided by television composer George Aliceson. The scoring alternates between a

[27] "Paradise Regained" Featurette. In De Palma, Brian, George Memmoli, Gerrit Graham, and Jessica Harper. 2014. *Phantom of the Paradise* (Bluray).

[28] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

[29] Interview with Paul Williams, "Paradise Regained."

self-consciously dramatic chamber music style reminiscent of Beethoven or Schubert, and what Williams describes "Vaudeville" scoring.

The songs in the film can be broken into three categories, though because of the focus on the "corruption" of "innocent" music, some occupy more than one category. First of all, we have the group of songs produced by Swan: "Goodbye Eddie" (The Juicy Fruits), "Upholstery" (The Beach Bums), "Somebody Super Like You" (The Undead), and "Life At Last" (Beef). We then have other excerpts from the Faust cantata: "Faust" (sung by Winslow, then by Phoenix and the other girls auditioning for Swan, finally by the Phantom: this is the music on which "Upholstery" is based), "Special to Me" (sung by girls auditioning and Phoenix), "Life at Last" (sung by Beef), and "Old Souls" (sung by Beef and then Phoenix). Finally, the most puzzling group of songs, those that appear in a metadiegetic, voiceover space: "Never Thought I'd Ever Meet the Devil" (Winslow), "Phantom's Theme (Beauty and the Beast)" (Winslow, then Beef diegetically), and "The Hell of It" (Swan).

II. The "Cult" Sensibility: Horror, Camp, and Paracinema

If the horror film musical combines the incongruous affects of the horror film and the musical to parodic effect, then the potential of the horror film itself to fail in intensity and seriousness makes the genre ripe for camp interpretation and engagement. *Frankenstein* in particular has always been interpreted with some level of wit; even Whale's early film adaptations of the story didn't approach the subject matter with anywhere near the solemnity of Mary Shelley's novel. The melancholy and romantic Victor Frankenstein of the book gives way to a number of theatrical and silent film incarnations, with the Monster coming to life in his most iconic form (Boris Karloff), his creator (Colin Clive) chewing the scenery in James Whale's 1931 and 1935

films for Universal Studios. The sequel *Bride of Frankenstein* in particular alternates between

overwrought horror and raucous comedy, worrying censors in its cavalier treatment of man's

pretensions to godlike status if not the queer implications of its narrative of nonheterosexual

reproduction.

Later British variations on Shelley's theme were fairly straight-faced period dramas;

Frankenstein has been credited with breathing new life into Hammer Studios, with *The Curse of*

Frankenstein (dir. Terence Fisher, 1957). The studio's first color feature, *The Curse of*

Frankenstein would launch Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee to horror stardom, and inspire the

production of six other Frankenstein films.[30] American variations, on the other hand, were almost

immediately and self-consciously parodic, as with *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (dir. Herbert L.

Strock, 1957)*,* released the same year as *The Curse of Frankenstein*, and *Mad Monster Party*

(dir. Jules Bass, 1967), a stop-motion animated musical featuring the voice talents of Boris

Karloff and Phyllis Diller. The early seventies, the period during which Hammer's production of

Frankenstein films was dying down, saw the mad scientist and his "hideous progeny" flourishing

in a variety of humorous film and television contexts.

There was a particularly dense concentration of Frankenstein films during the years 1973-

1975, each embodying a different tone and exploring different genres, each poking fun at the

impressive store of cinematic renderings of *Frankenstein* with varying levels of intimacy and

affection. *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* are both in this group, along with others such as *Young*

Frankenstein and *Flesh for Frankenstein.* The former, in particular, is a prominent example of a

"straight" camp approach to genre. In his chapter on the phenomenon, Knapp locates the

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[30] *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958), *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964), *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1967), *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969), *The Horror of Frankenstein* (1970), and *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* (1974).

"mainstream prehistory" for this kind of camp in the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. This tradition, far from engaging in the kind of gender and sexuality-destabilizing play of its queer relatives, deploys "strategies of positioning result[ing] in a tendency to reinforce heternormativity through comically exaggerated plot elements and homophobic humor, coupled with a predilection toward using music as a signifier of homosexual 'excess.'"[31] He argues elsewhere that Mel Brooks' 1974 *Young Frankenstein* "leave[s] both the Golem and the Frankenstein stories far behind to follow operetta's tendency to take us to remote locations solely in order to awaken and realize romantic urges on the most personal level."[32] An affectionate spoof, *Young Frankenstein* works hard to distance itself from the queer sensibilities with which it shares no small amount of heritage and formal features.

Phantom differs from *Rocky Horror* in its anxious alignment of music and queerness, and its rigorous attempts to confine that queerness to the figure of Beef. While each film utilizes different affective musical strategies, the two are quite similar in both the musical genres they mined (glam rock, nostalgic fifties rock) and in their attaining of a "cult" status. "Cult" films, films venerated by small, non-mainstream audiences because of their oppositional aesthetics and/or ideology where film canonicity and quality are concerned, are a key example of what film scholar Jeffrey Sconce labels a *paracinematic* sensibility, which he describes as "aggressively

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[31] Knapp, "The Straight Bookends to Camp's Gay Golden Age: From Gilbert and Sullivan to Roger Vadim and Mel Brooks," in Moore, Christopher, and Philip Purvis. 2018. *Music & camp*. Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 200.

[32] Knapp, Raymond, "Music, Electricity, and the 'Sweet Mystery of Life' in *Young Frankenstein*" in Powrie, Phil, and Robynn Stilwell. 2005. *Changing tunes: the use of pre-existing music in film*. Aldershot: Ashgate*,* 111.

attacking the established canon of 'quality' cinema and questioning the legitimacy of reigning aesthete discourses on movie art."[33]

Sconce defines the paracinematic in a fashion reminiscent of Sontag's, with lists, stating that the paracinematic comprises "seemingly disparate genres as 'badfilm,' splatter-punk, 'mondo' films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach-party musicals, and just about every other historical manifestation of exploitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft-core pornography."[34] Paracinematic sensibilities, then, are trash sensibilities, focusing on the failures of the film industry rather than failures or exaggerations of gender within its successes, as camp often does. They evaluate their objects as beyond the pale, as "bad" and of low cultural standing, and proceed to use those qualities and features that make them bad to criticize the "mainstream" of filmmaking and film taste.

Film historian Paul Monaco traces the beginnings of the cult phenomenon to a "camp interest" in Classic Hollywood genre films and sixties exploitation films, many associated with American International Pictures, whose poor production values and/or dated ideology or aesthetics allowed audiences to mock and enjoy simultaneously, with varying degrees of contempt and affection. Cult films show a strong affinity for camp in their ironic love for "artifice and exaggeration," but often the "camp" performances in cult films are approached differently by the audience venerating them than are camp performances more specifically rooted in queer sensibilities. I conjecture that this is mainly because the audience for the cult film tends

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[33] Sconce, J. (December 01, 1995). 'Trashing' the academy: taste, excess, and an emerging politics of cinematic style. *Screen, 36*:4, 101-102.

[34] Sconce, "Trashing the Academy," 101.

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to be from the dominant class (Monaco labels it the "private genre…of the privileged children of the middle class"[35]), and largely in terms of race and gender as well. Operating within cinematic realms geared towards them, the cult audience must approach the films in such a way as to signal their difference and outsiderdom, a very different procedure (counteridentification) than the traditional gay camp reworking of expressive conventions to create a coded language within the majoritarian one (disidentification).

Though, as Sconce points out, the paracinematic sensibility shares much with camp, its attitude towards its objects need not be tender (often is not), and is decidedly masculine in constitution (claiming an outsider status for itself not necessarily inherent in the subjects who embrace it, as opposed to camp's effeminacy). Sconce observes that "the paracinematic community, like the academy and the popular press, embodies primarily a male, white, middle-class, and 'educated' perspective on the cinema"[36] (he does not mention sexuality). Sconce himself notes the similarities between camp and paracinema, stating:

> At first glance, the paracinematic sensibility, in all its current manifestations, would seem to be identical to the 'camp' aesthetic outlined by Susan Sontag some thirty years ago. Without a doubt, both sensibilities are highly ironic, infatuated with the artifice and excess of obsolescent cinema. What makes paracinema unique, however, is its aspiration to the status of 'counter-cinema.' Whereas 'camp' was primarily a reading strategy that allowed gay men to rework the Hollywood cinema through a new and more expressive subcultural code, paracinematic culture seeks to promote an alternative vision of cinematic 'art,' aggressively attacking the established canon of 'quality' cinema and questioning the legitimacy of reigning aesthete discourses on movie art. Camp was an aesthetic of ironic colonization and cohabitation. Paracinema, on the other hand, is an aesthetic of vocal confrontation.[37]

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[35] Monaco, Paul. 1979. *American Film Now,* New York: New American Library, 66.

[36] Sconce, "Trashing the Academy," 104.

[37] Sconce, "Trashing the Academy," 102.

The distinction he makes here has everything to do with the differing configurations of gendered subjectivity in play. On the one hand we have the camp aesthetic, which he characterizes as parasitic and effeminate, and on the other, the paracinematic, which he characterizes as oppositional and masculine. The latter characterization illustrates cult cinema's alignment of the "counter-cinema" with a revolutionary machismo, and the "mainstream" with a passive and feminized acceptance of mass media.[38] Both camp and paracinematic reading strategies rely on a process that denaturalizes its objects, though Sconce attributes to the paracinematic a potentially widespread appeal not available in the case of camp, which he designates as relying on a parody and a denaturalization of prevailing gender codes specifically as opposed to paracinema's reading of aesthetic codes. The paracinematic, on the other hand, draws attention to the "arbitrary structure of a narrative" allowing the "elite viewer" to:

> study the 'perceptual field of structures' in the work itself in appreciation of artistic craftsmanship within a closed formal system. The paracinematic viewer's recognition of a narrative's artifice, however, is the first step in examining a field of structures within the culture as a whole, a passageway into engaging a larger field of contextual issues surrounding the film as a socially and historically specific document.[39]

Sconce's description outlines a cerebral process, pointing to the elite (unmarked but likely white masculine) viewer's learning of codes that they then use to read a narrative's artifice and social and historical specificity. However, if we follow Richard Dyer's characterization, camp as a mode of performance and perception has everything to do with embodied experiences of shame around gender, the failed masculinity of effeminacy, specifically. As he says: camp's "self-mockery and self-protection can have a corrosive effect on us [gay men]… behind them

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[38] See Joanne Hollows "The Masculinity of Cult" and Jacinda Read, "The Cult of Masculinity: From Fan-Boys to Academic Bad-Boys," in Jancovich, *Defining cult movies.*

[39] Sconce, "Trashing the Academy," 118.

linger such ideas as 'How stupid I am'… Camp can help us from letting the social, cultural

situation of gays getting us down: but it is the situation that's wrong, not ourselves."[40] Both

sensibilities are about reading codes and a sense of outsiderdom that is affirmed through the

shared reading of those codes. But the knowledge by which one becomes a reader ("elite" or

otherwise) of camp comes, at least in Dyer's formulation, from the experience of incongruity one

feels in one's own body and gender, and the way in which humor can be utilized to get in front

of the shaming one knows will follow public recognition of that incongruity. A paracinematic

viewer does not necessarily require these embodied and often traumatic experiences of gender

nonconformity, though they certainly could have them. The paracinematic viewer must instead

learn cinematic codes and master information about their extracinematic constitution.

The paracinematic reader must therefore approach materials in such a way as to signal his

difference and outsiderdom, but this need not include any kind of critique regarding gender. In

fact, femininity often finds itself in the position of just one among many of the facets of

mainstream media paracinema mocks. Some feminist theorists have made a similar critique of

camp, claiming drag, for example, "displays no love or identification with women or the

womanly… this femininity is affected and characterized by theatrical exaggeration. It is a casual

and cynical mockery of women, for whom femininity is the trappings of oppression."[41] This

interpretation, like cultural feminist interpretations of trans femininity, depends on a literalist

reading of the forms of femininity. Trans women are forced into a particularly impossible

position in relation to gender expression by both feminists and the dominant ideology with which

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[40] Dyer, Richard. 1992. *Only Entertainment*. London: Routledge, 136.

[41] Frye, Marilyn. 1983. *The politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory*. Trumansburg, N.Y: Crossing Press*, 137-138

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they counteridentify: "If [trans women] act feminine they are perceived as being a parody, but if they act masculine it is seen as a sign of their true male identity."[42] Cultural feminist counteridentification with majoritarian modes of gender actually reinforce certain aspects of sex essentialism.

Gender in cult contexts operates through an alternating or simultaneous deployment and reading of various codes (cinematic and personal, campy and paracinematic) of femininity. Where camp relies on a performed and exaggerated femininity, paracinema distances itself from and often objectifies this femininity, symptomatic of the mainstream media with which it hopes to disassociate itself. Therefore, a unifying characteristic of camp and the paracinematic is a coincident hypervisibility and silence around femininity by feminine subjects other than effeminate gay men. Making a claim for camp and paracinema's rights to femininity is not the aim of the chapter. Rather, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which camp's characteristic exaggerations and theatricality and paracinema's characteristic satire and contempt approach femininity. What kinds of counter- and disidentifications do they offer to gay men and trans women, existing in different positions where these representations of femininity are concerned, counteridentifying or disidentifying with that hegemonic femininity? These lines of inquiry are meant to counter feminist counteridentificatory readings of theatrical and "artificial" versions of majoritarian femininity that cannot account for the disidentificatory impulses that non-cis women subjects with investments and attachments to femininity and effeminacy might have.

Made at a time when experimentation with femininity by those not assigned female at birth was becoming more and more visible, in large part due to trends in glam rock and other

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[42] Serano, Julia. "Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels," in Stryker, Susan, & Aizura, Aren Z. (2013). *The transgender studies reader*, 232.

genres of popular music, as well as the counterculture's embrace of less traditionally masculine sartorial styles in response to U.S. militarism, *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* allow the historian of gender and sexuality to open up discussions about gender, drag, and the various reparative and paranoid relations subjects can have to femininity, discussions which have tended to pit gay male drag and "sissy" subjects against lesbian feminists who favor an androgyny. The utopian dream of a sexual matrix unmarked by patriarchal power relations can, paradoxically, erase transgender and gender-variant people.

Struggles for a "woman-identified" definition of femininity[43] can be read against what is usually seen as a pair of differently gendered sensibilities (effeminate camp and masculine paracinema), sensibilities in which femininity is both glamorous affirmation of subject and perverse sexual objectification, sometimes simultaneously. This simultaneity is a distinct feature of the affective economies of *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom. Phantom* in particular, and can be understood through a brief explanation of the ways in which contempt can follow both downward and upward trajectories. There are, in fact, two styles of contempt: the traditional disdain of the socially high and powerful for the socially low and disempowered, and what William Ian Miller has labeled "upward contempt," the contempt of the socially low for the socially high. In the traditional scenario, contempt flows downward. He contrasts this traditional contempt with upward contempt, which he describes as "the contempt teenagers have for adults, women for men, servants for masters, workers for bosses, Jews for Christians, blacks for whites, the uneducated for the educated, and so on."[44] These forms of upward contempt are all distinct,

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[43] Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" in Jay, Karla, and Allen Young. 1992. *Out of the closets: voices of gay liberation*. New York: New York University Press, 172.

[44] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 207.

as each oppression has its own history and each relates to a different fixity of oppression

(adolescence, for example, is "easily escapable"[45]).

In general, all forms of contempt are aversive, like the affect of horror, but more importantly, contempt is a hierarchizing emotion, like disgust. Contempt and disgust are similar in that they:

> assert a superior ranking as against their objects. But the experience of superiority based on one is quite different from that based on the other. We can enjoy our feelings of contempt, mingled as they often are with pride and self-congratulation. Contrast disgust which makes us pay with unpleasant sensation for the superiority it asserts.[46]

Contempt has something of a "warm and pleasant" side, then; it can "inform benevolent and polite treatment of the inferior" as much as hostility and cruelty.[47] Miller observes that, unlike disgust, contempt "often moves in the ironic mode, thus its frequent appearance with wry grins or sardonic smiles,"[48] but that so-called upward contempt is especially likely to be accompanied by *Schadenfreude* where the socially high are concerned, a kind of mirthful reveling in either the high's inability to operate within the confines of the standards and values they have set (hypocrisy attacked with satire), or the ridiculousness of those standards themselves (affectation attacked with spoof). In either case:

> If the pleasure of normal contempt is often tinged with complacency, self-satisfaction, and smugness, or even with a simple and less culpable delight in one's own superiority or in the sentimentality of pity, the pleasure in upward contempt is seldom separable from the knowledge that the superior you hold in contempt is humiliating himself, is, in short, looking foolish.[49]

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[45] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 207.

[46] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 32.

[47] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 32.

[48] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 33.

[49] Miller, *Anatomy of Disgust,* 222.

It is my argument that the cult sensibility, with its sometimes overlapping sometimes conflicting camp and paracinematic orientations towards majoritarian ideology and mainstream aesthetics, combines these two kinds of contempt, with varying levels of "warm[th] and pleasant[ness]." Where the camp paracinematic logic of *Rocky Horror* is tenderly contemptuous of the many formulaic absurdities of the low-brow genres from which it borrows and ideologies it parodies, *Phantom* is often openly hostile to the ideology it parodies, using mainstream musical and cinematic genres to bring out what it sees as the fundamentally tragic logic of the process of musical commercialization. The difference is clearly legible in the differing placement of and uses to which glam rock is put in the narrative.

III. Musical Monsters and Making Music Monstrous

Integrated v. Backstage: Gendering the Musical/Horror Blend

Different gendered approaches to the cult sensibility are legible on a structural level in the ways in which *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* blend horror with the film musical. Whereas *Rocky Horror* uses the Classical Hollywood form of the integrated musical to introduce characters, present narrative problems, and showcase performances, *Phantom* employs a more realist-inspired "backstage" approach, setting the action against a musical backdrop that justifies the performance of music. Where O'Brien modeled *Rocky Horror* to a certain extent on *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), a musical in which characters sing their feelings and identities and solve their problems through musical numbers, De Palma was adamant that *Phantom* was "not a musical where people burst into song. This is a movie in which all the songs are performed as a

group would perform them."[50] This aversion to "burst[ing] into song" can be read as a desire to avoid the feminized connotations of both the musical number as expression of subjectivity and the effeminate connotations of musical comedy itself. On the other hand, embracing the musical can be read as a desire to use its characteristic affects, which Lloyd Whitesell designates as euphoria and hauteur,[51] to bring out the glamorous and empowering aspects of various monstrous archetypes.

Rocky Horror establishes both its musical and paracinematic tone, as well as the film's tendencies toward a "bi-sexed aesthetic,"[52] in the opening number, "Science Fiction, Double Feature." The verse is accompanied by an acoustic guitar, bass, and piano, while the lyrics present a mashed-up listing of plots, characters, actors, and dialogue. The chorus adds backing vocals and saxophone, and draw out the song's characteristic "doo-wop" chord progression, fixing it firmly in a nostalgia for the popular music of the fifties. The lyrics of the chorus suggestively imply that the "late night double feature picture show" is an erotic space. O'Brien has discussed how his fifties parody was enabled by his understanding of the decade's aesthetics and ideologies as particularly naïve, and so the drawing out of sexual subtext has the effect of suturing the audience affectionately to those aesthetics (of which they may be paracinematically contemptuous) and those ideologies for which they may have less affection, or, in the case of O'Brien and his generation, towards which they may feel the echoes of a youthful upward contempt.

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[50] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

[51] Whitesell, Lloyd, "Trans Glam Magic: Gender Magic in the Film Musical" in Whiteley, Sheila, & Rycenga, Jennifer. (2006). *Queering the popular pitch*. New York: Routledge, 265.

[52] Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies,* 79.

The closing chords of the song blend into the ringing of church bells from the scene that follows: the wedding of Ralph and Betty Hapshatt, friends of protagonists Brad and Janet. This scene signals the film's critical—yet still affectionate—view of majoritarian sexual ideology. Exiting the wedding, for example, the audience will see an ominous inscription on the car the newlyweds will depart in: "Wait til tonite: she got hers, now he'll get his!" The inscription encapsulates majoritarian views of heterosexuality comprising two sexually distinct parties. The formulaic dialogue between Brad and Ralph and its wooden delivery, too, highlights the stiff, restrictive structures of masculine friendship. The desires set up in "Science Fiction, Double Feature" are initially presented in opposition to Brad and Janet's "normal" desires in the couple's establishing number, "Dammit Janet." These protagonists represent conventional desires that conflict with the perverse desires unleashed in the rest of the film, thereby providing the dramatic tension. *Rocky Horror* continues to use nostalgic references to fifties popular music to frame this opposition, sexualizing the "back row" at the "late night, double-feature picture show" (raunchily articulated by back-up singers and solo saxophone) as a space Brad and Janet (in their romantic world of fluttering tremolos and rockabilly bass) would never occupy.

At this point, the film cuts to the Criminologist (Charles Gray), whose authoritative voice will guide the audience through the narrative. As in the characteristic fifties hygiene films (a *locus classicus* of the paracinematic imagination), he appears on screen, in his office, breaking Hollywood conventions that would dictate an acousmatic placement of his voice off-screen. *Phantom* opens with just such an omniscient narrator (Rod Serling), accompanied by the eerie, high-pitched whine of a synthesizer. The voice-over serves much the same function as "Science Fiction, Double Feature" of setting the musical and paracinematic tone, but it also illustrates some of the key differences between the films. Serling's association with *The Twilight Zone,*

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which in tandem with the high-pitched synthesizer locates the audience in a fantastic, science fiction realm, and does so by introducing the place music will play in the narrative: its role as monstrous, as "beautiful, original creation…reduce[d] to elevator music."[53] After sardonically detailing Swan's legendary musical deeds of reduction (how "he brought the blues to Britain, he brought Liverpool to America, he brought folk and rock together, his band the Juicy Fruits single-handedly gave birth to the nostalgia wave of the seventies"), Serling tells us that the producer "is looking for the new sound of the spheres to inaugurate his own Xanadu, his own Disneyland: the Paradise, the ultimate rock palace. This film is the story of that search, of that sound: the man who made it, the girl who sang it, and the monster who stole it."

As in Mary Shelley's original, in *Phantom*'s Maker is the true Monster of the film, not his hideous progeny. Music is immediately introduced as the victim of the entertainment industry, of which Swan is a demonic representative. The sequence that follows Swan's introduction is of his own hideous progeny, The Juicy Fruits, performing their retro hit "Goodbye Eddie." The Juicy Fruits (and the Beach Bums and the Undead) are a trio played by Peter Elbling, Archie Hahn, and Jeffrey Comanor, backed by Paul Williams' touring combo (guitar, bass, drums, keyboard). Hahn is the lead singer, a posturing greaser in a pink bowling shirt, and Elbling and Comanor are his backup singers, clad in similar but all-black outfits. The song is Paul Williams' interpretation of the music of his "high school days," especially those by songwriter and producer Jeff Barry who had a string of hits throughout the 1960s, perhaps most famously with girl groups like The Exciters, The Ronettes, and The Shangri-Las.[54] "Goodbye Eddie" is a standard death ballad, detailing the lengths pop star Eddie Mitty ("born in Jersey

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[53] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

[54] Interview with Paul Williams, "Paradise Regained."

City") goes to to raise the money necessary for his little sister's life-saving operation. The performance situates music within the diegetic space of the Paradise, a much different procedure from *Rocky Horror's* "musically-enhanced reality mode"[55] in which characters "burst into song."

Neat as it may seem, the films do perform opposite functions in their blending of the horror film and the musical. Ultimately, *Rocky Horror* the musicalization of a camp horror pastiche, while *Phantom* is a paracinematic horror/exploitation film about musical creation and production. These differing formulations present different opportunities for disidentification and counteridentification with majoritarian ideology and mainstream aesthetics. I will now detail the affects I associate with these two developments: the "euphoria and hauteur" Whitesell associates with the musical, and the contempt and horror that forms the core of De Palma's satirical critique of the music industry.

Musical Affects for Horror (*Rocky Horror*)

In *Rocky Horror,* we have both Benshoff's domestic and sadomasochistic configurations of queerness. The domestic couple is actually and extraterrestrial threesome (Frank, Riff Raff, and Magenta), instead of a domestic couple, and in addition to creating life (Rocky), Frank goes off solo to transform some of the humans with whom he comes into contact (Eddie, Columbia, Dr. Scott, and of course, Brad and Janet). Eddie is somewhat unique in the roster—he is never aligned with femininity and must be destroyed. When the monstrous queer Frank-N-Furter is ultimately destroyed (not by normality, but by another, sadomasochistic queer, Riff Raff), the humans are left writhing in the wreckage, and it is unclear where they will go from here. *Rocky*

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[55] Knapp, Raymond. (2009). *The American musical and the performance of personal identity*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Horror uses music, as in the integrated Hollywood musical, to draw out the emotional and sexual content of these absurd genre archetypes and tropes. The musical, of course, has long been a province of gay men, but here a differently-gendered subjectivity arises.

As Whitesell points out at the start of his essay "Trans Glam Magic," the sissy, or effeminate gay man, has long been the custodian of glamour in the musical theater. Whitesell defines glamour as "an exciting, often illusory or romantic attractiveness," an image and emotional attitude created and evoked through aesthetic means and performance.[56] He contrasts glamour with two other modes, the burlesque and the everyday, focusing both on glamour as technique and glamour in itself, "an aesthetic category evoking emotions of envy, excitement, or desirous identification."[57] The affects this aesthetic category evokes have found a particular expression in the musical and a particular significance for, argues, D.A. Miller, effeminate gay men. In large part the direction of this section has been inspired by Miller's *Place for Us*, in which he identifies three queer affects that the Broadway musical and its gay audience encodes, preserves, and exposes to view: "the solitude, shame, secretiveness by which the impossibility of social integration was first internalized"; "the excessive sentimentality that was the necessary condition of sentiments allowed no real object"; and "the intense, senseless *joy* that, while not identical to these destitutions, is neither extricable from them."[58] These affects are, he argues, pathetic and grotesque in the decades following Stonewall and liberation:

> In the psyche of post-Stonewall man, the Broadway musical lies like a nervously watched pod that, having been preserved from a past geological epoch, may nonetheless—say, at any temperature above frigidity—split open to reveal a creature that, in comparison with

[56] Whitesell, "Trans Glam Magic," 265.

[57] Whitesell, "Trans Glam Magic," 265.

[58] Miller, D. A. 1998. *Place for us: essay on the Broadway musical*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University press, 26; italics in original

the less primitive forms of life around it, even with those which must have evolved from it, will appear monstrous beyond recognition.[59]

His description reads like something lovingly parodied by O'Brien in *Rocky Horror,* detailing the ways in which this "pre-Stonewall" queer subjectivity transmutes the "solitude, shame, [and] secretiveness" of gay identity through "the intense, senseless *joy* that, while not identical to these destitutions, is neither extricable from them."

Anything, argues Whitesell, can be glamorized, and in the musical feminine performance is often the way to perform this glamorization. "By focusing on the gender ideal as a matter of aesthetics, mainstream musicals propound a view whereby femininity, say, is not an innate quality granted to all women, but instead a special effect available to anyone with the proper skill and accessories."[60] As Whitesell's chapter suggests, glamorous femininity is much more about display than glamorous masculinity, and as a result much more often glamorous femininity is labeled as artificial and performed. The perceived naturalness of masculinity depends upon this opposition to femininity's artificiality, and the presumption of male superiority depends upon it as well. We can see, then, how glamorous femininity is much more amenable to the tasks assigned it by Whitesell: the destabilization of essential notions of gender and sexuality. It is Whitesell's argument that queers across identity can lay claim to the affirming affects produced by glamour—euphoria and hauteur, states reinforcing feelings of self-generated pleasure and self-worth—to construct their self-images, though the images from which they draw serve in many ways as the most rigid and bifurcated modes of gender.

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[59] Miller, *Place for Us,* 26.

[60] Whitesell, "Trans Glam Magic," 273.

Though structured like an integrated musical, *Rocky Horror* employs a method of showcasing performance within the narrative via Frank-N-Furter's penchant for elaborate floorshows of the scientific, musical, and sexual variety. The creation sequence, for example, seems just as staged as his "floorshow." The songs are sometimes are placed end-to-end, much like the songs and song fragments in the Munchkinland sequence in *Oz*. For example, the final segment of the film comprises "Rose Tint My World," "Don't Dream It, Be It," "Wild and Untamed Thing," and "I'm Going Home" with very little space between them. Leading up to these final musical sequences, the "floorshow" sequence, Dr. Frank-N-Furter frantically performs a combination of preparatory beautifying labor (make-up and costume and staging) infused with the pathos and desire of Pygmalion or his dark counterpart and Frank-N-Furter's namesake, Dr. Frankenstein.

While more burlesque than glamorous (Frank pulls at his subjects' black fishnet stockings and adjusts their tightly-cinched corsets, daubing faces with white cake make-up and dramatic colors more at home in a circus or burlesque show), the beautification of the sequence leading up to the floorshow quite clearly harkens to the involvement of "sissies" in the aesthetics of musical theater discussed by Whitesell. The floorshow—during which Columbia, Rocky, Brad, and Janet all sing about their sexual journeys—is merely an introduction for Frank-N-Furter's ode to old Hollywood glamour and sexual abandon, "Don't Dream It, Be It." Circling back to the themes outlined in "Science Fiction, Double Feature," the opening lines of "Don't Dream It, Be It" trace a sexual-affective attachment to the stars and narratives of old horror and science fiction: here reaching back farther than the fifties to Fay Wray's performance in *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper, 1933).

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Horror Affects for Music (*Phantom*)

The creation narrative in *Phantom* unfolds in relation to musical creation, not sexual transformation, so it understandably features less direct engagement with sexuality and gender, but the elements are still clearly present through the dual deployment of Benshoff's two queer couplings: domestic and sadomasochistic. In the beginning of the film, Swan's henchman Philbin complains that an unnamed "she" has been demanding more than her fair share. "I'm the one that *made* her," he whines. This is of course exactly what Swan and the music industry is shown to do. He molds the same performers into three different bands throughout the narrative (The Juicy Fruits, Beach Bums, and Undeads), steals Winslow's music so that it can be performed by the glam performer he "discovers" and theatrically "brings" to the public via jet plane entrance and exclusive press conference. He also makes Phoenix (Jessica Harper) a star after she steps in for Beef by promoting her, giving her drugs and feeding her hunger for applause. Swan and Winslow-The-Phantom (William Finley) enact a sadomasochistic coupling a la Karloff and Lugosi that nonetheless produces monstrous musical offspring (perverted in Winslow's eyes and ears, sublime in Swan's).

Winslow is described in the original screenplay as "a tall, blond, angular rock freak, dressed as one might imagine Wagner would be, playing his 'Die Gotterdammerung' for Ludwig II (the mad king of Bavaria). Swathed in a floor-length cape of black velvet, Winslow drips 19th century romanticism, putting him so far behind the times, he's ahead."[61] This characterization is clearly meant to speak to the Monster he will become, the Phantom, and George Aliceson Tipton's incidental music underlines this romantic association. The chamber music timbres evoke the "greats" of western music, a greatness and canonicity we are meant to translate to

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[61] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

popular music through Winslow's compositional craft. Finley also mentions in an interview that the character was based in part on De Palma's theater professor at Sarah Lawrence College, Wilford Leach, who was "that kind of introvert. A genius, but has no idea how to get it out there." So in the actual character this romantic flamboyance is softened with a bookish shyness since, according to De Palma, he wanted Winslow to be played as "lovable kid before he's horribly maimed and turned into the Phantom."[62] Winslow is played by Bill Finley in a "60s, hippie" way, evoking more of a James Taylor figure, with coke bottle glasses and a turtleneck.

By the time we reach the end of the film (an extended wedding sequence Swan means to conclude with the assassination of Phoenix, his new bride), the monstrosity of the music industry has been well established. The monstrosity of the diegetic *audience* for this musical spectacle, however, had not been. De Palma toyed with the idea of a humorous ending, but ultimately settled on letting the scenario descend entirely into tragedy, with the Phantom and Swan dying together much to the delight of a crowd that either thinks the violence is fake, or, more likely, is whipped into a frenzy by it. To create this atmosphere, De Palma hired Richard Schechner's Performance Group, with whom he had collaborated on a theatrical production of *The Bacchae* titled *Dionysus in 69.* The performers in this group were hired specifically to create a frenzy much the same as they had done for the stage play, suggesting that audiences are implicated in the violence they demand and consume (a suggestion similar to Craven's in *Last House*). Williams' music for this sequence is unlike any other sequence in the film—though it builds on the music Winslow first performs for Swan—an extended, psychedelic jam session as opposed to a compact, pop song.

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[62] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

Like *Rocky Horror, Phantom* was a flop upon its initial theatrical release, though, like

Rocky Horror, it did quite well in Los Angeles. *Phantom* also attracted a cult following among

pre-teens and teens in Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, where it opened December 1974 and

played continuously through May 1975.

> *Phantom of the Paradise* has become something of a local phenomenon. The film has
> attracted a cultish following unprecedented in recent memory. I've met many people who
> have already seen the movie anywhere from half a dozen to 13 or 14 times, usually taking
> at least one friend along each time. The soundtrack album is currently the hottest record
> in Winnipeg, with practically everyone who has seen the film rushing out to purchase a
> copy.[63]

The soundtrack album went on sale in Canada that February, where it proceeded to go gold,

selling at least 50,000 copies,[64] with the song "Somebody Super Like You" (performed by the

Undead in the film) according to station manager Bob Laine, "the most requested song" on local

AM radio station CFRW.[65] The film carried on by word-of-mouth and, like any good cult film, it

also inspired indignant responses from, presumably, middle-aged, middle-class audience

members, as encapsulated by a somewhat cartoonish Letter to the Editor entitled "Shocked at

Film" in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on the day of the film's last screening:

> Sir: I recently had the misfortune to attend a showing of the film *Phantom of the
> Paradise*. I was shocked, not only by the film's content and the manner of its
> presentation, but also by the response of the young audience in attendance. The film
> presents exploitation, 'sexploitation,' greed, violence and drug abuse, a package all neatly
> wrapped up in a good rock music score, and presented with all the glitter and shine of
> which Hollywood is capable. Certainly, the idea behind the plot is a good one. The rock
> version of a potpourri of Faust, Dorian Gray, Phantom of the Opera and even a little
> Frankenstein could have been an enjoyable experience. When tossed together with a good
> satire on the rock music industry, this version could have made for fine entertainment.

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[63] Mellen, Andy, "Youthscene," Winnipeg Free Press, March 10, 1975.

[64] Fan site *The Swan Archives* speculates that about 40% of those sales can be attributed to
Winnipeg, putting the record at 20,000 sold in a city of 200,000.

[65] Carlson, Doug. "Why Winnipeg? The 1975 Phantom Phenomenon," *The Swan Archives,*
http://www.phantomoftheparadise.ca/why2.html. Accessed June 10, 2018.

However… [p]ut together with a tasteless parody of homosexuality and murderous scenes of violence, such as stabbing, beatings, disfigurements and ritual dismemberments, the film is in reality a sickening and decadent spectacle.[66]

This reads quite differently than a description of the experience by fan Doug Carlson:

For most of us, the *Phantom* experience was a weekly ritual, spent with our friends in a lush downtown movie theatre that Timothy Leary himself might have decorated, catching an outrageous 91-minute glimpse of a tantalizing, if bizarre, adult world… For a generation of kids who spent their Saturdays waking up to *The Hilarious House of Frightenstein*, eating dinner to *The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Hour*, and going to bed watching *Chiller Thriller,* "getting" *Phantom of the Paradise* was a no-brainer. It made us laugh. It made us sing. It made us cry at the end. It made us want to be rock stars, or actors, or filmmakers ourselves. What more did any 10-year-old want in a movie?[67]

William Finley (The Phantom) speculates that the problem the film faced was that it was made for a teen audience, but that it was satirizing things they were taking very seriously—the music industry and its products—and "didn't know they were being manipulated by."[68] But at least the Winnipeg audience for *Phantom,* as Carlson's commentary suggests, didn't even read the film as satire, focusing instead on the spoofier aspects, as well as the more serious and tragic ones. The film is built entirely around a consummate counteridentification with the entertainment industry, and a serious one at that. The irony of *Phantom's* cult status is one that has befallen many a satire: that of an audience missing the critique and taking it "straight."

IV. Glam Rock, Artifice, and the Bi-Sexed Aesthetic

Femininity in the Midnight Movie and Feminist Counteridentification

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[66] Anonymous. "Shocked at Film*," Winnipeg Free Press,* May 1, 1975.

[67] Carlson, Doug. "Why Winnipeg? The 1975 Phantom Phenomenon," *The Swan Archives,* http://www.phantomoftheparadise.ca/why2.html. Accessed June 10, 2018.

[68] Interview with William Finley, "Paradise Regained."

A cursory survey of the literature on the phenomenon of the "midnight movie" will invariably bring the researcher into contact with *Rocky Horror,* usually vis-à-vis the image of an iconic, disembodied mouth: full, lipsticked red, bottom lip pulled suggestively between the teeth. If the image has been pulled from posters, we are looking at the lips of Lorelei Shark, and if it has been captured from the screen—floating against a black background—those lips belong to Patricia Quinn. In some instances, the lips are Tim Curry's. *Rocky Horror,* from whence this "different set of jaws"[69] came, is regularly positioned as the cult film par excellence, displaying various features designated by early sociological studies as particularly generative of the kind of "active and lively communal following"[70] that characterizes the cult film. *Rocky Horror* allows audiences to celebrate themes that place typical people in atypical situations, for them to identify with subversive characters, to question authority, to reflect upon societal strains, with the film ultimately offering "interpretable and paradoxical resolutions" to these strains.[71]

By most accounts, the relative cult successes of *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* have to do with how they package illicit cultural material (visions of sexual freedom and spectacles of hard rock) for the audiences, adolescent and otherwise, that consume them. In the previous two section, I laid out the ways in which the differing combinations of genre channel, through music, the flows of affect in these films. If the satire of *Phantom* strives for the backstage musical's "realism," justifying the inclusion of musical numbers by virtue of the film's narrative concerns of music as a branch of the entertainment industry, the paracinematic camp of *Rocky Horror* uses

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[69] Tagline on original posters.

[70] Cultographies, Mathjis, http://www.cultographies.com/definition.shtml

[71] Kinkade, Patrick T., and Michael A. Katovich. 1992. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading *Rocky Horror,*" *Sociological Quarterly.* 33 (2): 191-209.

the phantasmagorical space of the musical number to desublimate the latent sexual content of the

science fiction and horror film. In this section, I will explore the location of Straayer's bi-sexed

aesthetic of glam rock in these narratives. Where *Rocky Horror* applies Whitesell's glamorous

femininity as "special effect" and emblem of sexual power for people of all genders through

glam rock's bi-sexed aesthetic, *Phantom* condenses these queer effects down into the figure of

Beef, the embodiment of all the fakery and hypocrisy of the music industry.

As I have demonstrated, both films represent a majoritarian counteridentification with

mainstream film culture, but *Rocky Horror* in particular (and *Phantom*, for brief moments during

the performances of the Juicy Fruits, Beach Bums, and Undead), also allows audiences to

disidentify with majoritarian modes of gender and sexuality through music. *Rocky Horror's*

counteridentificatory play with gender and sexuality has been well-rehearsed within the literature

on the midnight movie. However, writing in 1982, feminist film scholar Gaylyn Studlar

interrogates the function of perverse sexuality—specifically, perverse femininity—within the

phenomenon, arguing that:

> From a Marcusean perspective, any appearance of perversion in the midnight movie
> might be regarded as a progressive movement toward subverting the dominant sexual
> practice sanctioned by the patriarchal bourgeois family. But analysis reveals that most of
> these films do little to subvert oppressive norms…Although midnight movies often revel
> in breaking sexual taboos through homosexuality and inverted sex roles or cross-dressing,
> these elements suggest a contemporary 'sexual revolution' that does not necessarily
> question the hierarchical status of gender or the patriarchal power imbalance in sexual
> practice.[72]

In sum, the films offer the promise of feminist counteridentification, a rejection of majoritarian

conceptions of gender and sex hierarchy, but fail to deliver due to their masculinist basis (Studlar

does not differentiate between majoritarian and minoritarian masculinities). Because "midnight

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[72] Studlar, Gaylyn. 1989. "Midnight S/excess: Cult Configurations of "Femininity" and the
Perverse," *Journal of Popular Film and Television.* 17 (1): 5.

movies typically crystallize the problem of sexual difference and the "s/excess" of perversity in a feminine, though not always *female* figure,"[73] the misogynist association of perversity and femininity in figures not assigned female at birth makes them easily assimilable into dominant discourse.

Studlar's dissatisfaction with *Pink Flamingos* and *Rocky Horror,* in particular, stems from the films' failure to problematize the straight male viewing position. For her, Divine's performance as Babs Johnson "parodies women's performance of femininity, but fails to expose the origins of this performance in patriarchal culture's demand for its construction,"[74] while Tim Curry's performance as Dr. Frank-n-Furter "safely recuperates the revolutionary promise of a homoerotic hedonism through the sexual politics of masculine aggression."[75] Studlar worries that the midnight movies' configuration of objectified femininity is a masculine appropriation, a concern that echoes cultural feminist anxieties about transsexuality. As she concludes:

> the sexual rebellion of such 'mainstream' cult films as *PF* and *RHPS* shows that gendered power relations are not necessarily subverted by a vision of perversely erotic freedom. On the contrary, femininity and perversity are bound together in a formula that provides the male with a rationale for denigrating 'femininity' and female sexuality. What results, finally, in all its contradictions and ambivalence, is a masculinist vision of the mysteries and pleasures of s/excess. Desire unencumbered by difference and division remains a dangerous dream, a 'liquid sky' perhaps too much, too overwhelming, too perverse— even for the midnight hour.[76]

Studlar is correct that the (often masculinist) process of paracinematic counteridentification with mainstream cinema does not accomplish a (cultural) feminist

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[73] Studlar, "Midnight S/excess," 4.

[74] Studlar, "Midnight S/excess," 6.

[75] Studlar, "Midnight S/excess," 8.

[76] Studlar, "Midnight S/excess," 13.

counteridentification with patriarchy. Feminist counteridentification manifested itself powerfully

during the 1970s through the search for "woman-identified" modes of self, style, and

community.[77] An aesthetic move towards a gender-neutral androgyny—marked by the absence

of makeup and the eschewal of revealing styles of dress, both considered to be first and foremost

constructions of femininity formulated for the male gaze—and a sexual move towards

nonhierarchical modes of eroticism represented, for many lesbian feminists, a utopian gesture

towards the liberation of women. Femininity itself is interpreted as a sexualized display within

the context of patriarchy, and it is seen this way and devalued accordingly by both subjects that

identify with this ideology (i.e. hegemonic, patriarchal subjects), and those that counteridentify

with it (feminists). They saw the gendering of women through their styles of dress and bodily

comportment as oppressive, but still located an essential "womanness" in specific genitals and

reproductive capabilities. This rejection of all forms of femininity by those not assigned female

at birth, including trans women, represents for Stryker "a watershed moment in this shared

[activist] history when the transgender political movement lost its alliances with gay and feminist

communities in ways that did not begin to be repaired until the 1990s."[78]

    During the seventies, the differing positions taken by feminists, gay liberationists, and

trans people vis-à-vis hegemonic institutions (e.g. medical, scientific, legal) led to the positioning

of trans people—transsexual women, in particular—as seeking to conform and "*re*emphasize

gender roles."[79] In short, during this period, trans liberation was not understood as liberation by

many gay and feminist activists, but instead a pathological inability to deal with a homosexual

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[77] Radicalesbians, "Woman-Identified Woman," 172.

[78] Stryker, *Transgender History*, 94.

[79] Stryker, *Transgender History*, 94.

identity, or a fetishistic appropriation of femininity. According to Stryker, a pervasive failure of cultural feminists to distinguish between different kinds of deployments of femininity that fall somewhere along a scale of gender variance, which, detected in Studlar's writing, comes to the fore in the seventies cultural feminist discussion of transfemininity of which Daly and Raymond's work is a central component.

Robin Morgan's discussion in her memoir of trans folk singer Beth Elliott, for example, as "a smug male in granny glasses and an earth-mother gown" along with her wholesale characterization of transsexual women as "men who deliberately *re*emphasize gender roles, and who parody female oppression and suffering,"[80] betrays for Stryker Morgan's "inability to distinguish between male-to-female transsexual life contexts and episodic gay drag or heterosexual cross-dressing."[81] In this way, upward contempt for patriarchal oppressors mingled with regular cissexual contempt for gender nonconformity, the perceived misalignment of masculine bodies and feminine styles of dress. Cissexual downward contempt for trans people mistook itself for the upward contempt lesbian-feminists felt they owned to hegemonic men.

Rocky Horror's Glam and the Bi-Sexed Aesthetic

Let us compare the differing positions within these narratives of glam rock, whose very name positions it as a musical manifestion of Whitesell's euphoria and hauteur. "Perhaps because it has always been predicated on the spectacular display of male bodies, effeminacy and transvestism have always been present in rock performance, tendencies that first became highly

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[80] Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicles of a Feminist*, cited in Stryker, *Transgender History,* 94.

[81] Stryker, *Transgender History*, 104.

visible, perhaps, with Esquerita and Little Richard."[82] Heavily influenced by the transgender

aesthetic outlined by Stryker, glam rock styles did not aim for lesbian feminism's gender-neutral

style of androgyny, but instead one that overtly played with disrupting patriarchal edicts that

femininity and masculinity were natural expressions of genitally-determined sex. Instead of

neutrality, these styles intercut exaggerated versions of masculinity and femininity. The slippery

androgyny of glam rock stars like David Bowie, Mick Jagger, and Gary Glitter, struck many

cultural feminists as an appropriation and violation of femininity by men, and perhaps in many

cases this was true. The sonic signatures of glam rock were, of course, unabashedly masculine,

with femininity mainly serving to accentuate that masculinity. As summarized by rock historian

Philip Auslander:

> It is also important that most glam rockers used cosmetics to create neither the illusion of
> female identity nor that of a seamless, androgynous blending of masculine and feminine.
> Unlike countercultural unisex fashion, the combination of masculine and feminine codes
> in glam costuming and makeup did not blur distinctions between men and women: glam
> rockers were clearly *men* who had adopted feminine decoration.[83]

But again, there is a difference between these styles—meant to highlight masculinity—and those

adopted by trans women, whose "abrupt, often jarring transitions between genders"[84] are read

externally by cis individuals as failing to conform to one gender or the other. Sociologist Vivian

Namaste observes that punk style more than glam (though the two are related) offered a space

within which trans feminine performers and a transgender aesthetic could thrive: "[n]on-

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[82] Auslander, Philip. 2009. *Performing glam rock: gender and theatricality in popular music*.
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 33.

[83] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 62.

[84] Stryker, "My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix," 237.

normative sexualities and genders constituted an integral aspect of punk style during their initial formation."[85]

Though related to it, the aesthetic of these films cannot be classified, I think, under Stryker's rubric of the transgender aesthetic, which she cites as thriving in places Namaste also discusses (Max's Kansas City, CBGB, etc.). I will instead refer to the gender-blending glam styles as adhering more to Straayer's bi-sexed aesthetic, because in these cult films, the characters in question are significantly coded as male. Curry's portrayal of Frank-N-Furter the "sweet transvestite" seems tailor-made for Straayer's analysis:

> [T]he female costume delivers sexual anatomy whereas the male costume abandons it. Sex is 'present' in both the masquerade of femininity and the female body, doubly absent for the male. Male sex is (mis)represented by the phallus. Instead of a body with a penis, the male character's entire body, through its phallic position and action, becomes a giant (substitute) penis—a confusion of standing erect with erection. Although sliding signification is integral to the representation of both female and male sexuality, the first effectively relies more on iconographic and indexical relations and the second on symbolic relations. This 'visible difference' in the representation systems of female sex and male sex allows the *potential* for an intense double signification of sexuality in the male cross-dresser—composed of both macho male sexuality via phallic action and the unseen penis, and female sexuality signaled by the masquerade's visible display.[86]

Or, as Frank-N-Furter himself might put it, "don't judge a book by its cover." His "double signification of sexuality" persists throughout the film, as he seduces men and women, and, in spite of his burlesque attire and makeup, remains resolutely masculine in voice and manner. This is quite distinct from gay male effeminacy and, again, articulated in Frank-N-Furter's establishing number, "Sweet Transvestite."

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[85] Namaste, Viviane K. 2007. *Invisible lives: the erasure of transsexual and transgendered people*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 85.

[86] Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies,* 79-80.

On a broader scale, glam rock engages with gothic horror as a trope to deal with the "overtly fabricated, patched together, and made-up nature"[87] of the bi-sexed aesthetic in performance, often overtly referring to *Frankenstein* (again, echoes of Daly and Raymond). Halberstam characterizes the gothic novel as a kind of "grotesque transvestism" of genre in itself, one in which the stylistic excesses for which the gothic is known constitute the core of its femininity.[88] Auslander bridges the literary and the musical, stating:

> The transvestism of glam rock is similarly grotesque, and glam rock personae often border on the monstrous (it should be clear that I am not using these terms pejoratively: the excessiveness of both gothic and glam are central to the pleasures each provides). Gary Glitter, seven feet tall on high platform shoes, wrapped in silver and covered with glitter, hair a bouffant nightmare, shoulders unnaturally wide, lurches across the stage like Frankenstein's monster.[89]

Against queer theory's positing of gender as "performance," the example of the "grotesque transvestism" of glam rock emphasizes the ways in which the body is a very necessary component in anchoring performance, and non-normative bodies that express femininity—people of color, fat, transgender, disabled, etc.—tend to fail to be read successfully as fully "woman" no matter how consummately they perform woman, falling instead into a realm of grotesquerie and failure because of their embodiment. Again, due to the tendency in lesbian feminism to group all forms of femininity among those not assigned female at birth under the heading of appropriation and monstrous artifice, any concurrence of masculine and feminine was criticized across the board. But trans women are forced into a particularly impossible position in relation to gender expression by both feminists and the dominant ideology with which

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[87] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 63.

[88] Halberstam, Judith. 1995. *Skin shows: gothic horror and the technology of monsters*. Durham: Duke University Press, 61.

[89] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 64.

they counteridentify: "If [trans women] act feminine they are perceived as being a parody, but if they act masculine it is seen as a sign of their true male identity."[90]

Beef, the Artificial and Laughable Queer

Monstrous musicians also abound in *Phantom*. The sequence that follows the opening voiceover introduction of Swan shows The Juicy Fruits performing their hit "Goodbye Eddie." DePalma's original choice for the band in the film was the group Sha Na Na, whose 1969 performance at Woodstock clashed dramatically with the visual and musical aesthetic of "authenticity" favored within the counterculture at the time, and whose rise for Geoffrey Stokes marked the beginning of the end for those aesthetics.[91] Philip Auslander discusses the group at length, arguing that their hyperkinetic performance of fifties vocal group music prefigured glam's celebration of artifice and punk's unpolished, frenetic retromania.[92] While this was obviously not a glam performance in the sense in which we understand the genre now, it is glam-adjacent, based on an exaggerated performance of gender that depends on outmoded pop styles for inspiration. De Palma could not get Sha Na Na for the film, but Elbling, Hahn, and Comanor capture their "cheerfully atavistic doo-wop"[93] aesthetic of the group. Stokes suggests that Sha Na Na found their "true medium" in television which, as Auslander reads him, implies that for Stokes they "never really belonged in

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[90] Serano, "Skirt Chasers," 232.

[91] Stokes, 1977. *Star-Making Machinery: Inside the Business of Rock and Roll*. New York: Vintage Books.

[92] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 20.

[93] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 29.

rock culture."[94] Neither, as *Phantom* makes abundantly clear, do their cinematic avatars, Swan's Franken-group, The Juicy Fruits. *Phantom'*s countercultural musicians, Winslow and Phoenix, serve as representatives of the pure, idealistic music perverted by Swan. The film thus sets up a binary situation in which theatrical "fads" are the foil for "natural" talents in composition and performance. There is always something of a danger in crafting a narrative about an aesthetic ideal of any kind: how to bring it to the screen in a convincing way? What if it doesn't live up to its billing?

De Palma recalls that he was likely put in touch with Paul Williams by A&M, the record company which had agreed to partially finance the film. While the director had originally wanted a bigger star to play Swan—producer Edward Pressman mentions Mick Jagger and David Bowie—and a preexisting group to play the Juicy Fruits/Beach Bums/Undead—the Rolling Stones or Sha Na Na—when De Palma began talking with Williams, he felt he had found someone who understood exactly what he wanted out of the music: a parody of various "raves" in popular music. Finley had already been offered the role of the Phantom, but De Palma briefly considered Williams instead. He settled on Williams for Swan: a character modeled on Phil Spector. "If I had less ego," reminisced Williams, "I don't think I would have been able to dive into the character like I did."[95]

Williams' songs for *Phantom* could be classified as what musicologist Mitchell Morris would call "modest" songs, songs for "ordinary situations: on the radio or record player, on the TV, in the mind while taking a bath, driving a car, sweeping the floor, washing the dishes—the

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[94] Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock,* 28.

[95] Interview with Paul Williams, "Paradise Regained."

list is infinitely extensible."[96] After offering a brief history of the term, Morris explains that the

modest song is a kitsch object, shunned in academic and popular circles alike. It "remove[s] the

ascetic challenge that 'high art' is supposed to produce… [and] brings its audience and

performers alike into disrepute. Either the badness of the object reveals the aesthetic and moral

inadequacies of its creators/appreciators, or it actively infects them with its own inferior

qualities."[97]

A good example is Barry Manilow, whose music offered, among other things,

"absolutely safe feelings."[98] This type of "middle-of-the-road" music, know variously as soft

rock or "Adult Contemporary, " is "popular music that stresses tunes over rhythm and

comfortable harmonies and arrangements over abrasiveness. It focuses single-mindedly on love,

as opposed to drug experiences or politics. And it dwells lovingly on sentiment, which its critics

call 'sentimentality.'"[99] Given De Palma's background in New York's experimental theater

scene and his narrative prizing of modernist ideals of "great" art, it seems more than a little

ironic that the embodiment of the "beautiful, original creation" in *Phantom* is the kind of modest

and feminized song one might find in an elevator.

This music may not embody the kind of tortured, masculine greatness the original

screenplay description of Winslow as Wagnerian music-hero entailed, but it does embody the

gentle idealism and "soul" De Palma seems to be arguing gets sucked out in the process of

making a record. It is these songs, not the songs more commonly referred to in relation to the

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[96] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, 18.

[97] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, 23-24.

[98] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, 23.

[99] Morris, *The Persistence of Sentiment*, 23.

film as campy, that I believe represent the core sensibility of the film: a modest, normal sensibility horrified at the flamboyant perversion of decent music as it makes its way to audiences by way of corrupt record executives, producers, and their cronies. De Palma wanted the film to explore the "idea of the distortion of idealistic song into pap that you hear in a Muzak elevator," which he relates to a migration of music from an intimate space to a stadium. This "doesn't make the music better, it's just a way to exploit it."[100]

Winslow's music—as sung by Phoenix—is meant to represent this pure, musical creativity distorted by the music industry, while the figure who, along with the Juicy Fruits, most embodies the industry's artifice, with whom we are meant most to counteridentify, is Swan's nightmarish discovery, Beef. The character is a clown—unpleasant, difficult, untalented—meant to be laughed at by the audience as well as characters in the film. He is introduced about halfway through the film when Swan begins auditioning singers to perform the Phantom's new cantata. Swan concedes that Phoenix is good, but decides that the cantata "needs something really heavy." After hearing "Phantom's Theme (Beauty and the Beast)" in various genre forms—country, gospel, etc.—Swan is instantly taken with Beef, who strums an out of tune chord on his guitar before pausing to flex his muscles narcissistically.

Graham was originally going to play the character more in line with Oblong, Hahn, and Comanor's depiction of the Juicy Fruits as over-the-top, fifties-style rock 'n' roll "greasers." But he was instructed to play the character more "flamboyantly, like Little Richard."[101] He speaks with a pronounced lisp in a high, affected register when he isn't singing (his singing voice, and that of Ray Kennedy's who dubs for him during the sequence in the Paradise, is a deep baritone),

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[100] Interview with Brian De Palma, "Paradise Regained."

[101] Interview with Gerritt Graham, "Paradise Regained."

wears makeup, and prances around the stage. During a rehearsal for "Old Souls," featuring

Phoenix as a backup singer, he is clearly struggling to read the music and sing the song, finally

stopping to complain: "man you better get yourself a castrato for this 'cause it's a little out of my

range. Swan this was scored for a chick; I'm not doing it in drag." To which Swan responds,

"You can do it better than any bitch." "You don't know how right you are," Beef agrees, drawing

an incredulous look from Phoenix.

Phantom appears, astonishingly, to be speaking in the voice of cultural feminism where

gender is concerned: performance and artifice are to be mistrusted; a "natural" femininity is

preferable to a theatrical one, and preferable to a femininity in a subject not assigned female at

birth; any such subject should be understood to be appropriating that femininity, a theft that must

be ridiculed and punished. While I find the film to be considerably more misogynist and

homophobic than *Rocky Horror*, I think that its constitution via the counteridentificatory logics

of satire, attacking mainstream male-dominated rock culture as a toxic environment, gives it a

strangely radical kinship to the lesbian feminist critique. Its bitterness, like that of radical

gyn/ecological thought, is genuine.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to tease out the various gendered genealogies that make up the

cult sensibility, an ironic and parodic sensibility that is often dismissed as simply a strain of

camp, a sensibility which for many gay critics entails a very specific combination of self-

protection and self-mockery. I have catalogued the ways in which the affects of horror and the

musical can be combined for comedic or serious effect, combinations that build upon the existing

potential of both genres to fail their requirements of intensity and seriousness (in the case of horror) and suspension of disbelief or immersion (in this case the musical).

The very combination of affective structures tends to be read as camp, but while camp elements do exist in cult films, they appear in a genre that is paracinematic and majoritarian, a "private genre…of the privileged children of the middle class,"[102] imbuing the seventies cult film with a very distinctive mixed attitude towards the monstrous genres and genders at its core. In *Rocky Horror*, a tender and nostalgic contempt for the films and sexual ideologies of the fifties is explored through the form of the integrated musical, while in *Phantom*, this nostalgia for the fifties is itself presented as a monstrous corruption of musical innovation.

Made at a time when camp had been "outed" and the meaning of femininity was slowly separating from female bodies (and the negotiation of this change was becoming more and more visible), *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* offer two distinct embodiments of and attitudes toward this new bi-sexed aesthetic, which was neither feminine nor effeminate. In their deployment of this aesthetic, these films ask the audience to consider the very categories of male and female, masculine and feminine, and relate those categories to types of musical experience and engagement. *Rocky Horror* presents the bi-sexed aesthetic in a utopian light, an aspirational sexual power that expresses itself in song, but *Phantom* bemoans the artificial and violent state of the entertainment industry. While these films use the same genres of film and music to tell these stories of sexual and musical creation, they feel completely different.

My motivation in this examination has been to expand minoritarian understandings of the function and meaning of femininity in queer contexts, and the ways in which a layering of glamorous femininity produces strong impulses toward counteridentification or disidentification

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[102] Monaco, *American Film Now,* 66.

depending upon the subject position. The cult sensibility operates through contradictory circuits of affection and contempt that move in and through discourses of femininity, sex essentialism, and sexual difference. Camp's characteristic exaggerations and theatricality and paracinema's characteristic satire and contempt combine in the cult film to allow space for the analysis of contradictory flows of contempt—upward and downward—that attend femininity's representation in the horror film and in activist discourse. The cult sensibility is therefore a crystallization of the decade's myriad debates around the relationship between the body, sex, and gender.

Chapter Three: Monsters
Consciousness Raising and the Message Sensibility in the Minoritarian Vampire Film

I. Introduction: Sex and the Minoritarian Vampire

In 1970 and 1972, American International Pictures (AIP) produced and distributed two highly lucrative vampire films: *The Vampire Lovers* (a co-production with the famed British "House of Horror," Hammer Studios, dir. Roy Ward Baker),[1] and *Blacula* (an in-house production shot in Los Angeles, dir. William Crain). Appearing during the early years of "the Vampire Decade,"[2] the pair are often credited with spawning two short-lived, overlapping subgenre cycles consisting of roughly 20 lesbian vampire films and 15 Blaxploitation horror films. The former shifted Hammer's focus from the predatory male vampire to the predatory female vampire, while the latter relocated Universal's roster of classic ghouls to modern, urban settings, casting Black actors in the title and supporting roles. Through these narrative displacements of white masculinity, this "diversification,"[3] the vampire's characterization as sexual and supernatural seducer takes on new significance: simultaneously embodying anxieties about feminine sexuality and Black sexuality while exposing predatory and sadistic desires and behavior that constitute dominant conceptions of human sexuality more broadly. The vampire film's general trend in explicit depictions of sexuality in the early 1970s would also create new opening for renegotiating meaning and dominant conceptions of sexuality.

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[1] *The Vampire Lovers* was the first of Hammer's so-called "Karnstein" trilogy, comprising *The Vampire Lovers, Lust for a Vampire* (dir. Jimmy Sangster, 1971)*,* and *Twins of Evil* (dir. John Hough, 1972)

[2] Designated as such by Stacey Abbott, *Screening the Undead*, and Gary A. Smith. 2016. *Vampire Films of the 1970s: Dracula to Blacula and Every Fang Between*. Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

[3] Pirie, David. 1977. *The vampire cinema*. London: Hamlyn*,* 138.

A number of disciplines have explored the consistency and longevity of the utilization of vampirism to signify sexuality. Writing in 1977, David Pirie is one of many film scholars to point out the centrality of sexuality and eroticism in cinematic renderings of the vampire, summarizing the link in a chapter on what he calls the "sex-vampire" film, a subcategory that tends toward the softcore and the surreal. He muses:

> There has never been any question that the primary appeal of [vampire] films lay in their latent erotic content. And by a peculiar irony the freedom from censorship restrictions that enabled film-makers to tackle the visually graphic subject of vampires in the first place has now—in the mid-seventies—enabled them to move on to even more explicit erotic material. It remains to be seen whether the graphic portrayal of sexuality on the screen can ever finally have the same suggestive power as the oral-sadistic metaphor it replaces.[4]

The lesbian vampire film experienced a boom in the early years of the decade, collapsing this representational redundancy, for while "[t]he generic vampire image both expresses and represses sexuality…the lesbian vampire especially operates in the sexual rather than the supernatural realm."[5] For Pirie this presents something of a paradox. He asks what the effect will be when, in the sex-vampire film, the sexual subtext of the vampire film migrates to the level of text to join the supernatural metaphor that had theretofore represented it, as it does in the sex-vampire film. Vampire films and the fantastic violence they entailed allowed filmmakers to incorporate graphic material that would never make it past censors in a realist genre film. By way of example Pirie suggests that if one transposes the image of a topless, bloodied Yutte Stensgaard (star of Hammer's follow-up to *The Vampire Lovers, Lust for a Vampire*) from the vampire fantasy she inhabits to "a psychological horror movie about a female sadist…the shot

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[4] Pirie, *The Vampire Cinema,* 6.

[5] Weiss, Andrea. 1992. *Vampires and violets: lesbians in the cinema*. London: J. Cape, 84.

becomes an impossibility."[6] No British censor would accept such a gratuitous display in a realist film, and would likely slap an 'X' rating on it, killing its chances of box-office success.[7]

However, in the vampire film, such shots (naked or scantily clad women covered in blood) are expected and to a certain extent allowed. Pirie's example illustrates that during the period under consideration in this dissertation, the vampire, a metaphor for predatory and illicit sexuality, functioned as a convenient delivery system for a high level of explicitness in the representation of sexuality and violence—especially their combination in violent sexuality—a level unmatched by depictions hailing from realist genres. Hammer used this to their advantage, and consciously used their vampire films to challenge censorship laws with plentiful depictions of softcore nudity, homoerotic sadism, and violent sexuality.[8] The genre to which these films are most often compared is softcore pornography.

One might expect a similar situation in Black horror of the decade, since Blaxploitation more broadly is also identified with newly explicit depictions of violence and sexuality. But the level of explicitness was not uniform across the decade's "countless variations on the vampire theme."[9] Hammer may have been instrumental in the softcore packaging of blood-spattered female nudity for an international audience, but AIP's Black-directed *Blacula* disappointed more than one reviewer with its relatively tame erotic content and failure to engage with "the man" in

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[6] Pirie, *The Vampire Cinema,* 100.

[7] *Tenderness of the Wolves,* for example, was rated X in the UK.

[8] Zimmerman, "Daughters of Darkness," in Grant, Barry Keith. 1984. *Planks of reason: essays on the horror film*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 72-81.

[9] Gary A. Smith. 2016. *Vampire Films of the 1970s: Dracula to Blacula and Every Fang Between*. Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4775570. 15.

the sexually aggressive manner of a number of AIP's other (white-directed) Blaxploitation films. Pirie, for example, actually critiques *Blacula* for its timidity. He laments that instead of using "the sexual threat which underlies the action [of Stoker's novel] and generates its particular aura of morbid dread"[10] to interrogate the racial dimensions of contemporary sexual politics, *Blacula* falls back on "the worst of all horror clichés, that is, the monster's quest for the reincarnation of his lost love"[11] and lapses into overstuffed sentimentality.

In *Blacula,* 18th-century Abani prince Mamuwalde is transformed into a vampire by Count Dracula, who dubs him with the name Blacula and seals him into a coffin. Mamuwalde's princess, Luva, is locked in the room with the coffin to die. 190 years later, two interior decorators, Bobby and Billy, purchase the coffin, and the newly awakened Mamuwalde kills them. The vampire believes that Tina, a friend of Bobby's, is the reincarnation of Luva, his deceased wife. Mamuwalde's pursuit of Tina features neither the overt sexual predation nor the fantastic supernatural seduction that merged in many of the decade's most successful vampire films. William Marshall plays the titular role in a manner that could best be described as fatherly, embracing Tina chastely and kissing her on the forehead, while his animalistic appearance when he attacks his victims links the film more to transformation horror in the tradition of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or *The Wolfman* rather than to the *Dracula* myth. How, then, is Tina seduced? Mamuwalde first tries to convince her that she is the incarnation of Luva. While Tina does not reject this idea outright, she has some trouble accepting it, asking: "I don't know what I believe anymore, but help me and I'll try to understand." Mamuwalde responds with a description of his transformation into a vampire as enslavement:

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[10] Pirie, *The Vampire Cinema,* 98.

[11] Pirie, *The Vampire Cinema,* 138.

We are of the Abani tribe, you and I, northeast of the Niger delta. Our people are renowned as hunters. Almost two centuries ago, the ruling elders of my people sent me, yes, and my bride to Europe, on a mission to protest the slave trade. On that mission, I myself was enslaved, my wife murdered, and I was placed under the curse of the undead. Our assassin was the vampire, Count Dracula!

When Tina tells him she will not join him in eternal life, Mamuwalde tells her that she "must come to [him] freely, with love, or not at all. I will not take you by force, and I will not return." As he rises to leave, Tina begs him to stay, unfastening his cloak as they embrace. This seduction, as in the original *Dracula* narrative, has as much to do with historical weight as it does with sexual or supernatural coercion. In fact, Mamuwalde states explicitly that he will not "force" Tina to decide to join him as a vampire: she must come to this decision on her own.

Stripped of the sexual and supernatural, this seduction is essentially political, a plea for and love rooted in shared cultural history. As Robin R. Means Coleman acknowledges, "Mamuwalde's amorous feelings for Tina, which she quickly reciprocates, can be viewed as motivating Afrocentric nostalgia for a complete and full Blackness [in Tina and in the audience]."[12] Furthermore, in the context of a Blaxploitation horror film where a certain level of exploitative sexual and violent explicitness is expected, director William Crain and lead actor William Marshall carefully concentrate on the production of an image of Black masculinity that is aristocratic and gentlemanly in the pursuit of the heterosexual love of a Black woman (though, it should be noted, still predatory and murderous where lower- and working-class Black subjects are concerned, as well as queer subjects). Through the vampire narrative, the Black man is given access to a dignity and power not available to him in roles in other, more dignified, genres,

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[12] Means Coleman, Robin R. 2011. *Horror noire: blacks in American horror films from the 1890s to present*. London: Routledge, 123.

though he must eventually return to the animalistic tropes of Blackness with which he has been

represented since the beginnings of the movie industry.[13]

Unlike many contemporaneous scenes of vampiric seduction, the mood here isn't

menacing or tense, nor is it particularly erotic or sexual. Instead, it is mellow and relaxed,

underscored with a gentle alto flute melody. There is nothing predatory about Mamuwalde's

words or actions in the scene, a sense carried home emotionally by the "Adult Contemporary"

qualities of the score. This melody first appears after Mamuwalde has seen Tina for the first

time, about 20 minutes earlier, accompanying his retreat to his coffin where he caresses the purse

she has dropped. The alto flute returns, almost imperceptibly, as Tina opens her door at the start

of the political seduction scene. This cue—which trades the melody from alto flute to tenor

saxophone to oboe to strings, accompanied by vibes, strings, and electric bass—shifts from

background to foreground when Mamuwalde rises to leave, moving into higher registers in the

violins, before ceding care of the melody back to the alto flute as the couple embraces at the end

of the scene. Before their passion, signaled by a dynamic swell of the strings, can gather any

momentum, it is interrupted by an abrupt cut to the next scene—the unearthing of Bobby's

coffin—accompanied by ominous *Jaws*-like ostinati.

Throughout *Blacula*, expressions of sexual desire between vampire and "victim" are

muted and curtailed, cast as filial or romantic, rather than pornographic, or even erotic, and

suffused with Afrocentric undertones. This was clearly not the case with most lesbian vampire

films, which revel and luxuriate in surreal and sadomasochistic renderings of queer (white) and

deviant same-sex desire. This difference in depiction speaks to the polarized positions white

femininity and Black masculinity occupy in the cultural imagination, a polarization that is, as I

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[13] See Means Coleman.

argue in the introduction, constitutive of the thoroughly racialized American understandings of cinematic sexuality, even when racial difference is absent among characters. I believe this relation of Black masculinity and white femininity deserves a central place in any consideration of eroticism, "living death,"[14] and the transmission of vampirism in the horror film. Changing the gender of the vampire is dramatically different than changing the race, and different still from changing both gender and race. The desexualization of Black male vampires and the hypersexualization of white "lesbian" vampires reveals much about the people making the films, as well as their intended audiences. While I interpret the former as a refusal by a Black director to reproduce dominant cinematic imaginings of Black hypersexuality, I interpret the latter, along with lesbian feminist critics Bonnie Zimmerman and Andrea Weiss, largely as appeals to a heterosexual male gaze produced by heterosexual men, that nonetheless can be approached vis-à-vis disidentification by queer and feminine audiences.

As with all of the figures explored in this dissertation, the vampire wields a social or ideological/political power as well as a sexual/supernatural one. And while *Blacula* clearly presents Mamuwalde's "alternative ideology"[15] as admirable, many vampire films present their alternative vampire ideologies as threatening and destructive. The vampire in Classical Hollywood films such as *Dracula* (dir. Todd Browning, 1931), for example, was often an Old World aristocrat, exerting a nostalgic force on an attached woman and seducing her away from her rightful mate. As it has been at least since the plays of Beaumarchais, this seduction of the

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[14] Patterson Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and social death: a comparative study*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press.

[15] Wood, *The American Nightmare,* 14.

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innocent is inflected by class: coercive sexuality and economic predation is made manifest when

a decadent aristocrat preys upon peasant girls and middle-class women.

Vampire narratives traditionally loaded a whole range of political and social threats onto

the Monster, and the narratives of the seventies are no exception. Looking at the two examples

with which I opened this chapter we can see the dynamic between aristocrat (Mamuwalde) and

lower-class victims (an interracial pair of interior decorators, a taxi driver, a cocktail waitress) as

economic, while the dynamic between the vampire and his beloved, Tina (who we assume to be

an educated professional, since her closest friends are doctors) is more about bloodlines than

actual blood. We can likewise see the aristocratic dynamic in *The Vampire Lovers* between

mysterious outsider (Mircalla) and naïve schoolgirl (Emma) as utilizing the aristocratic as a

backdrop, though this time a backdrop against which cultural understandings of female same-sex

desire as predatory and unnatural can play out.

Films such as *Blacula* and *The Vampire Lovers* opened the door for a host of films that

used the vampire narrative to explore minoritarian positions and relations, whether through a

sympathetic portrayal of the vampire's outsider status, or through directorial decisions,

subcultural and/or minoritarian casting, or wildly incongruous aesthetic and stylistic choices that

opposed mainstream Hollywood's audiovisual aesthetics and styles, or all of these at once. I

label the sensibility that guides the reception of these films a *message sensibility*, one that comes

very much out of the consciousness-raising ethos that permeated seventies discourses of

liberation. Minoritarian vampire films utilize both the association of vampirism with seduction

and sexuality and the ability of the trope to function in both a "high" art context and a "low"

exploitation context to repopulate the subtextual void left by the newly-explicit and textual

sexuality. The new subtext was politics, and the doubly textual sexual/supernatural vampire now

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was used to deliver political messages about minoritarian sexuality and minoritarian liberation. As we shall see, music and sound design help to create the sonic environment of intimacy necessary for such a transmission.

In this chapter, I analyze the soundtracks of two such films, minoritarian vampire films straddling the cultural realms of "art" and "exploitation": *Daughters of Darkness* (dir. Harry Kümel, 1971), features white lesbian vampires, while *Ganja and Hess* (dir. Bill Gunn, 1973) features Black vampires. In *Daughters*, the entranced woman finds herself ambivalently drawn to the sexual autonomy and power vampirism represents, while in *Ganja and Hess* the modern-day Black subject is given access to an elevated class position and freedom from white supremacist oppression via an African past. These films meditate on patriarchy and white supremacy with a focus on the subjects—women and Black—subjugated under those structures. Perhaps most noticeably, lacking a meaningful external representation of "good" (like the sturdy Van Helsing of the *Dracula* films), these films present minoritarian vampirism as a morally ambiguous but potentially attractive political alternative for minoritarian subjects.

These were made explicitly to capitalize on the successes of *The Vampire Lovers* and *Blacula*. Though *Daughters* did quite well in New York upon its release, and *Ganja and Hess* was selected for the Critics' Week showcase at Cannes, they float on the margins of both exploitation and art film. These films deviate wildly from the formulas of their predecessors, and their utilization of experimental and art techniques in the exploitation format led to box office death. For example, film scholar Joan Hawkins cites *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies*, saying that *Daughters* never received the attention it deserved: "This 'unsettlingly intelligent' and uncommonly beautiful film was not well received 'by any of the established audiences for art

cinema, horror or softcore'"[16] precisely because it combined elements from each to the satisfaction of none. Both films have received a high level of veneration in later decades, though, as a result of a consistently positive appraisal of their conveyance of liberatory messages. It is my contention in this chapter that soundscape analysis is particularly important for a full understanding of how the sexual threat and liberatory potential of the minoritarian vampire is brought to life.

Usually cast as visual entrancement, a trap for the eyes (recall the haunting visual effect of bathing Bela Lugosi's eyes in light as he gazes intently at his victims in Todd Browning's *Dracula,* who in turn lose themselves in his eyes), seduction in many vampire films is also an auditory affair. The vampire may seduce with an entrancing, supernatural gaze or a hypersexualized white feminine appearance, but often enough the vampire seduces with a sexually suggestive, purring voice and promises of immortality, epic, historically significant love, or promises of freedom and power more broadly. It is in these promises that I believe the liberatory potential of these films exists, and existed, for minoritarian critics and audiences. Here, the vampire's message is a political message as well as a sexual one, delivered in a manner consistent with Williams' "body genres" of horror and pornography,[17] and Hawkins' additional body genres of "art-horror and the horrific avant-garde."[18] I argue that the senses of aural proximity, intimacy, and immediacy in both *Daughters of Darkness* and *Ganja and Hess* use the arousal of this body genre mimicry to transmit messages of consciousness raising specific to

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[16] Hawkins, Joan. 2000. *Cutting edge: art-horror and the horrific avant-garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press*,* 22.

[17] Williams, Linda. 1991. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess". *Film Quarterly.* 44 (4): 2-13.

[18] Hawkins, *Cutting edge,* 4-5.

Women's Liberation and Black Power, both of which as movements responded to visually enacted, linked oppressions under white heteropatriarchy: epidermalization and objectification, the reduction of the minoritarian subject to their physical appearance and the fixing of that person in a role as either sexual predator (Black man) or sexual victim (white woman).

In order to get to the heart of the matter, I must define the message sensibility, in the context of its dual occupation of genres (horror and art films), which I am arguing is central to the ways in which it creates a sense of immediacy and a collapse "proper aesthetic distance" in service of the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory goals of arousal: fear, sexual excitement, consciousness raising and political inspiration. I locate the message sensibility in overlapping art and exploitation film production and reception contexts, as documented in the criticism of, among others, Pauline Kael and Susan Sontag. I also explore the ways in which the music in this sensibility "challeng[es] the formally constructed notion of mainstream good taste" and the political/ideological implications of those challenges. I argue that at its core, the message sensibility in *Daughters* and *Ganja and Hess* links the didacticism of the consciousness raising narratives to the mimicry of the body genre and the role of the fantastic in what Sontag labels the "total experience." I will then examine concepts of minoritarian consciousness and sexuality in relation to *Daughters* and *Ganja and Hess* to demonstrate the ways in which the intimacy, immediacy, and proximity created in their soundtracks serves to deliver these messages to minoritarian audiences. To this end, I must also for each film identify the key moments in the narrative in which oppression is addressed, and describe aural conventions used to frame these moments. But first, I will introduce *Daughters, Ganja and Hess*, and their soundtracks.

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Daughters of Darkness

Daughters of Darkness follows newlyweds Stefan and Valerie Chilton on their honeymoon at a deserted Belgian hotel. They are joined by the Countess Elizabeth Bathory and her companion Ilona, vampires, who take a predatory interest in the young couple. The Countess and Ilona may be supernatural predators, but it becomes clear that Stefan is a monster of a different kind: a sexual sadist who, it is implied, takes his own sexual humiliation at the hands of an older, aristocratic lover (played by Dutch filmmaker Fons Rademaker) out on his new bride. He is aroused by the sight of a murder victim and by a story of torture told by the Countess, and is depicted beating Valerie with a belt. Ultimately, Ilona seduces but is killed by Stefan, while Valerie is seduced and transformed into a vampire by the Countess. The Countess and Valerie then kill and feed on Stefan when he attempts to escape with Valerie. After fleeing the hotel by car, they crash, sending the Countess flying out of the vehicle and to her demise, by impaling and immolation. It is implied, however, that her spirit lives on in Valerie.

A Belgian/French/West German co-production, *Daughters* was made with some money and talent from American and French Canadian distributors, and features an international cast, with stars representing most of the contributing nations. Stefan and Valerie were played by American television actor John Karlen*,* and French Canadian erotic film sensation Danielle Ouimet, while the Countess was played by French New Wave cinema favorite Delphine Seyrig, and her assistant Ilona by German dancer, model, and softcore star Andrea Rau. The music for *Daughters* was composed, recorded, and mixed by François de Roubaix, a 32-year-old French composer who by 1971 had roughly a decade of experience in film and television under his belt, totaling over 60 projects spanning genres from educational and documentary shorts to *policiers,*

spy thrillers, and gangster movies (the bulk of his work), as well as melodramas, sexploitation (under the pseudonym "Cisco El Rubio"), and nature films.[19]

De Roubaix became involved with *Daughters* by way of Henry Lange, one of the film's producers, who suggested him to Kümel for the music. The director approached de Roubaix with an idea for an extravagant orchestral score to evoke the Countess Bathory's Hungarian origins.[20] But in the end, the evocation of Hungary is confined to the folk dulcimer, or cimbalom; its tinny resonance features prominently in the ultimate and penultimate cues, and is scattered throughout the rest. The surrounding orchestration is relatively spare (strings, percussion, brass, acoustic guitar, electric guitar and bass, with brief appearances from a piano, harp, the Swingle Singers, a Moog synthesizer), and the styles are split between a programmatic gothic/romantic idiom and a more contemporary jazz/pop idiom, with a brief hint of folk at the end. In his usual fashion, de Roubaix recorded dozens of cues and snatches of music on individual instruments, taking the material back to his home studio to edit, mix, and arrange along with the film.[21] The result is a limited, obsessive score, one that returns again and again to the same several cues, using the same pitch centers, stingers, drones, and syncopated percussion to move between scenes, or to emphasize important moments within scenes. In the words of de Roubaix biographer Gilles Loison: "The atmosphere that emerges reflects the nakedness of the landscapes and the bodies, the coldness of winter."[22]

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[19] Loison, Gilles. 2006. *François de Roubaix, charmeur d'émotions*. Bruxelles: Chapitre Douze. 93.

[20] Loison, *François de Roubaix*, 318.

[21] Loison, *François de Roubaix,* 318.

[22] Loison, *François de Roubai,* 318, translation mine.

Ganja and Hess

Ganja and Hess is the story of Dr. Hess Green, a Black anthropologist who is infected with vampirism when his mentally unstable research assistant, George Meda, stabs him with a ceremonial dagger belonging to the Myrthian people (a fictional tribe). Meda, thinking he has killed Hess, then shoots himself, leaving the transformed Hess to feed on his blood. The Myrthians, according to the film's Christian history, were an immortal, vampiric tribe who could only be killed by causing the shadow of the cross to fall across their hearts. Initially, the aristocratic Hess struggles with his vampirism, preying on sex workers in the surrounding urban community, but this is interrupted when Ganja, wife of the deceased Meda, comes looking for her husband. Shortly thereafter, she and Hess begin a romantic relationship. Ganja discovers Meda's body in the freezer, but does not turn against Hess, instead marrying him. In a second wedding ceremony, Hess stabs Ganja with the Myrthian dagger, and she becomes a vampire as well. The couple begin adjusting to their new existence, but Hess grows increasingly dissatisfied with his condition, choosing to end his immortality by attending a Pentecostal church service (shot with a congregation in Nyack) and standing beneath a cross' shadow after he has received communion. Ganja does not join him, and the film ends with a man Ganja and Hess had seduced for Ganja to feed upon rising from a pool and running to join her.

The music and sound designs for *Ganja and Hess* were created by long-time Gunn collaborator Sam Waymon, who also plays the role of Hess' chauffeur/Reverend Williams in the film. The two met sometime during the late 1960s, at a party thrown by Waymon's sister, Nina Simone, for the actress Josephine Premice. Waymon moved into Gunn's Upper Nyack home, where the two would live and collaborate until Gunn's death in 1989. Of Waymon's work with Gunn, biographer Christopher Sieving says:

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Waymon also became Gunn's closest artistic collaborator, making invaluable contributions as composer and musical performer to *Ganja & Hess*, *Black Picture Show* and *Rhinestone* (1982; a stage musical based on *Rhinestone Sharecropping*) and as actor to *Ganja & Hess* and *Personal Problems*. That Waymon also frequently served as Gunn's typist, editor, and sounding board makes it all the more difficult to isolate his influence on—or minimize his importance to—Gunn's seventies and eighties efforts.[23]

As the intimacy of their collaboration suggests, unlike Hollywood productions in which the composer is brought on relatively late in post-production to score the film, the structure of the soundtrack very much structures the film, and music plays a central symbolic role. Very little has been written on *Ganja and Hess,* and even less attention has been paid to the soundtrack of the film, which is every bit as intricate and varied as the visual and narrative components. The soundtrack elides easy distinctions between diegetic and nondiegetic largely through the figure of Reverend Williams and the music associated with him. This is an extremely diverse and busy soundtrack, comprising gospel singing, arrangements of "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," field recordings of Bungelii work chants manipulated electronically by Waymon, a blues song composed by Waymon and performed by Mabel King (who appears as the Queen of Myrthia in several dream sequences), chamber music, and electro-acoustic underscoring. The untitled gospel song performed by Waymon (as Reverend Williams) and the congregation at the end of the film is a central component of the soundtrack, its melody found in differing arrangements at key points in the narrative. Sounds of nature mingle with ambulance sirens or human screams, and diegetic music (such as the blues on Dr. Hess's radio) is often mixed with nondiegetic music (ominous, electronic drones, for example) and human speech. Multiple cues and sounds are layered one on top of the other, resulting in a chaotic and disorienting aural aesthetic.

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[23] Sieving, Christopher Jon. Forthcoming 2019. *Bill Gunn's 'Ganja and Hess.'* Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 19.

Whereas *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* combined seemingly incommensurate genres (the low-brow horror film and the middle-brow film musical), *Daughters* and *Ganja and Hess* treat their low-brow materials with high-brow, experimental aesthetics. Scrambling the coordinates of taste was favored among European makers of the sex-vampire film such as Kümel, in addition to Jess Franco and Jean Rollin, whose films were as surreal as they were sexually explicit. It was also favored among early propagators of the "Third Cinema" aesthetic, Latin American filmmakers positioning themselves against the "First Cinema" of Hollywood and the new wave of European auteur "Second Cinema" in an attempt to decolonize and democratize filmmaking.[24] Hawkins argues that films like *Daughters* are "difficult to categorize… films with high production values, European art film cachet, and enough sex and violence to thrill all but the most jaded horror fan… films that defy the traditional genre labels by which we try to make sense of cinematic history and cultures, films that seem to have a stake in both high and low art."[25] *Ganja and Hess* may not have high production values, but it is no less difficult to categorize; it, too, defies the "genre labels by which we try to make sense of cinematic history and cultures." It is the centrality of this scrambling to the message sensibility and the similarity in intention between Williams' body genres and Hawkins' "art-horror and the horrific avant-garde" that I explore in this chapter.

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[24] Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," in Michael T. Martin. 1997. *New Latin American Cinema, vol. 1, Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 45.

[25] Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 22-23.

II. Art-Horror, the Horrific Avant-Garde, and the Message Sensibility

Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde

In her book, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*, Joan Hawkins argues that Linda Williams' restriction of body genres to "low" cultural production needs some revision. While I am not entirely convinced that "art film" can be conceived of as a genre in quite the same way as a genre like horror, I agree with Hawkins' assertion that the cultural prestige of a film should not necessarily preclude it from inclusion as a body genre film, as long as it uses graphic sexuality, emotion, and violence as a means to producing an embodied and emotional mimicry in the audience. Exploring this overlap, Hawkins designates two new categories (art-horror and the horrific avant-garde), both of which use the generic and stylistic strategies and tropes of the other for effect. Where art-horror uses experimental and highly stylized strategies of cinematography, editing, and scoring to "elevate" the supposedly graphic and exploitative elements of horror to "art," the horrific avant-garde uses tropes and "excessive" spectacle drawn from horror to explore thematic issues more associated with "serious" or experimental filmmaking. She goes on:

> Clearly designed to break the audience's aesthetic distance, [horrific avant-garde] films encourage the kind of excessive physical response that we would generally attribute to horror… [These films] use sensational material differently than many body genre movies do. Seeking to instruct or challenge the spectator, not simply titillate her, films like [these] are deemed to have a higher cultural purpose, and certainly a different artistic intent from low-genre blood-and-gore fests. That is, high culture—even when it engages the body in the same way that low genres do—supposedly evokes a different kind of spectatorial pleasure and response than the one evoked by low genres.[26]

So, while the ends of these art-horror and horrific avant-garde films, the "spectatorial pleasure and response" evoked, are different from those of melodrama, pornography, or horror, the means

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[26] Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 6.

are, argues Hawkins, more or less the same. For her this explains why some European art films have long held a place in American low entertainment culture, in grindhouse and drive-in venues that screened "art films that failed to get the Hays Office's coveted seal of approval"[27] for their sensational content.

Conversely, as Hawkins notes in retelling Pauline Kael's disgust with art house cinema culture, intellectuals began consuming low culture films—her example is an English instructor whose favorite horror film is *The Beast with Five Fingers*—indicates that those same bodily excesses can be used by audiences in ways not originally intended. The emotional and embodied manipulation of the audience for the body genre film and its attending lack of distance retrofitted with a critical distance, like the cerebral paracinematic reception I discussed in the previous chapter. It follows that art-horror and the horrific avant-garde, which both have a "stake…in challenging the formally constructed notion of mainstream good taste,"[28] would be significant categories in the taxonomies Sconce and others have compiled of paracinematic genres.

This counteridentificatory aspiration to the status of countercinema links the paracinematic sensibility to the message sensibility, which also aspires to such a status. Quite clearly, radical political films—films made for political reasons, or films consumed and enjoyed by particular audiences for political reasons—have a stake in "challenging the formally constructed notion of mainstream good taste," as that notion of good taste often contains within it myriad crystallizations of oppressive ideology: white supremacist, sexist, homophobic, etc. Films such as these are made and consumed with the aim of educating audiences about the construction

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[27] Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 21.

[28] Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 30.

and functioning of oppression in minoritarian daily lives, films that would allow audiences to meditate on the sources of this oppression through familiar genre formats and/or challenging, experimental aesthetics. While both Williams and Hawkins provide a useful framework for these considerations, neither addresses the specific mimicry desired by creators of films of this type, or the audiences who appropriate such objects: crying, horror, and arousal, but crying, horror, and arousal as the inspiration for political and social "movement," not goals in and of themselves.

Crying, horror, and arousal in service of "instruct[ing] or challeng[ing] the spectator."[29] *Daughters* and *Ganja and Hess* present compelling case studies for the exploration of this overlap of means in art-horror (of which *Daughters* is an example) and the horrific avant-garde (of which *Ganja and Hess* is an example). In the first, the desire to inspire mimicry of political feeling is contained within at least one performer (Delphine Seyrig in *Daughters*), while in the second that desire is contained within the director, composer, and throughout the cast and crew (Gunn, Waymon, and others in *Ganja and Hess*). These minoritarian vampire films play on longstanding cultural characterizations—of lesbian sexuality as sterile, predatory, narcissistic, and unnatural, and of Black sexuality as animalistic and incapable of being restrained—to interrogate the conditions of monstrosity in which the minoritarian vampire is entangled, the conditions that produce the minoritarian vampire as monstrous. Recognition of these conditions and the ways in which minoritarian subjects may share the experiences produced by them can itself be a kind of "spectatorial pleasure" as defined by Hawkins. Political consciousness around issues of oppression can therefore be included under Hawkins' broadened umbrella of spectatorial pleasures to be had from the body genre film, bundled together with the spectatorial pleasures of the horror film and softcore pornography, and perhaps enabled by this bundling.

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[29] Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 6.

In order to create and deliver the intimacy required of consciousness raising, the immediacy and collapse of distance of the body genre film—and horror's specific proclivity for interrogating relations between monsters and normality—are useful tools. According to affective historian Victoria Hesford, for example, women's liberationists expressed a "desire for a politics that could be 'felt close up,' that touched individual women in ways that gave them a 'gut understanding' of their social worlds,"[30] that manifested itself in slogans like "the personal is political" and political practices such as consciousness-raising groups and critical media analysis.

A message sensibility is one in which the audience is subsumed in the emotions of consciousness raising, educated, and inspired to act. It is perhaps useful to think of the particular manifestations of the message sensibility under consideration in this chapter as offering what Susan Sontag labels a "total experience" in the context of her rumination on the "pornographic imagination."[31] She observes that:

> The physical sensations involuntarily produced in someone reading the [pornographic] book carry with them something that touches upon the reader's whole experience of his humanity—and his limits as a personality and as a body. Actually, the singleness of pornography's intention is spurious. But the aggressiveness of the intention is not. What seems like an end is as much a means, startlingly and oppressively concrete. The end, however, is less concrete. Pornography is one of the branches of literature—science fiction is another—aiming at disorientation, at psychic dislocation.[32]

She goes on:

> In some respects, the use of sexual obsessions as a subject for literature resembles the use of a literary subject whose validity far fewer people would contest: religious obsessions. So compared, the familiar fact of pornography's definite, aggressive impact upon its readers looks somewhat different. Its celebrated intention of sexually stimulating readers is really a species of proselytizing. Pornography that is serious literature aims to 'excite'

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[30] Hesford, Victoria. 2013. *Feeling women's liberation*. Durham : Duke University Press, 130.
[31] Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination" in Sontag, Susan and David Rieff. 2013. *Essays of the 1960s & 70s*. New York, N.Y. : The Library of America.

[32] Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," 214.

in the same way that books which render an extreme form of religious experience aim to 'convert.'"[33]

As far as music's role in such a process is concerned, the score's positioning to act in a seemingly unheard and immediate way emotionally obviously puts it in a particularly central position in the mechanisms of the message sensibility. Our first writers on the issue, Adorno and Eisler, address some of the potential "responses" a composer might have to the nine bad habits and prejudices of Hollywood scoring addressed in the introduction to their book. On the one hand, Adorno and Eisler advocate for music that functions more noticeably, more autonomously, and serves a more central and structuring role, as opposed to a secondary, unobtrusive, and banal backdrop. This prescription speaks to their concerns about music's ontology and its perceived debasement as a functional and non-autonomous element of film. But on the other hand, the "solutions" they propose seem to suggest that it is not just an unmasking of music's powers that can disrupt the "rules of thumb" and resulting soporific effects of music in film, but simply a different ideological positioning: using the same kinds of musical material to opposite effect. For example, the only difference I see between the first example they discuss and the third—between the "sham collectivity" of *Niemandsland* and the "visible solidarity" of *La Nouvelle Terre*—is the ideological orientation imposed by the music.[34]

This kind of directed proselytizing and meditation does not always result in a subtle aesthetic. The designation of a film as a "message movie" is usually a pejorative move on the part of the critic, an assertion that the film in question lacks subtlety or nuance, whose purpose is

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[33] Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," 214.

[34] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films,* 17.

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unmistakable and whose means are somewhat questionable.[35] In particular, one detects a fair

amount of hostility when arthouse films present these kinds of explorations in fairly

unambiguous but still overtly "symbolic" ways. Writing in the 1960s, for example, Pauline Kael

addresses films like *The Exterminating Angel, Last Year at Marienbad,* and *La Notte* which are,

in her estimation, populated by vampires and ghouls no less than their properly horror genre

counterparts. She says these characters' "vital juices have been sucked away, but they don't have

the revealing marks on the throat. We get the message: alienation drains the soul without leaving

any marks."[36] These arthouse message movies are "about the failure of communication and lack

of love and spiritual emptiness and all the rest of that. It's the closest thing we've got to a new

genre."[37] Unlike the *old* genres, though—which prized strong storytelling and narrative

complexity—this new genre of "art-house film" is "incomprehensible." "Movies are going to

pieces," she laments, "they're disintegrating, and the something called 'cinema' is not movies

raised to an art but rather movies diminished, movies that look 'artistic.'"[38]

   Kael lambasts these arthouse films (one of which, it should be pointed out, stars Delphine

Seyrig and features her in a role not far removed from the one she plays in *Daughters*) for their

sensationalism and their incomprehensibility, their lack of attention to "the finer points of

narrative and story construction."[39] But according to Kael, low-brow films are experiencing

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[35] But I am using it here descriptively to refer to films that are produced or received with a primacy given to the apprehension of a message.

[36] Kael, Pauline. 1994. "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist: Or, Are Movies Going to Pieces?" in *I lost it at the movies: film writings, 1954-1965*. New York: M. Boyars, 12.

[37] Kael, "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist," 12.

[38] Kael, "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist," 22.

[39] Kael "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist," 9.

something of a disintegration at this time, too, in the direction of incomprehensibility, abandoning the narrative. Kael stipulates that the low-brow audience "want[s] shock treatment, not diversion, and it takes more than ghosts to frighten them."[40] The low-brow film, then, is involved in the shift away from narrative and formula in its focus not on message or style, but on shocking moment. In Kael's writing, we can see how anxiety around the changes in Hollywood bespeak a disintegration in mainstream taste focuses on horror in particular: both high and low cannibalize the middle, using its form but emptying it of its content in service of delivering a shock or a message.

Again, this may sound something like Sconce's characterization of paracinema, and it is no coincidence that many of the films Kael describes are favored by the audience for paracinema. This is because, among other things, the films "aggressively" challenge mainstream taste through the fusion of the low and the high, just as films like *Rocky Horror* and *Phantom* carried out this challenge through an affective fusion of horror and the rock musical. However, where *Rocky Horror* treats the serious core of the genres humorously, art-horror and the horrific avant-garde empties out something profane to express something profound (itself a project that may yield a camp engagement should it fail). Before exploring music's role in this process, I will give a brief overview of the reception of these films—their initial difficulties and subsequent politicized readings—to solidify my claim that they represent distinct art-horror and horrific avant-garde manifestations of the message sensibility I have been describing.

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[40] Kael, "Zeitgeist and Poltergeist," 13.

Reception Histories, Message Histories (1971-Present)

Both *Daughters* and *Ganja and Hess* failed to attract a sizeable audience or wide distribution upon their release but have since achieved high levels of cult veneration and critical acclaim. The films were made within exploitation production structures with expectations of an exploitation product to distribute globally: *Daughters* a multi-country European/North American co-production, *Ganja and Hess* a domestic U.S. project meant to capitalize on the recent success of *Blacula* (dir. William Crain, 1972) and other Black audience-oriented horror films. Yet each is widely acknowledged as departing from the conventions and constraints of exploitation horror, elevated by way of their self-conscious formality and style.

Delphine Seyrig's participation in *Daughters,* for example, as well as the "artistic" direction and composition of the shots was much commented upon, rescuing the film from the complete low-brow squalor engendered by its genre—horror—and casting of stars from softcore pornography (Andrea Rau and Danielle Ouimet) and television (John Karlen). "Subtle, stately, stunningly colored and exquisitely directed by Belgium's young Harry Kümel [sic], the co-scenarist, this is far and away the most artistic vampire shocker since the Franco-Italian 'Blood and Roses' 10 years ago."[41] According to Bonnie Zimmerman, who saw *Daughters* upon its original release in 1971, "[t]he audience consisted of aficionados of soft porn, followers of the new wave intrigued by the presence of Delphine Seyrig, and a large contingent of lesbians curious about the film's advertised display of lesbianism."[42] But according to a buying and booking guide, the difficult-to-pigeonhole film could be counted on at least for some business in the horror market. In a booking guide, *Daughters* was described thus:

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[41] Thompson, Howard. "Film: Artistic Vampires." *NYT*, May 29, 1971, p. 24.

[42] Bonnie Zimmerman, who saw the film upon its release in the U.S.

> The glistening Delphine Seyrig as the best dressed vampire yet, slinking about a cavernous hotel somewhere between Marienbad and Transylvania. Some good ideas, but movie is poorly done. Fair boxoffice [sic] returns in the horror market.[43]

This audience floated the film through a relatively successful summer in New York, climbing to the No. 21 position in *Variety*'s "Top 50 Grossing Films" for a single week in July.[44] Nonetheless, it wasn't until 1980 that the film began attracting more consistent and cultish attention, when the Castro Theatre in San Francisco began programming it as a fixture of their summer midnight series, indefinitely.

Ganja and Hess had an even more difficult time finding its audience, and access to a serviceable print of the film was impossible for decades. Its high-art elements—the eschewal of a linear narrative, striking visual juxtapositions, philosophical monologues, and what Paul Monaco describes as the deft handling of "an impressive arsenal of narrative techniques…straight documentary, high melodrama, dark ritual, and cool realism"[45]—generally were far less legible to white critics than to critics of the "artistic" and acceptably titillating *Daughters*. Though *Ganja and Hess* was selected for Critic's Week at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was met warmly, and later screened as part of the French Critics series at the Museum of Modern Art, where it would be housed for the next several years, American critic A.H. Weiler dismissed the film as "a confusingly vague mélange of symbolism, violence and sex"[46]:

> Mr. Gunn's elliptical approach to the sanguine subject is ineffectually arty and does little to conceal the film's accent on blood and nudity. As an actor he is merely given to pointless philosophizing… Duane Jones… is essentially a dour, laconic type who rates

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[43] Cited in Hawkins, *Cutting Edge,* 6.

[44] *Variety,* July 28, 1971, 11.

[45] Monaco, *American Film Now*, 206.

[46] Weiler, A.H., "Screen: Gunn's *Ganja & Hess* Opens." *NYT,* Apr 21, 1973, p. 19.

little sympathy. Dressed or nude, Miss Clark is an arresting presence as the enamored Ganja. Also, she invests an unbelievable character with style and humor.[47]

The film's distributors, Kelly & Jordan Enterprises, attempted to recut the film as the more genre-ready exploitation film, *Blood Couple,* before pulling it entirely. "If I were white," Gunn wrote in the *New York Times*:

> I would probably be called 'fresh and different.' If I were European, 'Ganja and Hess' might be 'that little film you must see.' Because I am black, I do not even deserve the pride that one American feels for another when he discovers that a fellow countryman's film has been selected as the only American film to be shown during 'Critics' Week' at the Cannes Film Festival, May, 1973. Not one white critic from any of the major newspapers even mentioned it.[48]

The film was preserved through the efforts of Pearl Bowser, and was available in 16mm and videocassette formats, distributed by African Diaspora Images and Third World Newsreel in 1990; a fully restored DVD version was made available in 1998.[49] As soon as they were available more widely, both films were treated to politicized reappraisals in the influential film journal *Jump Cut*: "*Daughters of Darkness*: Lesbian Vampires" by Bonnie Zimmerman in 1981 following the Castro's programming of the film, and "*Ganja and Hess*: Vampires, Sex, and Addictions" by Manthia Diawara and Phyllis Klotman in 1990 following the film's new 16mm and video distribution. These essays, which I will discuss in more detail shortly, examine the vampire narratives of their respective films in the context of their respective identities and subjectivities: unmarked (white) lesbian in the former, unmarked (but potentially queer) Black in the latter. Unsurprisingly, they discuss the representations of sexuality and consciousness in

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[47] Weiler, "Screen: Gunn's *Ganja & Hess* Opens," 19.

[48] Gunn, Bill. 'To Be a Black Artist,' *NYT,* May 13, 1973, p. 121.

[49] Diawara and Klotman, "*Ganja and Hess:* Vampires, Sex, and Addictions," *Jump Cut*, no. 35, April 1990, 36.

these narratives, and the ideologies these representations embody. Both focus on the reception context, on decoding the messages these films convey. Where *Daughters* conveys the message in an art-horror context, *Ganja and Hess* does so in the manner of the horrific avant-garde. I will now move on to discuss each film in turn: the ways in which minoritarian audiences have interpreted these films' messages, and the centrality of music in framing those messages.

III. *Daughters of Darkness*: The Voice of the Lesbian Vampire

The cycle of "lesbian" vampire films is often cited as beginning with Jean Rollin's surreal *Le viol du vampire* in 1968, coming to international attention with Hammer Studio's *The Vampire Lovers* in 1970, and petering out somewhere around 1975, though notable entries (*The Hunger,* Tony Scott, 1983) continue to the present day. At least 20 vampire films containing some allusion to or expression of queer female desire were produced during this time, with roughly half of them released in 1971, following the popularity of 1970's *The Vampire Lovers*. Featuring expansive female nudity and explicit scenes blending sexuality and violence, these low-budget films have been interpreted by lesbian academics as presenting a male-oriented, heterosexual fantasy of lesbianism, one not unlike that presented in pornography, in which scenes of lesbianism serve as a kind of foreplay preceding heterosexual intercourse. The subgenre's characteristic blending of the supernatural and the sexual places it squarely in the exploitation realm, shaped equally by conventions of sexploitation and the vampire film. But, as the preceding discussion might suggest, the experimental techniques of its mostly European filmmakers also place it squarely in the art realm. *Daughters* is an art-horror film in its painterly shot composition and the atmosphere of tense dread and eroticism it constructs.

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Starting with Bonnie Zimmerman's thoughtful consideration of *Daughters* in *Jump Cut* in 1981, Anglophone lesbian feminist critics have been both fascinated and frustrated by the lesbian vampire: seeing the figure as pornographically catering to a voyeuristic male gaze on the one hand, while bringing a potentially appealing and empowering vision predicated on not just the absence of men, but their express annihilation, on the other. Zimmerman surveys some representative examples of the subgenre, linking their popularity with the rise of feminism and a more widespread public awareness of lesbianism, but arguing that men's relative security during these early years was a necessary component of that popularity. Writing a few years later, Andrea Weiss counters Zimmerman, arguing that "[t]he relationship which Zimmerman seeks to establish between the early 1970s feminist movement and the appearance of so many lesbian vampire films rests not on the security but on the insecurity that the feminist movement generated in male spectators at that time."[50]

Though they may disagree on the motives of the men who made these films and at whom they were quite clearly aimed, both Zimmerman and Weiss single out *Daughters* as exceptional and Seyrig's Countess as an "atypical lesbian vampire."[51] Unlike Ingrid Pitt's Carmilla or Lina Romay's Countess Karlstein, she is older: mature, intelligent and sophisticated, with an aura of authority bolstered by her off-screen celebrity. She delivers an interesting, stylized—inclining towards camp—interpretation of the role, and perhaps most importantly, is never disrobed for the prurient male gaze.[52] Her seductive technique is therefore largely a verbal one, one requiring a

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[50] Weiss, *Vampires and violets,* 90.

[51] Zimmerman, "*Daughters of Darkness,*" 76.

[52] Zimmerman, "Daughters of Darkness," 76.

diegetic force dependent not just on the semantic content of the words she whispers to seduce, but on the particular qualities of the voice whispering those words.

In "Tracking the Vampire," Sue Ellen Case points out by way of Todorov that the "central diegetic force in these [supernatural] tales is their atmosphere—an atmosphere of proximity. Settings in fog and gloom connect the disparate elements of the structure through a palpable, atmospheric 'touching.'"[53] *Daughters* exploits this atmospheric touching in the soundtrack, creating a total atmosphere in which the Countess' voice exercises complete seductive control. This closeness and "palpable, atmospheric touching" envelops the audience, preparing them for the vampire to whisper into their ear as the vampire whispers to the victim. The sense of the aural is, of course, crucial to the creation of such an intimate atmosphere of proximity, as K.J. Donnelly points out in his discussion of horror film music as a "sound architecture" or "coherent atmospheric package":

> In horror films in particular music can manifest a distinctive and enveloping 'sound architecture' or ambience. This function might be called 'theatrical,' as music works like part of the scenery, although its enveloping quality means that it can be more than simply 'backdrop.' Horror films are created as whole environments that the audience enters, equating a mental state with a sonic construct. Indeed, more than any other film genre, they construct a whole sound system, a musicscape, as well as embodying a distinct sound effects iconography of horror… the horror film is often seen as a coherent atmospheric package that embraces both music and sound effects.[54]

I would extend Donnelly's observation to have this atmospheric package include music, sound effects, and the human voice, bringing all aural elements together in a holistic consideration of the "soundtrack" that might offend film sound theorist Michel Chion, who argues that the "film's

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[53] Case, Sue-Ellen. 2008. *Feminist and queer performance: critical strategies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 79.

[54] Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound*, 93-94.

aural elements are never received as an autonomous unit and therefore the "soundtrack" as such does not exist.[55]

In Chion's estimation, these elements are immediately analyzed and distributed in the spectator's perceptual apparatus according to the relation each bears to what the spectator sees at the time."[56] This "instantaneous perceptual triage" orbits, for Chion, around the human voice. "In actual movies, for real spectators, there are not *all the sounds including the human voice. There are voices, and then everything else.* In other words, in every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception."[57] Claudia Gorbman outlines the seven principles of Classic Hollywood film music that generally aid in the goal of delivering the text, the speech, to the audience "on a silver platter."[58] Following this, Anahid Kassabian has outlined what she calls the "attention continuum" in film.[59] In this continuum, the voice—Chion's bearer of verbal, semantic content—occupies the main space in the audience's attention, while music falls into various categories below it. Given the importance I am placing on these narratives as delivering a political message via body genre conventions, I, too, will focus attention on the semantic content of the dialogue, though I will not relegate music to the peripheral or subsidiary. In fact, in its framing of this politically important dialogue, I argue that *subliminality,* the fact of occupying a less-conscious category in audience perception, should not be considered a marker

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[55] Chion, Michel, and Claudia Gorbman. 1999. *The voice in cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[56] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema,* 3.

[57] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 5.

[58] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 5.

[59] Kassabian, Anahid. 2001. *Hearing film: tracking identifications in contemporary Hollywood film music*. New York: Routledge.

of insignificance or lack of power, but is in fact one of the most powerful techniques in the communication of minoritarian messages through majoritarian genres and means.

In a fascinating case study, Jacqueline Nacache defines Seyrig as a vocal "icon of presence," and goes onto describe that presence as, somewhat paradoxically, "diaphanous."[60] To Nananche, Seyrig is timeless and ahistorical, eschewing physical connection with her surroundings. Her screen presence is located in gesture, but also largely in the arena of sound. Nacache situates Seyrig's voice within a broader "tradition of voice in French cinema," stating that the great French actors are very often actors *with a voice*: voices that she describes as throaty, quivering, dry and metallic, haughty, hissing, or simpering. The "voices and elocution of the actors she discusses are permanent features of their personalities and vary only slightly throughout their different roles"[61] and Seyrig is no exception. In this way, her voice can be understood as a "guide" through stories that are often obscure and complex, for example the labyrinthine *Last Year at Marienbad* (that drew Kael's ire), or the attention-taxing *Jeanne Dielman.* Reviews, even the unfavorable ones, standardize her presence by using the same adjectives to describe her: elegant, mysterious, fey, and unreal.

Nacache draws many of the descriptions from *Last Year at Marienbad,* the film that delivered Seyrig into the international spotlight; she hardly discusses *Daughters* at all. But interestingly enough, these characteristics culled from descriptions of her performance in *Marienbad* could easily be the description of a vampire. The timeless and ahistorical qualities of course, but also the ethereal gestures: Seyrig rarely touches physical objects and when she does,

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[60] Nacache, Jacqueline, "The Actor as Icon of Presence: The Example of Delphine Seyrig," in Sternagel, Jörg, Deborah Levitt, Dieter Mersch, and Lesley Stern. 2012. *Acting and performance in moving image culture: bodies, screens, renderings*. Bielefeld : Transcript Verlag.

[61] Nacache, "The Actor as Icon of Presence," 167-8.

she never grasps them firmly, instead grazes or caresses them. She is often presented with mirrors and while usually this is used to signal a kind of reflexiveness, in *Daughters* it applies specifically to the myth of the vampire who fails to cast a reflection.

These qualities can also be interpreted as stemming from a specifically feminine kind of alienation, which fits into Seyrig's public status as a feminist icon. In addition to choosing roles that allowed her to explore sexuality and feminine alienation (*India Song*), Seyrig also created and directed feminist work of her own, including a short (co-directed with Carole Roussopoulos, with whom she would also establish the Simone de Beauvoir Audiovisual Centre in Paris 1982) in which she read the entirety of Valerie Solanas' *Scum Manifesto* aloud (the book was not available in print in France at the time) and a documentary produced with Jane Fonda titled *Sois Belle et Tais-Toi* (*Shut Up and Look Pretty*) examining sexism in the film industry.

This feminist commitment, argues Nacache, "is linked to a form of solitude that sets her apart from the other actresses of her generation: Jeanne Moreau, Emmanuelle Riva, and others."[62] Here we see how the aristocratic and ennui-plagued, nomadic lesbian vampire echoes the loneliness and hunger of the melancholy, educated, bourgeois philosopher who diagnoses the oppression of her sex, and attempts to deliver that knowledge to her comrades, thereby raising their consciousness, but still finds herself trapped in the dominant discourses of violence and objectification, and even enacts them on those less privileged around her. Seyrig's voice—both "grain" and content—is the dominant organizing principle not just in the soundtrack, but also in the film as a whole, and the force her voice exerts both materially as sound and politically as consciousness raising accounts for *Daughters'* centrality in lesbian feminist discourse around the figure of the vampire.

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[62] Nacache, "The Actor as Icon of Presence," 166.

What strikes me most about *Daughters* is the framing of feminist discourse with conventions more commonly found in horror, pornography, and art film. Each of these aural elements creates an intense sense of bodily and/or affective immediacy and proximity, which provides an interesting environment for Seyrig's rhetoric. Their combined force begins to explain why the film and Seyrig's performance has been so compelling for later second-wave feminist critics, and lesbian feminist critics in particular, though no criticism of the film to date sufficiently accounts for the importance of the soundtrack. I will now discuss some of the ways in which the sound and music conventions of the body genres of horror and softcore pornography blend in the soundtrack, as well as the ways in which these blended cues are used to frame Seyrig's explicitly sexual and political messages.

"The nakedness of the landscapes and the bodies, the coldness of winter"

But what of the film's underscoring, the "silver platter" on which this voice is served? As described above by de Roubaix's biographer Loison, the score is limited and obsessive, a result of de Roubaix's practice of recording dozens of cues and excerpts that could be easily edited and dropped into a variety of scenes. Loison's focus on the ways in which the music mirrors the film's landscape and themes resonates with Donnelly's assertion that music in horror films functions as "whole environments that the audience enters, equating a mental state with a sonic construct."[63] Much of what Donnelly points out about the enveloping nature of horror sound can be observed in *Daughters*, which relies on a fairly limited repertoire of musical devices, timbres, and structures. While not quite monothematic, the score features little in the way of memorable tunes apart from the main theme, and the majority of the remaining cues are fleeting, under a

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[63] Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound,* 93-94.

minute in length, with a good number of those perhaps better classified as stingers than cues.

This unpredictable and jarring musical environment, combined with the uncanny closeness of

post-production dubbing—both in the original English, and the preceding French version—

creates an aural sense of proximity vitally important to the film's presentation and delivery of the

Countess' radical, albeit somewhat conflicted and suspect, feminist messages, and their

transmission to Valerie. I would first like to discuss the blending of high and low in the theme,

the ways in which the expectations of the horror score and the pornography score are combined

in the soundtrack, before moving on to discussing this blended aesthetic in relation to the

seduction (consciousness raising) narrative.

The theme, which first plays over the credits sequence, immediately evokes a

gothic/romantic tradition of dramatic text painting with patterns of rapidly falling figures in the

piano. The perpetual motion of the piano comes into conversation with the loose, psychedelic

electric bass, evoking the patterns of Schubert's *Erlkonig*. The timbres and musical patterns of

the theme immediately fuse the gothic (associated with aristocracy and high culture) with the

popular. The American version of the film performs this fusion with even more force, inserting

vocals into the theme:

> Whispering through the night
> Wings, wings
> Silently slice the darkness
> Soft as a breath, quiet as death
>
> Death with a face of love
> Sings, sings
> Voice with a trace of sadness
> Sweeter than wine, older than time
>
> She offers you escape
> Fly, fly
> Don't let the sunlight find you
> Or you will fade and die

Not only does this remove, before the film has even begun, any ambiguity as to what the narrative will entail, but vocalist Lainie Cooke's performance is clearly meant to be an imitation of Seyrig's iconic voice, as well. This undercuts—again, before the film has even begun—the sense of authority and seriousness which Zimmerman and others cite as so central to the potential of the Countess for resisting some of the stereotypes of the cycle, and allowing for a liberatory reading. However, it also leans more into the exploitative aspects of the art-horror film and the camp potential of the lesbian vampire film in particular.

Setting the body genre mood, the first scene following the credits sequence is a sex scene: in the cramped sleeping car of a train, demanding contortions and acrobatics from Ouimet and Karlen as they attempted to approximate the poses illustrated in a Swedish sex manual brandished by the director.[64] As with many cues throughout the film, this one is preceded by closely miked diegetic sound: in this case, a pitched interval from the train (falling b-a), the clattering of the wheels against the track, and upon cutting to the interior of the sleeping car, the clinking of empty champagne glasses against the silver ice bucket. The couple whisper their names to each other, and the rising motif that will consistently accompany erotic scenes creeps in. The *andante* motif moves along calmly (82 bpm), relying on the rising pitch and the gradual addition of syncopated layers to build intensity. The frame is filled with a montage of close-ups of the couple's blue-lit skin—Valerie's face, Stefan's hands caressing her body—while the strings accent the cuts with their dissonant and shrill minor second, syncopated on the "and" of the fourth beat.

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[64] Interview with Danielle Ouimet. Kümel, Harry, Henry Lange, Delphine Seyrig, Danielle Ouimet, John Karlen, Andrea Rau, Pierre Drouot, Jean Ferry, and Alain C. Guilleame. 2011. *Daughters of darkness*. [West Hollywood, Calif.]: Blue Underground.

The intensity builds with more frantic grabbing on the part of the couple, leading to a moment of synchresis with the brass adding an unexpected blast on the "and" of the third beat, aligning with the first full shot of the couple's naked bodies. As the couple collapses following climax, the brass sustain a minor ninth dissonance between f# and g that bleeds into the train's bell. Interestingly enough, these stingers, the first of many in the film, are associated not with the violent shocks one regularly encounters in the horror film—mimicking onomatopoeically the abrupt entry of a killer into the frame, the violent stab of a knife, etc.—but with the passionate thrusting of intercourse instead. As the scene continues, we are surprised by another musical interjection, here underlining the subverted expectation of Stefan and Valerie's first dialogue (in which instead of declaring their love for one another, they declare that they are *not* in love with one another).

According to Williams, the conventions of pornography are not so removed from those of the musical, which is to say, the conventions of pornography and their sound conventions in particular, locate them in the realm of the fantastic. Both the musical and pornography required in the 1970s divergent sound practices placing emphasis on intimacy and affect as opposed to narrative realism. They are also similar in their tendencies to shoot scenes in similar ways (with sound added in postproduction), the shared targeting of the "flimsiness" of their plots, and their organization of performers into varying spectacular combinations.[65] While pornography "sound does not seek clarity of music and lyrics, it does seek an effect of closeness and intimacy rather

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[65] Williams, Linda. 1989. *Hard core: power, pleasure, and the "frenzy of the visible"*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 123.

than of spatial reality."[66] Hard-core pornography from the 1970s, Williams observes, features a sound-image relation quite distinct from that in mainstream film. As she summarizes:

> In these films, when characters talk their lips often fail to match the sounds spoke, and in sexual numbers a dubbed-over 'disembodied' female voice (saying 'oooh' and 'aaah') may stand as the most prominent signifier of female pleasure in the absence of other, more visual assurances. Sounds of pleasure, in this latter instance, seem almost to flout the realist function of anchoring body to image, halfway become aural fetishes of the female pleasures we cannot see.[67]

While Williams asserts that the relation of sound to image in these circumstances doesn't have "the function of avant-garde deconstruction,"[68] I would argue that in the context of the foreign art-horror film, which also features the sonic dissociation necessitated by postproduction dubbing for multiple language markets, it may. In this way, the conventions of pornographic sound (creating a sense of immediacy and intimacy that may be somewhat impressionistic as opposed to realistic) and the necessities of foreign-language dubbing collaborate to create a particularly close sonic environment.

Horror has its own immediacy and intimacy producing conventions. As outlined by Joe Tompkins, and elaborated upon in my introduction, music for the horror film is understood to function in a way conceived of as particularly direct: "the category of horror music is distinguished as a special type of movie music on the basis of its affective character—its ability to cue spectator responses through 'startle effects' and/or emotional signification."[69] There are numerous examples of horror music of this type throughout *Daughters*. One such cue

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[66] Williams, *Hard Core,* 124.

[67] Williams, *Hard Core,* 123.

[68] Williams, *Hard Core,* 123.

[69] Tompkins, "Mellifluous Terror," 191.

accompanies multiple scenes focusing on blood or blood thirst: an arrhythmic and atonal piano figure accompanied by synthesizer flourishes. This cue occurs for the first time when Stefan nicks his neck shaving. A fairly common trope in the vampire film, this usually occurs after someone has been transformed into a vampire, a way to signal the activation of their blood lust (we'll see it in *Ganja and Hess* right before the couple make love for the first time: in that scenario, the lust Ganja activates in Hess lead him to flee and slake his bloodthirst before returning to slake his other thirst).

However, here it is used in relation to the one main character who will remain human throughout the entire film. With almost comical editing that tracks the cuts between Stefan in the bathroom and Valerie blithely buttering a roll in bed—the music fills the soundtrack in the former while there is silence in the latter—we understand this music to be the product of Stefan's subjectivity, his emotional response to the sight of blood. This is reinforced during the scenes in Bruges, when the couple gets swept up in a crowd trying to get a look at the latest girl who has been murdered and drained of blood. Cued by the retired detective, "Ah, here she comes!" the same cue returns, adding to the visual confusion of the sequence. These shots, however, are from the dead girl's point of view, taking in the frenzied faces of the crowd, including Stefan, who elbows Valerie in the face, hard, when she tries to pull him away from the gruesome spectacle. The music continues, culminating in a sustained f# in the brass that fades out as the crowd follows the gurney away. The cue doesn't return again, though there is plenty of blood, and discussion of it in the interim, until the end of the film, when Valerie and Elizabeth struggle to subdue Stefan. After a long stretch with only diegetic sound—Valerie crying for help, the sound of Stefan's blows—the Countess knocks everything off of the table and grabs a large crystal bowl. With Valerie's help she presses it down over Stefan's face, and the cue resumes until the

bowl cracks, each half falling to the side and slicing Stefan's wrists open. Here the music

converges back to a series of organ chords that sustain over the tableau shot, from above, of the

women drinking his blood from his slit wrists.

Aural Immediacy and Intimacy, Seduction, Consciousness Raising

As these examples demonstrate, the soundtrack operates where conventions for representing sex

and representing violence overlap: it uses dissonant stingers to punctuate the former (avant-

garde) as much as the latter (conventional). Likewise, the sound conventions of pornography, art

film, and dubbed film overlap to create a sense of intimacy and dislocation as opposed to

realism. I would now like to conclude with a comparison of the Countess' seductions of Stefan

and Valerie in light of these observations. In both cases the seduction is largely verbal, and

framed musically in such a way as combines some of the elements I've discussed above.

However, the Countess' seduction of Stefan is on the basis of their shared sexual sadism—

playing off of conceptions of the lesbian as either masculinized or deviant—whereas her

seduction of Valerie consists mainly of a feminist critique of Valerie's marriage to Stefan.

When the Countess learns that Stefan has heard of Elizabeth Bathory, she immediately

engages him in a collaborative description of the "Bloody Countess" and her crimes, much to

Valerie's horror. Here a wordless choir creeps in when they begin discussing the bloody deeds,

building to a quiet restatement of the main theme. The Countess' motivation during this scene is

somewhat unclear. Is the sadistic Countess fantasizing about torturing women in earnest or is the

fantasy a meditation on the nature of beauty? Is she centering Stefan's sadistic desires? Does this

exchange indicate bisexuality on her part, or a violent sublimation of lesbian desire? Having

sensed Stefan's sadistic nature, is she trying to work him into a violent frenzy so he will beat his

new wife, sending her running into the Countess' arms? Or is she simply torturing Valerie psychologically, a substitute for the physical torture she and Stefan describe? In any case, the scene is an example of the lesbian vampire's operating in a sexual rather than supernatural realm, though here the "trap" is a verbal one, and not a visual one. However, the Countess then places a white pearl necklace on Ilona, who she sends off to occupy Stefan while she sets about seducing Valerie. The conversation Ilona has with Stefan concludes with an ominous sustained pitch in the brass that crescendos into silence as she pushes him back onto the bed.

We then cut to the Countess and Valerie on the beach, where the pair are discussing Stefan's sadistic sexual appetites. The Countess asks, "tell me Valerie, whatever Stefan asks of you, do you consent to do it? Ah yes, naturally, but you don't feel any pleasure… you don't understand Stefan." The cue underscoring the dialogue here is a variation on the main theme, rendered in a calliope-like timbre on a Moog. It was used earlier, when Ilona and the Countess are settling into their hotel room, before they've spoken to Stefan and Valerie, and is clearly meant to underline the Countess' hold over Ilona. Here, and throughout the sequence, its lilting, hypnotic qualities underline the Countess' growing hold over Valerie.

The sequence cuts back and forth between Ilona and Stefan and the Countess and Valerie, the former scene unfolding in complete silence—without musical accompaniment—the latter accompanied by the hypnotic, lilting cue. The women go to talk in a well-lit café, but the conversation gets away from the Countess after she kisses Valerie on the hand. "Soon you will love me the way I love you now," she says, and Valerie snatches her hand away, exclaiming that she is "disgust[ed]" by the Countess. She hurries out into the dark walkway. From here the sound conventions shift from the dreamy lilt to a more recognizable horror drone: a sustained musical dissonance while Valerie hurries away, followed by a fairly cheesy "stinger" when the Countess

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appears in the shadows. The Countess now encourages Valerie to leave Stefan, arguing that even if Valerie thinks Stefan loves her, that "kind of love" is not for Valerie.

Here, the Countess mocks Valerie: "he loves you. That's why he dreams of making out of you what every man makes out of every woman: a slave, a thing, an object for pleasure." It is quite likely that Seyrig inserted this dialogue into the script herself, as Kümel purportedly deferred to her seniority and expertise on a number of issues throughout shooting.[70] The majority of their conversation takes place in the shadows, detaching their words from their bodies, though those words are very closely miked, and remain static regardless of the ways in which the two women move throughout the scene. The gentle calliope wafts back in after the Countess' delivery of her terse appraisal of male sexuality. "Come," she says. "I'll show you what men are made of, every man" and guides Valerie back to the hotel, where they discover Stefan not in Ilona's embrace, but having just killed her.

Each of these aural elements creates an intense sense of bodily and/or affective immediacy and proximity, which provides an affecting environment for feminist rhetoric. What should be clear from the examples I've provided is how Seyrig's voice shifts from explicitly politicized registers to explicitly eroticized ones, sometimes combining the two, blurring the boundaries by delivering *all* of her lines in a uniformly seductive way. This polymorphous perversity was nothing new to the vampire film, which often trafficked in such dark queer imagery and boundary blurring, but for lesbian critics it presented the political implications of the lesbian vampire's seduction as potentially erotic as opposed to uniformly horrifying or even sleazily pornographic.

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[70] Interview with Ouimet, *Making 'Daughters of Darkness.'*

The Countess and Valerie escape together, but when the sun begins to rise, Valerie loses control of the car, sending the Countess sailing out through the windshield, impaled on a fallen tree. In a nod to conventional horror tropes, the queer Monster, source of power and inspiration for writers such as Zimmerman and Weiss, is destroyed. In the end, however, it is implied that the Countess' spirit lives on in Valerie via the "magic" of overdubbing. Valerie, wearing the Countess' cape as she seduces a young couple at some other European resort, now speaks with the Countess' voice, as the film's main theme is played by a diegetic folk ensemble. "The effect of this transference is not at all horrifying, but rather amusing, almost charming, especially to a lesbian viewer. The stiff-faced beauty queen, whom we have seen as innocent bride, passive masochist, and fascinated victim, is now the powerful, immortal lesbian vampire. Any woman, this suggests, can be lucky enough to be a lesbian."[71]

IV. *Ganja and Hess*: Eroticism in the Horrific, Decolonial Avant-Garde

As Means Coleman points out in *Horror Noire,* the seventies represent a shift from what she calls "Blacks in horror" to "Black horror." Around the same time as the lesbian vampire film was taking the exploitation world by storm, 1968-1976, so too was the Black horror film coming into its own. "While *Night* [*of the Living Dead*] revealed the difficulties in us 'all just getting along,' the 1970s focused on Black Power, nationalism, and self-reliance rather than the difficulties of cross-racial integration and cooperation."[72] The first of these—William Crain's *Blacula* in 1972—is credited with initiating this subgenre cycle into the mainstream, leading to the release of at least 15 Black horror films, the majority of them between 1973-1974. Reinventing classic

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[71] Zimmerman, "Daughters of Darkness," 80.

[72] Means Coleman, *Horror Noire,* 116.

horror narratives such as *Dracula, Frankenstein,* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* as well as popular

newer horror narratives such as *The Exorcist*, these Black horror films elicited ambivalent

responses from critics, such as Ellen Holly who worried in the *NYT* in 1974 that "[e]ntirely too

many 'black' films have been black in name only,"[73] that the representations of blackness

circulated on film catered to a white gaze. However, *Blacula* may have played on stereotypes of

blackness as threatening and animalistic, but it also presented audiences with a heterosexual

romance that was an embodiment of many Afrocentric cultural and political aims. This romantic

arc—Mamuwalde's pursuit of Tina—would strike white critics as overly sentimental, lacking the

edge of other contemporaneous Blaxploitation films.

The 1970s also represented a time during which politicized Black filmmakers who had

internalized a radical, decolonial vision of Third Cinema via film programs in Los Angeles and

New York began producing work that was decidedly *not* catering to a white gaze, but instead

seeking to develop a Black film aesthetic in solidarity with oppressed peoples all over the globe.

Existing at the intersection of these trends—Black horror film and Black politicized film—*Ganja*

and Hess provides an opportunity to untangle some of the ways in which a soundtrack can build

an expressly politicized message sensibility. As summarized by Klotman and Diawara, "[t]he

producers wanted a film that would exploit black audiences—a black version of white vampire

films… [but] Gunn went beyond the vampire genre to create an original product."[74] Marlo David

describes this as the director's "slip[ing] the yoke and creat[ing] instead two works of conscious

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[73] Holly, quoted in Means Coleman, *Horror Noire,* 127.

[74] Diawara and Klotman, "*Ganja and Hess,*" 30.

cinema."[75] While the two films are quite distinct, both *Blacula* and *Ganja and Hess* reformulate the vampire narrative to deliver messages about Black oppression's roots in colonialism, and use the tragic-romantic figure of the aristocratic vampire to counter racist Hollywood depictions of Black hypersexuality.

Unlike *Daughters* and *Blacula,* though, *Ganja and Hess* was never conceptualized as a vampire movie, much to the chagrin of financiers Kelly and Jordan. The film, starring Marlene Clarke and Duane Jones (of *Enter the Dragon* and *Night of the Living Dead*, respectively), was made to capitalize on the success of *Blacula*, but in reality Gunn accepted this contract with no intention of creating a straightforward Black vampire film. Instead, he meant to create a film in which the vampire film's central blood metaphor would be deployed in the service of exploring a wide range of issues of Black existence: addiction, alienation, cross-class conflict, colonization both internal and external, consciousness of oppression, eroticism, history, kinship, and religiosity, to name a few. The focus of the resulting film can be boiled down to one of the central lyrics of the song that opens the film, a poem by Gunn set and performed by Waymon: "the blood of the thing is the truth of the thing." Seen in this way, the film is an exploration of the "truth" of the situation of the Black subject in America, an exploration that very much aligns the film with broader trends in decolonial cinema of the time, though as I will demonstrate unique in its aesthetic focus on eroticism and Black desiring subjects.

As I discuss elsewhere, "[i]n their 1968 call for a Third Cinema, Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino describe the necessity of the deconstruction of deceptive images propagated in the neocolonial world and the creation of truthful, demystified images in

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[75] David, Marlo D. 2011. ""Let It Go Black": Desire and the Erotic Subject in the Films of Bill Gunn". *Black Camera*. 2 (2): 28.

their place."[76] The pair champion documentary filmmaking as the model for the revolutionary aesthetic they describe, and many Black filmmakers in the U.S. inspired by Third Cinema would take on a kind of realist aesthetic whose aim was the creation of truth and the demystification of racist and oppressive Hollywood imagery. With the development of Third Cinema, art house audiences became familiarized with a particular brand of militant documentarian filmmaking: didactic work using realist aesthetics to destroy or demystify the racist stereotypical images created by colonialism and distributed by Hollywood, and replace that image with a "throbbing reality in any of its incarnations."[77]

But *Ganja and Hess* is a fantasy, and therefore operates in an entirely different world as far as the representation of eroticism and sensuality is concerned, topics rarely touched upon in Third Cinema. The film's open sensuality was received reductively by white critics who, presumably, collapsed the common criticism of Blaxploitation as presenting gratuitous sex and violence with the common criticism of art film, as represented by Kael, as "incomprehensible" and lacking in content: a cinematic Rorschach blot. *NYT* critic Weiler states that "Mr. Gunn's elliptical approach to the sanguine subject is ineffectually arty and does little to conceal the film's accent on blood and nudity" before concluding, as I quoted earlier, with approval of Marlene Clark's performance, "[d]ressed or nude."[78] Gunn fired back in a *Letter to the Editor* that this kind of disrespect to his actress "could not have been cultivated in 110 minutes. It must

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[76] Woolsey, Morgan. "Re/Sounding: Music and the Political Goals of the L.A. Rebellion" in *L.A. Rebellion,* Field, Allyson Nadia, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart. 2015. *L.A. Rebellion: creating a new black cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 171.

[77] Getino and Solanas, "Towards a Third Cinema." 45.

[78] Weiler, "Screen: Gunn's *Ganja & Hess* Opens." 19.

have taken at least a good 250 years,"[79] drawing attention to the way in which "films that portray black nudity, sex, or sexual themes…have proven integral to the structural reproduction of not only racism but also sexism and heterosexism."[80] Gunn, as Marlo David points out, had a particular interest in the representation of Black sexuality on screen as a component of his "conscious" cinema.[81] In David's words, "his images redirect audience expectation and refuse hegemonic imperatives, and instead centralize multivalent, postmodern black aesthetic perspectives through an emphasis on characters as erotic subjects."[82]

David's work represents a vital, initial exploration of the place of eroticism in Gunn's filmmaking but, as I am accustomed to observing when I begin my analyses of little-known films, insufficient attention is paid to music. There is great importance in the close reading of images that respond to oppression based on phenotype, just as there is great importance in the close reading of images that respond to oppression based on sexual objectification: these are visually enacted phenomena, and it makes sense that filmmakers would seek to counter these visual enactments of oppression. However, as my work on the films of politically motivated Black filmmakers of the 1970s—the L.A. Rebellion—suggests, one must also consider the musical conventions that accompany these revolutionary images. If in what Jonathan Sterne labels the "audiovisual litany"—"a set of presumed and somewhat clichéd attributes" that elevate "a set of cultural prenotions about the senses (prejudices, really) to the level of theory"[83]—the

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[79] Gunn, "To Be a Black Artist," 121.

[80] David, "Let It Go Black," 27.

[81] Toni Cade Bambara cited in David, "Let It Go Black," 26.

[82] David, "Let It Go Black," 28.

[83] Sterne, Jonathan. 2008. *The Sound Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 9.

visual stands for the rational, the objective, the spatial, and the intellectual, the auditory stands for the irrational, the subjective, the temporal, and the affective or emotional. The visual may tend to take the privileged position in relation to truth procedures, but the auditory takes the privileged position in the representation of inner, subjective states.

In *Ganja and Hess*, vampirism as a metaphor for predatory sexuality becomes the ground for the representation of such inner, subjective states, with its attendant focus on sexuality. David argues that in the film through an enmeshment with addiction to a variety of other sensual pleasures—blood, drugs, alcohol, wealth, art, music, religion—Black sexuality escapes Hollywood's confinement of it to the body, creating a desiring "sexual intellectual" figure in Hess, and a desiring Black woman in Ganja. A detailed explication of all of the sensual forms in the film would be well beyond the scope of this chapter. As *Jump Cut* authors Manthia Diawara and Phyllis Klotman state plainly in their essay, the film is narratively and thematically complex: "*Ganja and Hess* violates conventional narrative devices such as beginning, middle, and end, a clearly defined hero and heroine, and cause and effect. Therefore, it is difficult to summarize."[84] However, by providing an overview of the components of the soundtrack and the atmosphere they create and audiovisual analysis of key moments of eroticism in the film, I hope to provide an example of how music can be used in "conscious" cinema to, in David's words, "invert, subvert, or otherwise transgress the symbolic economy of the sexualized Other."[85]

Contextualizing and Historicizing Sensuality

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[84] Diawara and Klotman, "*Ganja and Hess,*" 30.

[85] David, "Let It Go Black," 31.

As noted earlier, Waymon's soundtrack for *Ganja and Hess* developed early, in tandem with the script, and the composer plays a very central role in the narrative through his diegetic characterization of Reverend Williams. The soundtrack is every bit as intricate and varied as the visual and narrative components, and it is quite difficult to categorize much of the music in the soundtrack as diegetic or nondiegetic, as a large portion falls somewhere in the metadiegetic space. This is in part due to the fact that the structure of the film is dependent on a rapid and consistent shifting of narrative focus, as Diawara and Klotman express through their analysis, arguing that identifying the dominant narrative voice at a given moment in the film is the key to understanding the "ideological and aesthetic assumptions that underlie the film."[86] Hess may be our protagonist initially, but Reverend Williams also represents a strong narrative voice— introducing us to Hess and explaining his situation—as does Meda. Later, when Ganja arrives, the narrative shifts to her perspective, and though the majority of the final act of the film is concerned with her relationship with Hess, it is ultimately Ganja's voice with which we end. Metadiegetic music—music pertaining to a secondary narrator—is therefore an important component of the soundtrack, since in a way much of the narration of the film is carried out by secondary narrators.

It is therefore less than helpful to divide the soundtrack into diegetic and nondiegetic (though these are designations I will use where appropriate), and more helpful to divide it by association of the music: *to what narrative space does the music belong*? There are certain cues that escape even this distinction, but an initial categorization will help to keep things sorted. First, there is music and sound associated with Black secular and religious traditions. This includes the music accompanying the sermon at the end of the film—Hess' stop for redemption

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[86] Diawara and Klotman, "*Ganja and Hess,*" 34.

before he ends his vampiric existence under the shadow of the cross—as well the song, "March Blues" that plays diegetically several times throughout the film. Second, there is music associated with the Myrthians: a single cue drawn from a Smithsonian field recording of Bungelii work chants. Third, there is music associated with western high culture: a Beethoven sonata for cello and piano (Op. 102) and various arrangements of Bach's famed "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." And fourth and finally, there is music associated with the various forms of addiction in the film: these tend to be psychedelic, dreamy nondiegetic cues that mix harp, mbira, electronic timbres, animal sounds, and make generous use of postproduction effects. The song with which the film opens, described by Diawara and Klotman as one of Reverend Williams' "sermons," defies easy categorization altogether: it is sung by Reverend Williams, but its production lends it something of an extradiegetic positioning. It is too polished to belong to the diegetic world of the church, but too directly related to the narrative to be entirely score. It therefore functions as something of an opening voiceover, introducing the audience to the mythology of the film: the structure of Myrthian vampirism and its connection to modern-day Black religiosity.

Most importantly, the soundtrack is heavily layered, with music and sound from each of these categories blending together throughout the narrative. Because of the associations we have with each of these sounds and cues, the soundtrack functions much in the way Diawara and Klotman argue the narrative functions: as a multipart trajectory in which the audience must situate themselves, sorting out the significance of all of the sounds and cues on the basis of their origins. *Ganja and Hess* places the audience in a chaotic sonic environment comprising many layers and voices, one that presents them with many perspectives on the issue of Black oppression and existence, asking them to make their own decision. Klotman and Diawara argue

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that each of Hess' interlocutors offers a necessary nuance to the film's depiction of Black experiences of oppression. The minister, played by Waymon, represents the most central message (which should not be confused with unqualified endorsement, caution Klotman and Diawara) of the film, and Meda and Ganja present messages that are ideologically opposed to Reverend Williams and the world view he represents.

The three main categories of meta/diegetic music in the film—secular and spiritual Black music, Myrthian music, and western music—come together to form the subjectivity Gunn explores in the film: the "sexual intellectual" and "desiring black woman" subjects outlined by David. The last of these categories, Western art music, is the least present in the soundtrack, functioning in the background as something of an analogue to the many visual representations of western art. Hess surrounds himself with objects of western opulence, and this includes records of Classical music. However, as with *Daughters*, there is no real figure representing normality to other the Black vampire, instead the force of that normality—here white heteropatriarchy—is everywhere present, but never acknowledged directly. Black secular and spiritual music, on the other hand, is more consciously foregrounded, occupying diegetic, nondiegetic, and metadiegetic space. This is most apparent in the untitled gospel song performed by Reverend Williams and his congregation preceding Hess' death. The melody of this song is the most prominent in the soundtrack, occurring a total of seven times throughout the film, and additionally in two instances in which the accompanying harmonic progression is replicated without the full presence of the melody. The persistence of this melody through a variety of instrumental and rhythmic permutations positions it as a flexible motif that can be linked to a variety of affective modes, as well as several key moments in the film: Hess's initial survival instincts, Ganja's own self-preservation, and the couple's marriage to name a few. "March Blues" and the Bungelii

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chants, too, occur consistently throughout the film, but mainly in the meta/diegetic space

conjured during scenes depicting the characters' experiences of blood lust and the violence that

follows. Each of these categories of music speaks to a particular sensual or relational experience,

and the complexity of their combination is what requires the kind of guidance Diawara and

Klotman argue is provided by Hess' three interlocutors.

Take the opening song, for example, which plays over the credits and establishes Hess as

a vampire in the context of Christian/Myrthian mythology. Unlike the music and the sermon that

precede it (both of which are presented as ostensibly diegetic), this song is, as I have already

mentioned, produced in such a way that removes it from the diegesis. The reverb will later

connect it with scenes of vampirism and fantasy, but a this is our first encounter with those

features, we do not yet have an association between them and those narrative scenarios. We are

introduced to Reverend Williams, who tells us that Hess is "an addict. He's not a criminal, he's a

victim. He's addicted to blood." After a short sequence in which Meda is introduced to Green,

the pair get into his Rolls Royce and drive away. The lyrics to the song that accompanies their

journey to Hess' estate, a poem by Gunn set to music by Waymon, are as follows:

> By the Christians it is written that in the black Myrthian age
> There existed an addiction to blood among its people
> Thousands of slaves were bled to death
> But murdered in such a way the slaves could not die
> There was visited upon them a curse that they should live forever
> Unless the shadow of the cross, an implement of torture, touched their darkened hearts
> But oh, since Christ had not come and the cross did not exist
> Don't you know they were caused to walk the earth til the Christians came
> But oh my lord, the blood of the thing is the truth of the thing
> They had come to be addicted to truth til the Christians came

This opening song suggests that the concepts of addiction—including vampirism,

sexuality, material pleasures, and so forth—must be interpreted through these colonial and

religious historical lenses. Immediately the vampirism of the Myrthians is a designation made by the Christians, and this initial designation causes the listener to retroproject the entire salvation narrative (the Myrthians as a cursed people waiting for Christ) as one fabricated by the Christians to displace the guilt of bleeding "thousands of slaves…in such a way the slaves could not die." The lyrics speak to the conflicted nature of the relation between Christianity and Black subjectivity, the ways in which the church provides safety and community and love (as described by Reverend Williams) and the ways in which it is rooted in colonial relations of violence. As Diawara and Klotman argue, the shifting narrative voice in the film helps the audience navigate and track these complex relations.

Religion, Eroticism, and "Let[ting] Go"

Throughout the film, then, sexuality and eroticism are placed in the context of religion and spirituality, "invert[ing], subvert[ing], or otherwise transgress[ing] the symbolic economy of the sexualized other."[87] This enmeshment of the religious and the erotic, to return to Sontag, plays on a characterization of the two as following similar pathways of obsession and conversion. And it is this path to conversion, a political process for the "conscious" Black filmmaker, that is symbolized via these religious and erotic metaphors. We can see this in the trajectory of the film. In *Ganja and Hess*, the audience must also track the transformation (as opposed to seduction) of two vampires, and in place of the love triangle presented to us in many vampire films (in which the vampire, lesbian or otherwise, struggles with the human man for the love of the human woman) we have a more convoluted erotic geometry. Here, there is no originary vampire, only the imagined Myrthian queen. Hess is stabbed by Meda, thereby transforming him, but Meda

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[87] David, "Let It Go Black," 31.

was not a vampire to begin with, and after shooting himself is removed from the narrative. Hess then transforms Ganja, also without her consent, and Ganja transforms Richard (the young community center worker the couple seduces). While the "bourgeois patriarch" Hess receives the messages of the Black church and the Black artist and in turn ends his own existence, the woman he transforms opts for continuing her vampiric outsider existence with a new, virile companion. Each of these transformations—Hess', Ganja's, Richard's—is received by the audience in the context of the layered sonic environment I've just described, and the historical context it attempts to put in place.

Meda, the artist, begins by highlighting, in his neurosis, psychosis, and violence the damage done by these competing world views. His moments of soliloquizing constitute his contributions to the ideological discussion of the film. They are poetic and difficult to follow, culminating in his own chaotic death. After stabbing Hess with the dagger and believing him dead, Meda retreats to the bathroom to end his own life. In the sequence leading up to this, we are sutured to Meda through the common device of closely miked breathing as he points the pistol at his heart. He listens to Mabel King's "March Blues." As the tension builds, the camera cuts to Hess, uninjured, sitting upright on the edge of his bed. The electronic drone that comprises the second layer of many of the addiction cues enters ominously, as the Bungelii chant competes with Mabel King in the foreground of the soundtrack. The Myrthian cue is cut off abruptly, though, with the firing of Meda's pistol, shattering King's voice and the accompanying brass and piano against themselves, stuttering in aggressive echoes. The disorientation in the music matches the disorientation in the frame, spinning around Meda's lifeless body as Hess drops to his hands and knees to lap the blood from the floor. The music again is cut off abruptly

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with the transition to the next scene, in which Hess runs across a field to pray; he is miked

closely, too, so that we can hear his breathing.

Though presented as a curse through a repetition of cues similar to the one used during

the sequence I've just described, vampirism becomes something Hess can live with. Moving into

the second section of the film, "Survival," Hess steals blood from a doctor's office, briskly

escaping into the street as the gospel melody, arranged for jazz combo, swells joyfully in the

soundtrack. This initial exuberance is musically tied to Ganja's appearance in his life. The next

appearance of the melody coincides with the couple's early flirtation on the patio, in which the

pair dissect a cherry in extreme close-up, commenting on how the fruit's juices look like blood.

The instrumentation here is more subdued—a solo vibraphone—and takes on an intimacy absent

in the previous application of the cue. The cue appears again after Ganja tells Hess a personal

story following the first time they make love, a story that also focuses on survival and,

specifically, personal autonomy in the face of familial and societal rejection. Finally, the diegetic

sequence in the church—shot in a verite style—places lyrics alongside the melody that has been

so firmly implanted in our heads throughout the narrative, advising the audience and Hess that

"you've got to know / to let it go / you've got to know / when it's all over." This could refer to

Hess' life, and indeed it seems that this is the manner in which that message is received.

However, for Ganja, who chooses not to end her vampiric existence, it can be interpreted as

letting go of those who no longer support her (as in the story she tells Hess).

Ultimately it is Ganja's message that seems to be granted pride of place in the film, as the

sole survivor. As in *Daughters*, the Monster who transformed her has been dispatched, leaving

her to pursue new seductions, new adventures. Her virile lover, springing naked from the water

and running to join her after Hess' body is taken away by the coroner, is also perhaps a

representation of the new Black man envisioned by Black nationalist writers such as Eldridge

Cleaver.[88] Ultimately I think it is Ganja who is able to absorb the many points of view in the

film, is able to survive the crushing colonial circumstances in which the minoritarian vampire

finds herself, circumstances that drove Meda to suicide and wore Hess down in the end as well.

Here, Ganja fits very much within the definition Means Coleman lays out in opposition to

Clover's "Final Girl": the enduring woman. Unlike the final girl, who—androgynous and

white—fights as an exceptional being, battling a singular evil whose defeat signals the end of the

film and the contingent return to normalcy, the enduring woman—sexualized and definitively

female—is always enmeshed in systems of oppression that are ongoing. The close of the

narrative very rarely signals rest for the enduring woman, who, as a Black woman, must continue

to struggle against systemic oppression and violence. Throughout the course of the film, the

many points of view—and subjective states associated with them—are absorbed: first by Hess,

who responds by ending his existence, then by Ganja, who responds by enduring.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented two contrasting examples of what I have labeled a message

sensibility, a sensibility that—through its reliance on musical and vocal strategies hailing from

low and high body genres (softcore pornography, horror, Third Cinema, experimental and

arthouse film)—attempts to empty out the meanings usually associated with the figure of the

vampire and imbue them with new meaning. The reliance on such high and low strategies and

techniques serves a paracinematic aim of critiquing a mainstream notion of taste and, ideally,

establishing a countercinema fueled by a counteridentification with that mainstream notion of

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[88] Cleaver, Eldridge. 1968. *Soul on ice*. London: Cape.

good taste. In the minoritarian vampire film, this critique is leveled aesthetically with an aim of ideological critique as well: the destabilization or displacement of white supremacist, heteropatriarchal understandings of gender and race.

Where *Daughters* creates a claustrophobic and limited sound world facilitating the intimate and immediate transmission of a singular lesbian feminist point of view, *Ganja and Hess* contextualizes and historicizes its narrative and representations of sexuality with a chaotic layering of music and sounds representing three spheres of influence on Black subjectivity: western culture (the normality that others the Black subject), contemporary Black culture, and a violently erased Black past that can be accessed only through imagination. In both cases, the soundtracks create a fantastic and surreal space in which the audience can follow the sexual and supernatural transformation of the characters.

However, in these "sex-vampire" films—in which the vampire's sexual subtext is made explicit—the space of signification is cleared out and utilized to represent consciousness raising. The journey of the minoritarian vampire is not just a sexual and supernatural journey, but a political one as well. These are, in Sontag's words, "total experiences," experiences in which the "aggressiveness of the intention" is a form of proselytizing in service of psychic dislocation and, ultimately, conversion.[89] She goes on:

> And total experiences, of which there are many kinds, tend again and again to be apprehended only as revivals or translations of the religious imagination. To try to make a fresh way of talking at the most serious, ardent, and enthusiastic level, heading off the religious encapsulation, is one of the primary intellectual tasks of future thought.[90]

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[89] Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," 214.

[90] Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," 231.

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The minoritarian vampire film, then, constructs these heightened sexual and religious states—states deployed in order to proselytize, educate, enlighten—in part through a message sensibility aimed at direct communication, through a seemingly contradictory use of sound conventions from body genre films, both Williams' original triad of horror, melodrama, and pornography, and Hawkins' additional pair of art-horror and the horrific avant-garde. These sound conventions, developed to represent such "gratuitous" elements as sex and violence, are used in the films to create atmospheres of psychic dislocation and fantasy in which various messages of minoritarian consciousness might be transmitted to knowing and unknowing audiences.

Chapter Four: Killers
Masculinity and the *Concrète* Sensibility in the Slasher Film

I. Introduction

From the Fantastical to the Realist

Up until this point, my focus has been films whose representations of fantastical monstrosity

attract and repel audiences through disjunctive and/or exaggerated audiovisual means that are

often grouped indiscriminately under the heading of "camp." From the sixties onward, camp has

come to function as an umbrella under which a wide range of ironic sensibilities characterized by

theatricality, exaggeration, and artifice have been grouped. I have worked throughout to apply

pressure to the concept of camp through an examination of the horror soundtrack, in the hope of

uncovering new understandings of the complicated and oftentimes conflicting affects it

circulates. The aim of this project has been to expand the affective archive of sexuality beyond

the usual shame/pride dyad of camp by presenting the horror soundtrack as an under-explored

source of affective information about sexuality.

It has been my argument that by focusing on the soundtrack (the system perhaps most

responsible for generating a film's tone and establishing an emotional connection with the

audience) of the horror film (a genre that serves as a powerful archive for representations of

sexuality) during particular times of sexual upheaval and change (here, the U.S. in the 1970s),

we may gain knowledge about the public circulation of affect around sexuality: its contours and

patterns, its customary formations. Majoritarian cultural attitudes about a wide range of sexual

practices, identities, and subjects, as well as understandings those subjects may have had about

their own sexual practices, identities, and subjectivities can be traced in the affective economy of

the horror soundtrack, through the ways in which music and sound attract audiences toward and repel them from representations of monstrous sexuality.

Thus far this has been accomplished via the examination of fantastical soundtracks: the contrasting and ironic musical worlds of the horror film musical (in Chapter Two) and the "high"/"low" intimacy-inducing ones of the minoritarian vampire film (in Chapter Three). In both cases, I argue that the stated and unstated political and aesthetic goals of these films can be felt and observed in the soundtrack. In this final chapter, though, I turn my focus from those demonized minoritarian subjectivities—gender variant and transfeminine (Chapter Two), white lesbian, Black (Chapter Three)—to monstrous instantiations of white masculinity and, perhaps unsurprisingly, from the fantastical soundtrack to the realist. Here, I explore the differing realist aesthetics in the soundtracks of two highly controversial depictions of the serial killer or the slasher (that most prominent of seventies masculine horror archetypes): *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980). I will demonstrate the ways in which these realist soundtracks embody what I am calling a *concrète* sensibility. This designation draws on the connotations of *musique concrète* and its compositional practice of severing sounds from their sources, turning them into "sonic objects" (*l'objet sonore*) and assembling or altering them without the mediating abstraction of notation.

Films of this sensibility, a sensibility that characterizes much of the output of New Hollywood filmmaking as it rejects the musical strategies of Classical Hollywood, both draw self-consciously on techniques from documentary filmmaking to create a sense of immediacy and authenticity (as we saw with *Last House*), and more unselfconsciously strive to create films

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that are themselves objective,[1] as we saw with *The Exorcist*. An examination of this apparent

shift from subjectivity to objectivity necessitates a reconsideration of Chion's musical concepts

of empathy and anempathy (as utilized by Link and Stilwell) with which I have been working, as

well as a reconsideration of the relationship of those affective postures to music and its

relationship with the diegesis.

This examination will also require an overview of the role these concepts play in affixing

and presenting masculinity in audiovisual cinematic contexts. After introducing the slasher

subgenre and my chosen films—*The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Cruising*—and giving an

overview of their soundtracks, I will link Julie Hubbert's illuminating discussion of cinematic

musical realism with majoritarian masculinity's reliance on concepts of authenticity,

nontheatricality, and unsentimentality. I will then examine the soundtrack of each film in detail

to demonstrate the ways in which musical objectivity itself, a techno-discourse made up of

decontextualized "sound objects," can be interpreted as an expression of a specifically masculine

and majoritarian form of subjectivity. This anxious covering over constitutes the incoherence

that forms the core of the *concrète* sensibility as it registers hegemonic masculinity's struggles

with its sexually deviant Others—rural (in the case of *Texas Chain Saw)* and urban (in the case

of *Cruising)*—through the nascent discourses of serial murder and macho gay identity in

circulation at the time.

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[1] "Objective" in the sense of being unconcerned with the interiority or subjectivity of characters, as well as being invested in presenting the facts and events of the film to the audience with a minimum of directorial interpretation.

The Slasher

Following the success of *Psycho* in 1960, according to Robin Wood, the American horror film slowly makes its way to "its true milieu, the family."[2] He argues that each of the five most prominent motifs in horror of the seventies—monster as human, revenge of nature, Satanism, the terrible child, cannibalism—is concerned with the family in some way. Where once the Monster was comfortably foreign (or supernatural or extraterrestrial), it quickly became domesticated and, in its more disturbing cases, quintessentially human. Wood's first motif, the "Monster as human," would of course grow exponentially over the course of the seventies, with the handful of slasher films produced between 1970-1974 giving way to hundreds in the years between 1978-1982, before slowing to a steady trickle that continues to this day. These films, like the vampire films discussed in my previous chapter, exploit a combination of sex and violence in an episodic structure similar to that found in pornography. Unlike exploitation vampire films, however, slashers of this period tend to operate in a rule-driven sexual world, that is devoid of sensuality: a world in which adolescent sexual activity is habitually punished.[3] Carol Clover summarizes the subgenre thus:

> At the bottom of the horror heap lies the slasher (or splatter or shocker or stalker) film: the immensely generative story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived. Drenched in taboo and encroaching on the pornographic, the slasher film lies by and large beyond the purview of the respectable (middle-aged, middle-class) audience.[4]

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[2] Wood, Robin, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 85.

[3] I cannot thank the students of my 98T seminar (Swoon, Slash, Scream: Music and Sexuality in the 1970s Horror Film) enough for summing this up so well.

[4] Clover, *Men, women, and chain saws*, 21.

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As summarized in the introduction to this dissertation, Clover's work is an attempt to shift the conversation about slashers from criticism of its apparent sadism and glorification of violence against women to the ways in which the subgenre destabilizes cultural notions of gender through the mirrored, gender ambiguous figures of the killer and the Final Girl.

Italian fascination with the human killer took off slightly before American in a wave of stylish *gialli* films that gained popularity with *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (Mario Bava, 1963). As the title would suggest, *gialli* would borrow heavily from Alfred Hitchcock, and the particular sexualization of motive and action that characterizes many of his narratives (including *Psycho*), but they tended more towards *film noir* than horror: unfolding in urban locations with a focus on a protagonist investigating a series of killings to which she is connected. Early American slasher movies such as *Home for the Holidays* (John Llewellyn Moxey, screenplay by *Psycho* screenwriter Joseph Stefano, 1972) and *Scream Bloody Murder* (Marc B. Ray, 1973)*, unfold in suburban or rural locales (as opposed to the *giallo*'s urban) and tend to dwell on the connection between the psychosexual fury of the killer and the pathological family situation from which it derives. Clover posits that the slasher film combines a number of features drawn from *Psycho*: the tortured killer (the product of a sick family, propelled by psychosexual rage); victims who are generally beautiful, sexually active women; a location that is not home; a weapon that is not a gun; and shockingly sudden attacks registered from the victim's point of view. She also specifies that the slasher, like *Psycho,* sexualizes both motive and action, or positions the family as the location of an unhealthy cathexis that stunts sexual development.

But where *Psycho*—and specifically the shower scene—is famous for "suggest[ing] so much but show[ing] so little,"[5] many slashers revel in the gory details of each death, especially

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[5] Clover, *Men, women and chainsaws*, 41.

the deaths of adolescent women. And where many horror films pre-1960 locate horror in the grotesque visage of the monster, many slashers depend on the display of the mutilated female body to generate horror: horror of a somewhat different sort. "Audiences express uproarious disgust ("Gross!") as often as they express fear, and it is clear that the makers of slasher films pursue the combination."[6] As such, a realist aesthetic is important to many of these films, both in the sense of being able to realistically represent violent deaths and the sense of taking place in a diegesis "[u]nmediated by otherworldly fantasy, cover plot, bestial transformations, or civilized routine."[7] Slashers rely for their effect on this direct and graphic presentation of sexualized violence, and my chosen films, based on true events, combine this edict with an evocation of the "real-life" horrors that may be hiding behind an ordinary face or in an ordinary place.

The Texas Chain Saw Massacre

Texas Chain Saw provides my first case study in the dual consideration of the blossoming of cinema's fascination with the masculinity of the psychosexually stunted killer in the 1970s and the realist cinematic aesthetic through which it was delivered to audiences. Widely considered the first slasher hit, the film was independently produced by Texas filmmaker Tobe Hooper and features a soundtrack created by Hooper and boom technician Wayne Bell. The plot—which uses the crimes of Ed Gein as inspiration—follows Sally and Franklin Hardesty, accompanied by three friends, on a trip to visit their grandparents' abandoned house in rural Texas. After a disturbing interlude with a hitchhiker who attacks Franklin with a knife, they reach the house,

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[6] Clover, *Men, women and chainsaws*, 41.

[7] Clover, *Men, women and chainsaws,* 22-23.

low on gas. The group splits up to explore and see if they can fill their tank at the neighboring house.

They then encounter the inhabitants of that house: two brothers (a masked, semi-verbal "Leatherface," the character for whom the film was originally named, and the hitchhiker from earlier), their father, and their mummified grandparents (the grandfather is barely alive, the grandmother is dead). Leatherface dispatches the first four of the kids with the film's eponymous chainsaw, leaving Sally, the film's Final Girl, to flee the house only to be captured and brought back for a ghoulish family dinner. She escapes again, this time jumping into a passing pickup truck, and the final frames of the film picture her, covered in blood, laughing maniacally—in the same register she had been screaming—as Leatherface frustratedly swings his chainsaw in the air behind the retreating truck.

The soundtrack features the unsettling and anempathetic use of several diegetic songs, all by Texas artists,[8] but more often when the soundtrack is discussed it is to its sounds—the chainsaw, Sally's scream, clucking chickens and squealing pigs—that attention is drawn, sonorities that are described as having been assembled in a *musique concrète* style. Bell, for example, says that "what we did and what these French abstract guys were doing - first it is abstract and it also once again plies the waters between what is music and what is sound. But another important similarity between us and *musique concrète* is the use of editing as a

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[8] "Fool for a Blonde" (Roger Bartlett and Friends); "Waco" and "Glad Hand" (Timberline Rose); "Daddy's Sick Again" and "Mist Hours of Daylight" (Arkey Blue); "Feria de las Flores" and "Poco a Poco No" (Los Cyclones). http://www.texaschainsawmassacre.net/Music. Accessed May 7, 2018.

composing tool."[9] Musical instruments are used in nonmelodic ways—in keeping with Donnelly

and Tompkins' assertion that horror soundtracks blur the line between music and sound

effect[10]—and decontextualized sounds fill the traditional functions of the horror score (stingers,

drones, ostinati). As Gunnar Hansen (the actor who plays Leatherface) summarizes in his

memoir of the making of the film, a memoir for which he interviewed many of the film's

participants, including Bell:

> Tobe and Wayne developed the score together, often in latenight [sic] jam sessions with a
> series of instruments, almost all of them Wayne's, including a lap steel guitar and a five-
> string double standing bass with a broken neck that he had glued back together. The other
> instruments included 'lots of children's toy instruments, stuff made for preschoolers
> sometimes. A lot of the bone sounds, some of that is children's shaker toys,' [Bell] says.
> As part of their music making, they did 'a lot of bowing—we'd hang things on the bass
> for vibration, and so you hear that stand-up bass a lot, bowing of cymbals and bowing of
> other metal things for the way they would ring.[11]

But editing, as Bell suggests, is in many ways responsible for the overall experience of the

soundtrack, the uncanny quasi-diegetic nature of all of the sounds that make it up. The

soundtrack of *Texas Chain Saw* exists almost entirely in the space between diegetic and

nondiegetic, what Robynn Stilwell labels "the fantastical gap."[12] Robin Wood describes the film

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[9] Brigden, Charlie. "Why We Should Listen To Texas Chainsaw Massacre's Score As Musique Concrete." http://thequietus.com/articles/23290-texas-chainsaw-massacre-soundtrack-article. Accessed May 7, 2018.

[10] Whittington, William. "Horror Sound Design." In Harry M. Benshoff ed. 2017. *A companion to the horror film*. 168-185.

[11] Hansen, Gunnar. 2013. *Chain saw confidential: how we made the world's most notorious horror movie*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 170.

[12] Stilwell, Robynn, "The Fantastical Gap," 184-204.

as having "the authentic quality of nightmare," which he suspects is the result of its emphasis of "uncontrol…in conjunction with the film's relentless and unremitting intensity."[13]

This intensity builds largely, I think, in the soundtrack and its fantastical location: heightened by the nearly constant presence of sounds in the film, whether crickets, the radio, the whir of a generator, the revving of a chainsaw, the characters calling out to each other, Sally's hysterical screams and laughter, or the laughter and screams of her tormentors. Long stretches of little to no action (accompanied by crickets and the constant litanies of banal violence recounted by the newscaster on the radio) give way to long stretches of violence (the sound of the chainsaw and Sally's screams). Interestingly enough, the sound mixer who worked on this crucially important element of the film—Robert "Buzz" Knudson—was among William Friedkin's frequent collaborators, and would serve a similarly central role in both *The Exorcist* and *Cruising*.

Cruising

Cruising, released just under six years after *Texas Chain Saw*, is likewise inspired by real crimes, a series of murders attributed to Paul Bateson, labeled pejoratively the "Fag in a Bag murders" and later simply the "Bag murders" by the NYPD. It is a Lorimar Film Entertainment/United Artists-funded production helmed by William Friedkin, whose 1971 crime thriller *The French Connection* won five Academy Awards (including Best Picture and Best Director), and whose 1973 horror film *The Exorcist* was nominated for ten Academy Awards and won two: Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Sound Mixing (accepted by Robert Knudson and Chris Newman). The film, which also focuses on pathological formations of masculinity, is a loose adaptation of

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[13] Wood. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. 90.

Gerald Walker's 1970 novel of the same name in which a rookie cop (Peter Lynch in the novel, Steve Burns, played by Al Pacino, in the film) must go undercover in Manhattan's gay community to catch a serial killer of gay men. In the process his sense of self begins to unravel and he becomes increasingly violent, depicted as the double of the misogynistic and self-hating killer, Stuart Richards (Richard Cox), who may or may not be gay himself. The film concludes with the killer's capture and Burns' return to his normal life, though it is strongly implied that he himself has murdered his gay neighbor, to whom he may have been attracted.

The film is perhaps best known for the very bitter and very public debate that ensued between Friedkin, producer Jerry Weintraub, and Manhattan's gay community, led by *Village Voice* columnist and activist Arthur Bell. Friedkin decided to use the details of the Bag murders—which Bell himself had written about over the course of several columns—to create the gritty realism for which he had gained recognition in *The French Connection.* He consulted with the same ex-undercover police officer, Randy Jurgensen, and endeavored to shoot on location in various well known gay cruising locations: Chelsea and Greenwich Village, as well as the Rambles in Central Park.

Breaking from the novel on which the film is based, Friedkin set *Cruising* in Manhattan's gay leather community, having been made aware of it by Jurgensen, who had gone undercover during the 1960s to catch the "Salt and Pepper killers," a pair of criminals targeting wealthy gay men. Bell and others felt that the film—with its rehearsing of stereotypes associating homosexuality and criminality, and its association of homosexuality with the leather community—would "negate years of positive movement work and may well send gays running back into the closet and precipitate heavy violence against homosexuals."[14] As such, he

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[14] Bell, Arthur, "Bell Tells," *Village Voice,* 7/16/1979.

demanded the film halt production. However, participants in the leather community were largely happy that they would be represented in a mainstream film, and others argued that the kind of censorship Bell was calling for had dangerous implications for queer representation more broadly. The film therefore represents a very public negotiation of gay identity post-Stonewall and pre-AIDS.

The soundtrack can be divided into three general categories: the composed/compiled score, the diegetic pop music in the background of the scenes taking place in the leather bars, and the highly stylized sound effects and dialogue. The songs were assembled, and some produced, by Nitzsche. The score was also credited to him, but in reality it is more a collage of experimental and electronic jazz by Ralph Towner and Barre Phillips stitched together with *musique concrète* excerpts by Pierre Henry, than a composition of Nitzsche's. The result, as with *Texas Chain Saw*, has been described as *musique concrète*.

Originally Los Angeles punk band The Germs were to record several original songs for the film, but when it became apparent that they would be unable to deliver, Nitzsche went to favored collaborator Willy DeVille, and began seeking out alternatives via Jerry Weintraub's connections at CBS and MCA.[15] In addition to DeVille and the Germs, five more artists were tapped for the soundtrack: The Cripples, John Hiatt, Mutiny, Rough Trade, and Madelynn von Ritz. The Germs and the Cripples all had ties to the punk scenes in New York and Los Angeles, while John Hiatt and Willy DeVille (who had gained notoriety fronting the CBGB house band Mink DeVille in New York in the early days of punk), fused rock and the blues in growling masculine vocalities. The Carole Pope-fronted Rough Trade and Madelynn von Ritz represent

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[15] Weintraub worked extensively as a manager and concert promoter in addition to his career as a film producer.

the two contributions of women singers on the soundtrack, though both have regularly been

mistaken for men when their voices are heard alone.

II. Musical Realism in Film and the Realness of Hegemonic Masculinity

Musical Objectivity, Musical Realism

Starting in the 1960s, the Classical Hollywood orchestral score—with its Late-Romantic idioms,

and its over-determined relationship with the action onscreen—began to fall out of favor as a

younger generation of filmmakers, dubbed New Hollywood, experimented stylistically in an

attempt to escape the tight aesthetic and narrative strictures developed over the course of the

Studio Era.[16] Composers who had thrived operating in the Classical Hollywood style began to

panic. There are countless stories of failed communication between composer and director

during these years; composers bemoaned directors' inability to grasp the potential of the

orchestral score, and directors bemoaned the composers' reliance on musical devices they felt

were outdated and clichéd. These changes in film music practice have long been attributed solely

to a commercially-motivated turn to popular music, but Julie Hubbert convincingly demonstrates

that there was another influence: that of a new aesthetic of cinematic realism that was

increasingly critical of the editorial capacities of the score. She summarizes:

> The dramatic change in the sound of film music was also being influenced by a new
> approach to musical realism, an approach that was first outlined in an experimental
> movement in documentary filmmaking in the 1960s. Certainly, music tastes and practices
> in the early 1970s were being shaped by commercial concerns, but they were also being
> shaped by an influential documentary film movement called *cinema vérité*.[17]

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[16] Cook, David A. 2007. *Lost illusions: American cinema in the shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

[17] Hubbert, Julia. 2003. ""Whatever Happened to Great Movie Music?": Cinema Verite and Hollywood Film Music of the Early 1970s". *AMERICAN MUSIC*. 21: 184.

Cinema vérité, "an approach that sought to record reality directly and to achieve a greater sense of truthfulness or reality by capturing events as they spontaneously occurred,"[18] abandoned narration and the traditional score "because they emphasized the filmmaker's interpretation or perspective over the viewer's. Both additives interpreted the subject being documented instead of letting the subject speak for itself."[19] Source music, however, could be included in this new aesthetic, since if the source could be observed within the film—tied to the diegesis in some way—the music fit within *cinema vérité*'s mandate that the director "us[e] the camera simply as a tool for observing and documenting reality."[20] Observed music was acceptable, composed music that lurked glaringly in the nondiegetic space of the apparatus was not.

Directors who cared about realism, though, had long struggled with the place of the score in their work. Alfred Hitchcock's collaborations, for example, are littered with stories of this particular struggle. This is encapsulated in an oft-cited anecdote about *Lifeboat* (1941)—a film with a main title and an end title, but no score—attributed by composer Hugh Friedhofer to David Raskin:

> [Raskin] asked Hitchcock, 'How come no music?' because [Raskin], as I, felt that the
> picture did need something. So Hitch replied, 'Out in the middle of the ocean, where's
> the orchestra?' So Dave said, 'Out in the middle of the ocean, where's the camera?'[21]

Though other elements of the cinematic apparatus, such as the camera, control and shape the "reality" an audience receives, the score is more noticeably "artificial," nagging at the

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[18] Hubbert, "Whatever Happened to Great Movie Music?"184.

[19] Hubbert, "Whatever Happened to Great Movie Music?"188.

[20] Hubbert, "Whatever Happened to Great Movie Music?" 184.

[21] Danly, Linda. 2002. *Hugo Friedhofer: the best years of his life: a Hollywood master of music for the movies*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press. 75.

audience member to imagine the forces producing the music behind the scenes if they are not

sufficiently enveloped in a particular cue. Take a strikingly similar comment from William

Friedkin, given as justification for his rejection of Lalo Schifrin's score for *The Exorcist*:

> Whenever I hear a score playing behind dialogue, I always envision *Blazing Saddles*…
> where they pan over to an orchestra out in the desert, sitting there in evening jackets
> playing the score. It doesn't help me personally. It makes me think about the process to
> hear music underscoring dialogue. I find it very off-putting.[22]

Friedkin wanted to treat the supernatural events of *The Exorcist* as seriously and realistically as

possible, and he felt that Schifrin's score was a distraction, especially as underscore during

stretches of dialogue.[23] Though he would replace the score with music that was quite similar

stylistically,[24] what he was really after was music as punctuation and transition, not music in its

traditional Hollywood role as emotional cueing. As the director states: "I don't believe that the

music should be telling the audience how they're supposed to feel. I think that shows signs that

either the scene is weak or that as the director you don't believe in the scene."[25]

Friedkin links realism with objectivity, and the Classical Hollywood score with

subjectivity. The two are conceptualized as working to mutually exclusive ends, where the

disorderly emotional force of the latter destroys the putative purity of response enabled by the

former. Again, this Cartesian division is not new: visually observable music has always carried

connotations of objectivity in the Classical Hollywood soundtrack, while the score has generally

served to connect audiences to the subjectivity of characters in the diegesis, a medium for

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[22] Friedkin quoted in Park, George, "The Devil's Music: The Filming of *The Exorcist*," *Film Score Monthly,* 1999. 24.

[23] Park, "The Devil's Music," 24.

[24] A selection of compositions by Krzysztof Penderecki.

[25] Friedkin quoted in Park, "The Devil's Music," 25.

conveying emotion, for "telling the audience how they're supposed to feel." This often leads to the equation of "objective" source music with anempathy, and subjective score with empathy, as in Stan Link's analysis of "The Knife" (the empathetic cue from Bernard Herrmann's score for *Psycho*) and the contrasting anempathetic use of music in many representations of psychological pathology that would follow.[26] In this view, the score connects an audience to cinematic characters while source music highlights the absence of that connection. But in this chapter we will see that this is not always the case, especially in films that self-consciously explore dominant conceptions of masculinity, itself operating, as we shall see, through the most fragile pretension of objectivity.

Naturally, the attempt to leverage music to help create a sense of realism has a gendered dimension, since composed music is considered both subjective and formulaic, traits often relegated to the feminine. The "realness" of masculinity is constructed through recourse to New Hollywood's favored realist music aesthetic and a move away from the emotionally excessive and over-determined musical methods of the Studio Era and its feminized score. If the images are real, and "speak for themselves," there shouldn't be underscoring telling the audience what to feel, since that would deny them emotional agency. In practice, of course, New Hollywood filmmakers did use music in ways that exceeded the "source music only" mandate, and stretched the limits of what observable music could do to evoke emotional response.

Authenticity and Hegemonic Masculinity

In her classic consideration of female impersonation, *Mother Camp,* Esther Newton asserts that drag denaturalizes gender by demonstrating the "achieved" status of sex roles: "[t]he effect of the

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[26] Link, "Sympathy with the devil?" 1-20.

drag system is to wrench the sex roles loose from that which supposedly determines them, that is, genital sex. Gay people know that sex-typed behavior can be achieved, contrary to what is popularly believed."[27] She goes on to consider the ways in which drag signifies the opposition of feminine and masculine within homosexual men through a contrast between surface and interior. As she describes:

> At the simplest level, drag signifies that the person wearing it is a homosexual, that he is a male who is behaving in a specifically inappropriate way, that he is a male who places himself as a woman in relation to other men. In this sense it signifies stigma. At the most complex, it is a double inversion that says 'appearance is an illusion.' Drag says, "my 'outside' appearance is feminine, but my essence 'inside' [the body] is masculine.' At the same time it symbolizes the opposite inversion: "my appearance 'outside' [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence 'inside' [myself] is feminine."[28]

At both levels of this double inversion, it is the materiality of the masculine/male body around which a feminine 'outside' appearance may signify a feminine 'inside' essence. Sex roles are wrenched loose from the genital sex that determines them by the surface application of femininity, by contrast. But what of a surface application of masculinity? What complex double inversions might this perform? If gay men are on some level feminine, what does a conscious putting-on of masculinity signify?

These questions are not new, but I believe they find particularly significant address in the *concrète* sensibility I am trying to theorize. I have stated already that this chapter seeks to explore the complicated affective audiovisual negotiations of hegemonic masculinity that unfold cinematically when that hegemonic masculinity is presented with its deviant rural or queer other, and the *concrète* sensibility I see accompanying, enabling, or embodying those negotiations. I am arguing that this anxiety of authenticity revolves in these films—*Texas Chain Saw* and

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[27] Newton, *Mother camp,* 103.

[28] Newton, *Mother camp,* 103.

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Cruising—around the figure of the murderer psychosexually stunted by a pathological cathexis to a sick family. In the former, this manifests in a semi-verbal, child-like killer whose sexuality is sublimated entirely through violence, while in the former it manifests as a killer whose repression and hatred of his own homosexuality necessitates his murder of homosexuals who look like him. What these films suggest, in strikingly different tone, is the equivalence of the hegemonic and the deviant and, by extension, the hypocrisy of the hegemonic in its demonization of the deviant. I am now prepared to detail each soundtrack's negotiation of musical realism, that negotiation's enmeshment with discourses of masculinity, and the nature of the affective economy of each soundtrack's trajectory where hegemonic masculinity and its Others are concerned.

III. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*

Slashers, Serial Killers, and the Sounds of Sexualized Violence

Though Clover's formulation of the "Final Girl" has been at the center of conversations about gender in the slasher film, for the purposes of this chapter I will concentrate on the other gender-ambiguous half of her equation: the "killer propelled by psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress."[29] Where the Final Girl is asexual and androgynous—a necessity, argues Clover, if she is to function as a victim-hero with whom men, especially adolescents, may identify—the Killer is unmistakably male. However, as the description provided earlier suggests, starting with *Psycho*, the Killer's drive to kill is interpreted as a perversion of his sexual drive, and that perversion is often rooted in familial traumas from early childhood. Horror film historians generally link this increasing family focus and homeward shift in a public recognition,

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[29] Clover, *Men, women, and chainsaws,* 27.

enabled by national news over the second half of the 20th century, of human capacities for evil.

The figure of the "serial killer" quickly captured the imagination of the specifically film-going

public, starting, again, with *Psycho,* though it would not be named as such until some time in the

early 1970s.[30]

The persistent entanglement of this proto-category with existing binaries of gender and

sexual deviance was itself intensified by Anthony Perkins's sexually motivated characterization

of Norman Bates as "not exactly" a transvestite both sexually attracted to and pathologically

identified with women in Hitchcock's *Psycho.* The film was an adaptation of Wisconsin author

Robert Bloch's fictionalization of the crimes of Ed Gein, and the novel coded Norman as

Clover's "male in gender distress" who was pathologically focused, though in conflicting ways,

on femininity. His—presumably "natural"—attraction to Marion is sublimated through murder,

and that murder is both carried out by and blamed on a feminine cipher: Mother.

Gein would also serve as the inspiration for Hooper's film, carrying this focus on deviant

families and the co-occurrence of gender deviance, cannibalism, and incest into the slashers of

the 1970s and 1980s. In the "Introduction" to *The American Nightmare*, Wood discusses *Texas*

Chain Saw at great length, using it, as Clover does, to catalog the important features that

characterize the slasher film's orientation towards Monsters and normality. For Wood, the

contrast between the two families and their houses in *Texas Chain Saw*—the Hardestys' whose

grandparents were ranch-owners and Leatherface's deviant "all-male" family's,[31] who are

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[30] Term likely coined by FBI agent and profiler Robert Ressler somewhere around 1974, and is
itself derived from the "serial adventures" of Batman and the Lone Ranger he used to watch as a
child on Saturday afternoons. See *Serial Killers: The Method and Madness of Monsters*, Peter
Vronsky, 2004. New York: Penguin.

[31] Not named in the film, but the "Sawyers" in the sequel.

dispossessed slaughterhouse workers—serves to highlight sexual and social elements repressed under bourgeois patriarchy. Here, the Monsters are the "exploited and degraded proletariat" and the release of sexuality in the film is "totally perverted from its functions, into sadism, violence, and cannibalism…It is striking that no suggestion exists anywhere that Sally is the object of an overtly sexual threat: she is to be tormented, killed, dismembered, eaten, but not raped."[32] This has been noted by Clover as well, who observes that "rape is practically nonexistent in the slasher film, evidently on the premise…that violence and sex are not concomitants but alternatives, the one as much a substitute for and a prelude to the other as the teenage horror film is a substitute for and a prelude to the 'adult' film (or the meat movie is a substitute for and prelude to the skin flick)."[33]

The idea of a sexuality so pathological that it could only be expressed through torture and murder would become a staple of the slasher film, and the horror of that idea derived much of its power from its supposed connection with real crimes. But as K.E. Sullivan points out in a *Jumpcut* article exploring the preponderance of representations of "transgendered [sic] serial killer[s]" in film,[34] the real-life Gein and his fictionalized counterpart Norman were actually quite dissimilar. But the latter overshadows the former, and "[e]ven now it is difficult to sift fact from fiction. What seems very clear, however, is that Gein and the initial fictionalization of his case in the figure of Norman Bates in *Psycho* function as larger cultural symbols, which reflect contemporary concerns about masculinity, motherhood and sexual deviance… Mid-century

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[32] Wood. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. 91.

[33] Clover, *Men, women, and chainsaws,* 29.

[34] Neither transsexuals nor transvestites make the profile list for serial killers established by the FBI. See John Douglas and Mark Olshaker, *Mind Hunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit* (New York: Pocket Books, 1995).

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United States, reeling from the effects of the Kinsey report, obsessed not only about proper masculinity and the threat of homosexuality but also about the relation of failed mothering and homosexuality to crime."[35] This powerful constellation of masculine sexual deviance and the sublimation of sexual impulses into murderous ones would continue to inspire filmmakers for decades to come, and shape public perceptions of male homosexuality and gay identity in particular, as well as a range of rural and working-class masculinities.

The slasher, which would take off in popularity over the second half of the 1970s,[36] was thoroughly suffused with a realist aesthetic: in part due to its rooting in human monsters, in part due to its commitment to—if not always success in execution of—realism in its depictions of gory acts of bodily dismemberment. Their realism landed them in hot water with feminists, along with another genre that existed in uneasy relationship to reality: pornography. Where pornography depicted fantasy scenarios, the performers in this particular genre were not just acting out the acts depicted, but actually participating in them. The slasher, on the other hand, depended on sadistic representations of women being tortured and killed in sexualized ways, depictions that hewed uncomfortably close to real life. As Clover suggests, violence is an alternative for sex in the slasher, an observation borne out by Italian director Dario Argento's oft-cited declaration that he would much rather see a beautiful woman murdered than an ugly

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[35] Sullivan, K. E. 2000. "Ed Gein and the figure of the transgendered serial killer". JUMP CUT. (43): 38-47.

[36] One can observe a steady increase in the number of such films over the first half of the decade. About a dozen films were released during this time, between 1970-1976, and the numbers jump substantially in 1977, where roughly half that were released, and following *Halloween* in 1978 that number rockets to around 100 films between 1978-1981. See Jenkins *Using Murder*.

one.[37] Slasher films and pornography—especially sadomasochistic pornography—became prime targets for the feminist anti-pornography movement,[38] representing, as they did, extreme cases in which the socially oppressed position of women was presented for the purpose of sexual pleasure, or if not expressly sexual pleasure, for the purpose of reveling sadistically in violence against women.

This drive to cinematic realism did not necessarily translate into musical realism on the soundtrack, but it did fuel a move towards musical sounds that were understood as having less inherent emotional content, less subjectivity as it had been conceived in the Classical Hollywood score. Early instantiations of the slasher (e.g. *Home for the Holidays, Silent Night, Bloody Night,* and *Scream Bloody Murder*) feature fairly traditional horror scores composed of stock orchestral cues and ad-hoc atonal cues, sometimes incorporating children's music to represent the traumatic past(s) of their killers. *Silent Night* features a minor-mode version of "Silent Night" throughout, and the slightly later *giallo Deep Red* features Giorgio Gaslini's mechanical music box-inspired "School at Night."[39] But, as suggested earlier, these newly-graphic representations of violence and gore did not seem to invite the same kinds of musical accompaniment that earlier representations of violence had. This can be understood through interpreting music's role as providing the "appropriate" emotional response for a less graphic representation of violence, in which it was making up for things unseen that filmmakers wanted expressed more immediately.

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[37] Billson, Anne. "Not another terrorised female." *The Guardian*. Mar 3, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/mar/03/horror-films-women-protagonists-the-resident. Accessed May 7, 2018.

[38] Bronstein, Carolyn. 2013. *Battling pornography: the American feminist anti-pornography movement; 1976 - 1986*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press.

[39] Link, Stan. "The Monster and the Music Box," in Lerner, Neil William. 2010. *Music in the horror film: listening to fear*. New York: Routledge. 38-54.

This new, documentary view of violence seemed to inspire filmmakers to "strip down" music, and to avoid the sentimentality and "fossilized associations" of empathetic orchestral scoring[40]—either by using less music altogether, migrating to the semi-pitched (and thus less "expressive") realm of percussive cues, or by translating the old empathetic gestures into new, alienating timbres afforded by electronic synthesizers,. For example, in *Scream Bloody Murder* there is no music when the killer (Matthew) loses his hand as a child. When later on he kills a housekeeper with the cleaver she has been using to chop meat, the audience is left with only the visual shock and the victim's screams. This is very much in line with what Hitchcock had originally intended for *Psycho*'s shower scene: the desire to let the image speak for itself. But of course the impulse toward empathetic scoring in horror—to use music to scare the audience—is alive and well in the popular theme music from *Halloween* (composed and performed by director John Carpenter), as well as the "grab bag" of stingers and drones produced by Alan Howarth. These are routinely described as a "distillation" of the horror soundtrack's most characteristic sounds, and praised for the innovation.[41]

The music in slasher films can therefore be seen as participating broadly in the project of sublimating sexual impulses through violence in the eschewal of the usual sensuality of the orchestral score. In this project we often will see an equation of unsentimentality and objectivity: the more "true" and objective a film is, the more brutal and uncompromising, and so brutal and uncompromising music feels more objective: it denies access to subjectivity in much the same way as anempathetic music does in Link's discussion. However, left out of these fraught

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[40] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the films*, 2.

[41] Hayward, Philip. 2009. *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror cinema*. London: Equinox. 1-13.

machinations is the possibility that such realism could be used for subjective or stylized ends. I

argue that both *Texas Chain Saw* and *Cruising* do, though the films and their filmmakers have

quite obvious differences in their attitudes toward and deployments of objectivity, and this has

differing implications for their representations of deviant masculinity.

Chainsaws and Bowed Cymbals in the Fantastical Gap

As summarized earlier, Wayne Bell self-consciously compares his work with Hooper on *Texas*

Chain Saw to *musique concrète,* saying that it "crosses over the line between what is sound

effect and what is music."[42] In his understanding of *musique concrète,* decontextualized sounds

are manipulated to create music, but in initial definitions of the term, Pierre Schaeffer intended

more that in this style of composition the creator would be working "directly (concretely) with

the sound material, in contrast to the composer of instrumental or vocal music who works

indirectly (abstractly) using a symbolic system of notation which represents the sounds to be

made concrete by instruments and/or voices."[43] This practice was inspired largely by Schaeffer's

background in radio, but was also the ways in which sound source and sound can be delinked

and relinked in film sound practice.

Chion uses key terms from Schaeffer's theorizing of *musique concrète* in his own film

sound theories, specifically the concepts of reduced listening—"the listening mode that focuses

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[42] Bell quoted in Hansen, *Chainsaw Confidential*, 169.

[43] Emmerson, Simon, and Denis Smalley. "Electro-acoustic music." *Grove Music Online.* 7 May. 2018. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000008695.

on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and its meaning"[44]—and acousmatic listening—"a situation wherein one hears the sound without seeing the cause."[45] According to Chion (following Schaeffer), reduced listening takes any kind of sound, regardless of source (animal, verbal, noise, music, etc.), as the object of focus and study (rather than the meaning or source of that sound). Reduced listening is one of Chion's three listening modes, along with causal listening (listening to determine the source of a sound) and semantic listening (listening to a sound for meaning). Of reduced listening's significance for film analysis Chion says: "it would seem that film and television use sounds solely for their figurative, semantic, or evocatory value, in reference to real or suggested causes, or to texts—but only rarely as formal raw materials in themselves…[However] the emotional, physical, and aesthetic value of a sound is linked not is linked not only to the causal explanation we attribute to it but also to its own qualities of timbre and texture, to its own personal vibration."[46]

The soundtrack for *Texas Chain Saw* (built entirely from pre-recorded sounds, synch sound, a wide range of human and animal sounds as well as mechanical) encourages the audience to engage in each of the listening modes, but mainly situates them between causal and reduced listening, forcing what I am calling *anticipatory listening*, a paranoid and ultra-vigilant stance in which the audience is never entirely able to connect all sounds to the diegetic space, and is therefore constantly wondering if the sounds it is hearing signify an immediate danger or not. The chainsaw, obviously—as well as Sally's screams that often accompany it—has a unique

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[44] Chion, Michel, Claudia Gorbman, and Walter Murch. 1994. *Audio-vision: sound on screen*. New York: Columbia University. 29.

[45] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 32.

[46] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 31.

auditory signature, and forms a core component of the film's sensory assault on the audience.[47]

But the film's ability to unnerve, to hold the audience in this middle space, is encapsulated in its other signature sound: what has been described variously as "whining camera sound"[48] or a "flash, [a] squealing sound."[49] Following a long tradition of the secrecy of horror sound effect creators, Bell has on multiple occasions refused to disclose his exact method for creating this sound. It, like the soundtrack as a whole, invites the kind of combination of causal and reduced listening postures the film engenders.

This listening posture is established from the first frames. After hearing an authoritative voiceover detailing the "true" events that befell Sally Hardesty and her friends on, as the title frame tells us, August 18, 1973, the audience is presented with a black screen and a collage of sounds. The combination of grunting and loose dirt, of something knocking against wood, invites the audience to imagine someone struggling as they dig in the earth, an acoustic representation that is underlain by a barely perceptible metallic sound, likely a bowed cymbal. The unseen digger lets out a particularly forceful grunt, and there is a click and the difficult-to-classify "flash" sound—a whining that bends upward following the attack—that aligns with the visual flare of a camera bulb and a brief, close-up glimpse of a desiccated hand. Each time this odd whining is heard, the bulb flashes, and we glimpse another part of what we quickly realize to be a decomposing corpse. The whining and flashes increase in frequency, occurring closer together,

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[47] Coyle, Rebecca and Phillip Hayward. "Texas Chainsaws: Audio Effect and Iconicity." In Hayward, Philip, ed. 2009. *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror cinema*. London: Equinox.

[48] Hansen, *Chainsaw Confidential,* 169.

[49] Brigden, Charlie. "Why We Should Listen To Texas Chainsaw Massacre's Score As Musique Concrete." http://thequietus.com/articles/23290-texas-chainsaw-massacre-soundtrack-article. Accessed May 7, 2018.

until we are presented with multiple shots of a skull, from varying angles, in rapid succession. The whines that accompany these shots bend upward in pitch as the first had done, but they also blend with and fade out on a metallic grinding: something of a cross-fade between what we now identify as the sound of a camera flash with the sound of some kind of machinery (a chainsaw?). Slowly, another newscaster—this time sounding like he is on the radio—describing crimes of grave robbing is added to the mix, and the black screen cuts to a close-up of the corpse's skull. The sound of digging gives way to arrhythmic percussion as the camera zooms out to reveal that the corpse has been arranged atop a gravestone. A gong crash punctuates the film's title, yellow text against an abstract red and black background.

Stilwell labels this space between diegetic and nondiegetic, which music and sound have a particular ability to traverse, as the "fantastical gap," stating that "[w]hen the boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic is traversed, it does always *mean*. It is also hardly ever a single moment—one moment we're in the diegetic realm and in the blink of an eye, like walking through Alice's mirror, we are in the nondiegetic looking-glass world."[50] The movement of music from a diegetic space to a nondiegetic one frequently draws the audience into a particular character's subjective experience, outlining a space Stilwell labels "metadiegetic," a space pertaining to narration by a secondary character. The fact that *Texas Chain Saw* holds the audience in this fantastical gap more or less consistently throughout the film, with moments or longer stretches that snap them back into the diegesis, has the effect of putting the audience off-balance. Throughout the film, sounds are used generally to create impressions of the various nightmare spaces of rural Texas and its inhabitants: gongs and wind chimes combine with the mechanical and unrelenting drone of a generator as Pam and Kirk approach the house in which

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[50] Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap," 186.

they will be dismembered; a flock of unseen chickens cluck while sheet metal and bones rattle after Pam falls face first into a room full of grisly crafts made from human bones; unseen pigs squeal as Leatherface knocks Jerry down with a single blow; the Hitchhiker and Leatherface mock and laugh at Sally over a barely perceptible echoing scream.

The film's more iconic sounds—screams, the flash, and the chainsaw—are used to mark moments of rupture and violence, performing the affective work of binding the audience to the embodied experiences of fear and pain in the film. For example, when the Hitchhiker cuts Franklin in the van at the start of the film, it is synchronized with the grinding metal version of the flash sound. This sound will line up with various acts of violence experienced by Sally as she is tied up at the dinner table as well. Generally, slashers would go on to do much of this affective work visually, with graphic representations of gore. However, *Texas Chain Saw,* though described by Roger Ebert and others as "as violent and gruesome and blood-soaked as the title promises,"[51] has very little direct visual gore. Hooper was angling for a PG rating, and was extremely careful about showing blood. But the auditory assault on the audience, especially during the final act of the film, is relentless, and it is during this final act that I find the most interesting way in which the soundtrack delivers the film's message about gender in the hegemonic family (represented by Sally, Franklin, and their friends) and gender in the pathological family (represented by Leatherface, the Hitchhiker, their father, and their grandfather).

Hysteria and Hypocrisy

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[51] Ebert, Roger (1989). *Roger Ebert's Movie Home Companion: Full-Length Reviews of Twenty Years of Movies on Video*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 748.

The anticipatory toggling I've been describing between causal listening and reduced listening is enabled by an extremely blurry sound world crafted through the techniques of *musique concrète* methods of composition. The resulting impressionism has implications for the representations of gender in the film, and enables the kinetic transfer of horror that occurs when the "normal" American family is compared with its horrific double. The implication, of course (and this is why Wood was such a champion of the film) is that the normal family is simply the repressed, hypocritical version of the monstrous family, and the soundtrack encourages this reading.

This is perhaps most apparent in the turn from Sally and Franklin's bickering to the Father's castigation of his errant sons, Leatherface and the Hitchhiker. Approaching the final act of the film, Sally and Franklin argue about who will go to look for Jerry, and who will get to hold the flashlight. The scene is scored with a disembodied and undulating chorus of echoing voices, which read only as vague timbral textures, not human voices, and the ever-present crickets. Upon realizing that the keys are not in the van, Franklin urgently honks the horn. Sally yells at him to stop, and tries to wrestle the flashlight from his hands. The pair yell at each other relentlessly until Sally storms off on her own. Franklin follows, and they call out in the dark for Jerry. They see a light, which they move toward, but in rapid succession Franklin says that he hears something, tells her to stop, and the camera cuts to a medium shot of Leatherface, along with the revving up of the chainsaw.

What follows is roughly six full minutes of screaming and chainsaw, the latter of which is severed when Sally bursts through the door into the gas station. The sense of struggle from the earlier scene—when she is arguing with Franklin and then pushing his wheelchair through the underbrush—picks up again in her interactions with the gas station attendant, whom we soon discover to be the Father of the monstrous family. "You're alright, you're OK!" He yells at her,

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talking over her incoherent screaming as the radio plays honky-tonk music in the background. After a brief reprieve, Sally's attention is drawn to the sizzling barbeque, and as the man comes back into the gas station carrying a sack, she realizes she has fled back into danger. He begins beating her back with a broom, laughing as she screams, and this combination of sounds will continue in the truck. The scolding Father will transition smoothly from scolding Sally to scolding the Hitchhiker for getting too flamboyant in his grave-robbing and for leaving Leatherface alone. Sally and Franklin bicker as brother and sister. The Father scolds Sally as if he is scolding an errant child. The Father scolds his sons for horrific deeds as if he is scolding them for some much more banal trespass. The humor of the film, often misrecognized, coheres in sequences such as this one.

Ultimately, like *Last House*, *Texas Chain Saw* takes a stylized approach to realism to deliver a deeply cynical, sarcastic, and critical message: more invoking the signifiers of "reality" from documentary and *verite* filmmaking than aiming to make objectivist film as we will see Friedkin attempting to do in *Cruising*. This is a style that does not depart from the empathetic dictates of the Classical Hollywood version of the horror score. It deviates only in its means of production and use of diegetically-derived sounds in place of orchestral cues. The realism of the film's soundtrack does not bespeak anempathy. Instead, it is an indicator of the film's nightmarish qualities. The intensity and relentlessness of the sound in the film positions the audience in a hyperalert position, tiring them out just as Sally is tired out.

When the film shifts from horror to humor at Sally's arrival for dinner, we barely notice because the emotional pitch has been so high for so long. The emotional points of view are knit together much in the way Link discusses them being knit together during *Psycho*'s shower scene, with the victim's fear, the attacker's rage, and the audience's shock all accounted for in the

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relentless drone of the chainsaw and the relentless rise and fall of Sally's screams. The interchangeability of the various character's screaming and shouting and bickering performs much the same function. This is highlighted by the presence of the few anempathetic moments in the film, for example the endless verses of "Fool for a Blonde" on the radio as the Hitchhiker terrorizes the five friends in the van.

The sarcasm I discussed earlier in the introduction to the dissertation in relation to Wes Craven's use of music in *Last House* hinges on the parallel representation of the normal family, or at least a portion of it, and its horrific double. While this is clearly meant to critique the normal family—a clear project of the film in its frequent quotations of *Psycho* and *Night of the Living Dead*—it does so vis-à-vis a representation of the comical nature of Leatherface as filling the domestic role in the family. According to Clover, "none of the brothers shows overt signs of gender confusion, but their cathexis to the sick family—in which the mother is conspicuously absent but the preserved corpse of the grandmother…is conspicuously present—has palpably arrested their development."[52] I would argue that of them all, it is Leatherface who is meant to embody the Geinsian character, with his mask and wig, later made-up for dinner, cooking in the kitchen, and visibly distressed at the invasion of his domestic space.

Hooper is therefore less concerned with realistically portraying true events, and more with using the "reality" of the scenario as a pretext for his critique of American hypocrisy (in the mean and cynical style of Craven and Joe and the Country Fish discussed earlier), a critique suffused with caustic humor. As we will see in the following discussion of *Cruising*, music can also be used in the service of a doubling and a realism meant to be contemplated in dead

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[52] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 27.

seriousness, a seriousness that has drastically different implications for the representation of deviant masculinity.

IV. *Cruising*

The "Worst Nightmare" of Homosexuality

As demonstrated in the previous section, the American film-going public's introduction to the crimes of Ed Gein through Robert Bloch's fictionalization and Alfred Hitchcock's film adaptation would cement a lasting association between serial murder and a wide range of forms of masculine sexual deviance. When serial murder cases began to be labeled as such and began attracting widespread public attention in the mid-seventies, the majority of the offenders were male, as were the majority of their victims.[53] These crimes were understood through "the larger issue of sex crimes or sex psychopaths."[54] In *Texas Chain Saw* this understanding took the form of an all-male family in which sexuality is sublimated entirely through murder and cannibalism, but as the decade wore on more and more films considered serial murder alongside homosexuality more directly, labeling serial murderers "sex-killers" and linking their crimes to the repression of their deviant desires.[55] This extension of earlier associations between homosexuality and violence—which had been present since the first decades of cinema's

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[53] Seven high-profile cases during the late 1970s totaling ~200 victims, all of which involved predominantly male victims, predominantly children and adolescents (with the exception of Ted Bundy, Hillside Stranglers, and Son of Sam): Son of Sam, John Wayne Gacy, Hillside Stranglers, Atlanta Child Murders, Ted Bundy, Freeway Killings: Jenkins, *Using Murder*, 50.

[54] Jenkins, Philip. 1994. *Using murder: the social construction of serial homicide*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. 49.

[55] Jenkins, *Using Murder,* 49.

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existence—drew on longstanding stereotypes of gay men in particular as dangerous predators.

As historian Philip Jenkins summarizes:

> [T]here is a persistent failure [in the discourse of serial killing] to distinguish between homosexuality and pedophilia, so that sex-killers who target boys or young men are automatically described as homosexual killers. In addition, sexually motivated killers are often depicted in association with aspects of sexual inversion…Even when it is not directly stated that the offenders are homosexual, the implication is still that homosexuality is part of a spectrum of deviant behaviors that culminate in violence and multiple murder. The combined effect of such imagery is that homosexuality is powerfully mapped together with serial murder, especially the murder of children.[56]

To this already-complex mapping, Friedkin's adaptation of Walker's novel added the consensual sado-masochism of the leather community, which was seen from the outside (both gay and straight) as another location on the spectrum closer to violent assault and murder. Understandably, the association of homosexuality with predatory violence had long been a target for gay activists, and in the seventies this struggle intensified, especially later in the decade in response to Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign. Responding to assertions such as these, and to law enforcement that accepted this way of thinking, activists attempted to highlight the ways in which stereotypes about homosexuality and violence resulted in a loss of gay life.

While *Village Voice* columnist Arthur Bell would come out most strongly against the making of *Cruising*, it was the National Gay Task Force that first perused an advance copy of the screenplay and determined it to be homophobic: detrimental to recent advances by gay activists toward mainstream acceptance. Based on a string of murders in the gay and leather community and the experiences of an ex-cop, Randy Jurgensen, who had gone undercover in those communities, the screenplay suggested—as the final version of the film would—that the rookie cop protagonist kills at least one gay man over the course of his disorienting stint undercover.

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[56] Jenkins, *Using Murder,* 177.

That the action would unfold against the backdrop of Manhattan's gay leather scene brought further anxiety.

Activists such as Bell and, perhaps more famously, activist-historian Vito Russo, balked at Hollywood's tendency in the late 1970s, to see "only the readily visible poles of the gay community—the sissy at one end, the leather jacketed macho violence of the waterfront sex bar at the other."[57] That the proposed film seemingly would equate homosexuality and homicidality in the context of the leather bars, suggesting that the latter was the logical outcome of the former, confirmed the Task Force's worst fears. They determined that the "film would cause a 'potentially inflammatory and explosive' reaction to the homosexual community"[58] with its depiction of violence in the leather community, and asked Mayor Ed Koch to withdraw Friedkin's shooting permit.

When the Mayor's office declined to withdraw the shooting permit, activists took to the streets. Bell quickly became the protest's most prolific chronicler and instigator, addressing them regularly in his column "Bell Tells" throughout the summer and fall of 1979. He felt that *Cruising* "promise[d] to be the most oppressive, ugly, bigoted look at homosexuality ever presented on the screen, the worst possible nightmare of the most uptight straight and a validation of Anita Bryant's hate campaign. It will negate years of positive movement work and may well send gays running back into the closet and precipitate heavy violence against homosexuals."[59] Significantly, Bell's "worst possible nightmare" of homosexuality included, in

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[57] Russo, Vito. 1987. *The celluloid closet: homosexuality in the movies.* New York: Harper & Row.

[58] "Protesters Call the Film 'Cruising' Antihomosexual," *New York Times,* B7.

[59] Arthur Bell, "Bell Tells," *Village Voice* 7/16/1979.

no uncertain terms, not just the homophobic representations he anticipated from Friedkin, but the

leather community itself and its culture of sexual anonymity. Bell's 1977 opinion piece "Looking

for Mr. Gaybar"—one of the many periodical pieces Friedkin was likely to have consulted while

writing the screenplay for *Cruising*—can be read as foreshadowing the posture he would take

throughout the debates around the film. In it he bemoans the state of post-Stonewall gay sexual

culture:

> As homosexuality came out of the closet, romance went in and bolted the door. And the
> backroom bar became TV dinners for young men in a hurry. These bars are where you do
> the stunts you wouldn't do in the privacy of your home with someone you wouldn't
> necessarily drag home. Pretty models hook up with gorillas. Gorillas hook up with other
> gorillas. The Anvil, already, is the old 'in spot.' The new hangout is The Mineshaft,
> where the rack and the whack are the thing. It's replaced the Toilet as the last resort.
> Deep in the night, you often ask yourself how far you are from a place called the
> Hospital. And you wonder if Death Wish is far behind.[60]

However, not all gay men saw this as a "nightmare," among them author John Rechy and activist

Jim Fourratt, who cautioned against the possibly deleterious effects for sexual minorities of

attempting to enforce censorship in the representation of sexuality, and the erasure of a

subsection of the community. The extras, too, clearly did not share Bell's views. As summarized

by John Devere (editor-in-chief of *Mandate Magazine* who himself went undercover as an extra

and interviewed a number of other extras who opted to appear in *Cruising* in spite of the

widespread national attention being paid to protests against the film):

> The [extras]…did *not* object to their world being depicted. Middle-of-the-road gays, they
> thought, were the ones who didn't want the leather fringe seen by middle America [*sic*],
> even though the world certainly exists…[A] repeated argument of the leather men in the
> film is that *Cruising* will not confirm established straight stereotypes of gays at all, but

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[60] Bell, Arthur, "Looking for Mr. Gaybar," *The Village Voice*, Jan 27, 1977, 19.

will sharply counter it with unexpected images, images of gay men as super-macho men certainly capable of taking care of themselves, not limp-wristed Franklin Pangborns.[61]

In short, leather men were happy to circulate images of gender-conforming gay men, images that registered the embrace of a macho aesthetic and "clone" culture within urban gay populations,[62] and were less concerned about the way these images of kinky sex would damage mainstream perception of gay sexuality.

As this overview demonstrates, *Cruising,* no less than *The Rocky Horror Picture Show,* represents a very public negotiation of modalities of masculine gender performance and the interfacing of those modalities with contemporaneous concepts of sexual identity and expression circulating in film. Where *Rocky Horror* experiments with various modes of theatrical and subjective femininity, *Cruising* renegotiates a violent, hegemonic masculinity in relation to homosexuality via various objective and unironic modes that I categorize as *aspirational realist*. These modes draw on a binary conception of gender that positions masculinity as authentic, standing in opposition to characterizations of femininity as artificial, but trouble the notion of masculinity's authenticity by presenting images of gay masculinity alongside images of (ostensibly) straight masculinity and challenging the viewer to distinguish between the two. Just

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[61] John Devere, "The Men of *Cruising*," *Mandate Magazine,* 6. Franklin Pangborn was a gay character actor who appeared in so-called "pansy" roles in over 50 films between 1926 and his death in 1958.

[62] See Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*: "a specific articulation of gay masculinity that emerged in the major urban centers of gay life in the era between the Stonewall riots of 1969…and the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s… [C]lones modeled themselves upon traditional masculinity and the self-fulfillment ethic. Aping blue-collar workers, they butched it up and acted like macho men. Accepting me-generation values, they searched for self-fulfillment in anonymous sex, recreational drugs, and hard partying. Much to activists' chagrin, liberation turned the 'Boys in the Band' into doped-up, sexed-out, Marlboro men." 1-7.

as the serial killer could not reliably be distinguished from the normal man, the homosexual

could no longer be distinguished from the heterosexual. According to Nystrom:

> By the 1970s, S/M culture offered gay men not only a hypermasculine gender and sexual identity but also a set of practices that could parody—according to some enthusiasts, exorcise—the unjust power relations of larger society.[63]

Friedkin's film tracks the anxiety caused by macho gay identity in extreme detail, and it is in the

soundtrack that I locate the contours of masculinity's struggles with objectivity and sexuality.

Pierre Henry and Punk Rock

Like *Texas Chain Saw*, *Cruising* operates in a sound world that has been constructed with

concrete methods, some by choice, some by necessity. Following the success of his collaboration

with last-minute replacement Jack Nitzsche on *The Exorcist,* Friedkin decided he would bring

the producer and composer on board for *Cruising.* Nitzsche had smoothed the spaces between

Friedkin's choices of pre-existing music in *The Exorcist* with the creation of a little over a

minutes' worth of crystalline sonorities.[64] This film, however, would feature an aggressive and

hostile punk soundtrack in addition to Nitzsche's underscore, which itself would take on a more

noticeable role. Having seen Los Angeles band the Germs perform in 1979, Friedkin decided that

their sound—progenitor of what is arguably Los Angeles' most well known punk innovation,

"hardcore"—would give his film the hard musical edge it required.

    Things did not go quite as planned with the Germs, however: the unpredictable lead

singer, Darby Crash, was not accustomed to working with a producer like Nitzsche, or with

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[63] Nystrom, Derek. 2009. *Hard hats, rednecks, and macho men: class in 1970s American cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 121.

[64] Park, "The Devil's Music," 24.

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having to come up with new material on a tight schedule. These pressures were intensified by Crash's substance problems, and ultimately, though the band recorded six tracks for Nitzsche, only "Lion's Share" appears on the soundtrack.[65] But Friedkin's initial enthusiasm for the Germs has led many to mislabel the exact performing forces and arrangement for the songs featured on the soundtrack. There has been, to date, little academic and journalistic consensus regarding the artists whose songs appear in the film, either in the S/M bar scenes, or in Jack Nitzsche's "Cruising Suite," which comprises the background score, miring the film in a synthesized haze. D.A. Miller, for example, attributes all of the music in the film to the aforementioned Germs saying: "[i]t is scored to terrific original music from The Germs, whose punk pulsations, like everything else here, are too insistent to be just background."[66]

When it became apparent that The Germs would be unable to sustain the soundtrack, Nitzsche went to favored collaborator Willy DeVille, and began seeking out alternatives via Jerry Weintraub's connections at CBS and MCA.[67] In addition to DeVille and the Germs, five more artists were tapped for the soundtrack: The Cripples, John Hiatt, Mutiny, Rough Trade, and Madelynn von Ritz. So in reality, Nitzsche did not work exclusively with The Germs, and he did not compose much of the score. Instead, based on the end credits and my own close listening to the "Cruising Suite," it appears that for the score he used synthesizer-heavy jazz by Barre Phillips and Tom Browne, and repetitive guitar riffs by Ralph Towner, stitching them together

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[65] Mullen, Brendan, Don Bolles, and Adam Parfrey. 2002. *Lexicon devil: the fast times and short life of Darby Crash and the Germs.* Port Townsend, Wash: Feral House.

[66] D.A. Miller, "Cruising." *Film Quarterly* 61:2 (Winter 2007), 70-73.

[67] Weintraub worked extensively as a manager and concert promoter in addition to his career as a film producer.

with some snippets of Pierre Henry's early *musique concrète* work *La voile d'Orphée*, and a small amount of his own *musique concrète*.

Musique concrète is used as sound effect in *Cruising*, but the sound world itself—with its creaking leather, jangling keys, and strangely hermetic patches of dialogue—is interesting to consider under this rubric as well. As I mentioned earlier, Robert "Buzz" Knudson was the sound mixer on both *Texas Chain Saw* and *Cruising* and we can easily hear the particularly stylized approach to both projects. Where *Texas Chain Saw* created its entire soundtrack from sounds manipulated during postproduction, *Cruising* was forced to recreate much of its dialogue and source sound in postproduction, the result of protester interference during location shoots. Protesters would yell at performers, insert their bodies and faces into the frame, or use mirrors to disrupt the carefully calibrated lighting of the outdoor shots.[68] Disturbances such as these were common throughout production, with activists seeking to disrupt any aspect of filming, be it theatrical, visual, auditory, or psychological. According to production manager Burtt Harris, "[d]uring shooting, the noise was incessant. The demonstrators blew whistles and threw eggs."[69] Coughing fits, chanting, shouting, and whistle-blowing all contribute to the sabotage and redirection of the sound design of the film; that is, these sounds left material marks on the film's soundscape, driving Friedkin and the music, sound, and editing crew members to work around them during postproduction.

While a ruined shot can be challenging if not impossible to fix during postproduction— generally Friedkin would simply have to shoot again on location, or find a different location

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[68] Segaloff, Nat. *Hurricane Billy: the stormy life and films of William Friedkin*. New York: Morrow, 1990. 200.

[69] Quoted in Clagett, Thomas D. *William Friedkin: films of aberration, obsession, and reality*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1990. 245.

where he could continue unmolested—a ruined sound recording can be addressed in many ways

once production has wrapped. Going back and rerecording segments of dialogue during

postproduction is and was (and is) a fairly common practice in film sound, but for a film plagued

by interruptions as much as *Cruising*, postproduction also represents a chance to reorganize

material whose production did not go the way the director had planned. Thus *Cruising* booked a

Foley stage for six weeks, according to sound effects mixer Robert Glass, as opposed to the more

usual three days required for a feature-length film.[70]

The reworking of the soundscape of *Cruising* is abundantly clear throughout. Voices

attached to multiple bodies, the sound of chains and keys clanking, the creaking and straining of

leather: all of these elements are manipulated in a soundscape that more properly resembles a

musique concrète composition than a narrative film effects track structured to enhance

intelligibility and reproduce reality. Postproduction supervisor Paul Huntsman notes this aural

amplification and excess when he states: "there's probably more leather sound than you'll ever

hear in a film again."[71]

Anti/Objectivity: Music at The Mineshaft

The background songs in the club scenes provide a fascinating study in gradations of masculine

roughness, and gradations of masculine queerness. Lead singer of the Germs, Darby Crash, is

frequently described as "a closeted gay,"[72] and Carole Pope, lead singer of Rough Trade, would

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[70] Claggett, *William Friedkin,* 251.

[71] Paul Huntsman, quoted in Segaloff, *Hurricane Billy,* 200.

[72] Adams, Tim. "The death and afterlife of an LA Punk." *The Guardian.* August 23, 2008.
https://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/aug/24/popandrock1. Accessed May 7, 2018.

go on to earn the honor of having the first "lesbian-themed" song to break the Top 40 in Canada. Other artists represent marginal forms of masculinity (Jerome Brailey's lead turn in "Lump" with Parliament Funkadelic offshoot Mutiny, and Shawn Casey O'Brien's disability-themed political satire punk rock with The Cripples). This aggressively butch and masculine soundtrack led puzzled *New Yorker* critic Roger Angell to include this music in the film's damning representation of homosexuality as violent, an observation echoed almost verbatim in *The Celluloid Closet* by Vito Russo. Angell inquires:

> Why is the music that accompanies the homosexual scenes, even casual ones, such persistently loud and menacing rock, while the background score when Steve Burns is in the company of his girlfriend Nancy (Karen Allen), is a Boccherini violin suite?[73]

And Russo:

> [Th]e monster in Friedkin's horror film is homosexuality itself. Everything in the film conspires to present gay life as menacing. The background music accompanying the homosexual scenes is loud, intimidating rock, while the score when Pacino is with his girlfriend is a Boccherini violin suite.[74]

The music that accompanies these "homosexual scenes," like the scenes themselves, is hardly consistent with long entrenched, mainstream cultural understandings of male homosexuality as synonymous with effeminacy, instead embodying a butch clone aesthetic. The aggressive atmosphere engendered by this music therefore fits more easily into cultural understandings of hegemonic masculinity, even though the characters depicted are gay, and had been heretofore represented with music emphasizing their difference, deviance, or effeminacy. The film's sole representative of heterosexual femininity, Burns' girlfriend, Nancy (Karen Allen),

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[73] Roger Angell, "The Current Cinema: Mean Streets," *New Yorker* 2/18/1980, 2.

[74] Russo, *The Celluloid Closet,* 261.

exists within a private cocoon of gentle rococo instrumental music,[75] while the macho men and butch-feminine sex workers of the film rollick through a public milieu of diegetic blues, rockabilly, punk, and early New Wave. Existing, though, largely in the latter, masculine world, *Cruising* offers an exceptionally textured and impressionistic sonic depiction of masculinity. Friedkin was insistent throughout his very bitter, very public debates that *Cruising* was "real": that it was based on "real" events, contained "real" clubgoers, and "real" dialogue, all of which he had been exposed to via informants such as Jurgensen. But not once did he mention having heard a song included on the soundtrack in one of the leather bars he visited while doing research for the film. This is not to suggest that none of the music had been heard in those clubs — Rough Trade very well might have been — but at least a third of that music (specifically, the tracks by Willy DeVille, Rough Trade, and The Germs, and The Cripples) had been recorded expressly for use in the film.

However, one might think that in the hundreds of interviews and public conversations there might be some reference to the music in the clubs. This was not the case and, as demonstrated in an interview recorded for the DVD's 2007 rerelease in which Friedkin actively highlighted the inauthenticity of the music, its inappropriateness for the scenes based on its superior quality:

> It was the beginning of the punk movement and some of the groups in *Cruising* were some of the great punk and grunge artists of the 70s in Los Angeles. The music of the gay bars was not as edgy then as the music in *Cruising* is. It is very edgy and dark. The songs are great.[76]

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[75] Boccherini's famous Minuet, from the *Quintet, G 275* (not a "violin suite").

[76] William Friedkin, "Exorcising *Cruising*," featurette. *Cruising*. 2007.

As is well known, Friedkin based his representation of the clubs in *Cruising* largely on The

Mineshaft. The rough sketch I've been able to recreate of its atmosphere and the musical styles

favored in the creation thereof provides a clear counter to Friedkin's assertion. The "music of the

gay bars" may not have been as "edgy" as the music in *Cruising*. The music at The Mineshaft,

however, seems to have been. It seems likely that Nitzsche, with his connections to the Village

music scene via Willy DeVille (whose band Mink DeVille was one of CBGB's original house

bands, 1975-77) would have tuned into the sounds emanating from his gay neighbors to the west.

The musical world of The Mineshaft, then, was well known, and in Moore's words, "has taken

on mythic qualities as gay writers try to explain the powerful atmosphere of the club."[77]

In his "retrospective ethnography" of The Mineshaft for *The Journal of Homosexuality,* Joel I.

Brodsky describes the audio set-up:

> The Mineshaft was equipped with a sophisticated sound system which was used to play
> original tapes. The tapes were eclectic, but favored avant-garde, punk, and classical
> music. The sound system operated at a lower volume in the front room than in the
> playground areas.[78]

According to Patrick Moore, the atmosphere of The Mineshaft was "shaped by the

sensibility of… Wally Wallace… By all reports, the music tapes… formed much of the

atmosphere inside the clubs, leading participants through a progressively more intense journey as

the night wore on."[79] These tapes are discussed in more detail in an interview between *Drummer*

Magazine editor and gay activist Jack Fritscher, and Wallace. Fritscher summarizes:

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[77] Moore, Patrick. 2004. *Beyond shame: reclaiming the abandoned history of radical gay sexuality*. Boston, Mass: Beacon. 20.

[78] Joel I. Brodsky, "The Mineshaft: A Retrospective Ethnography," *Journal of Homosexuality* 24:3-4, 233-252.

[79] Moore, *Beyond Shame,* 29.

> The reel-to-reel music tapes played at the Mineshaft were created by Jerry Rice and Michael Fesco and Ashland and Wally Wallace, and were absolute key in a perfect mix of classical themes, jazz, energetic beat, and S&M themed lyrics, with a special fisting favorite, Tim Buckley's 'Sweet Surrender.'[80]

In response to Fritscher's question about who made the tapes and what kind of music they included, Wallace says:

> Jerry Rice… and Michael Fesco who ran the Flamingo… and a guy named Ashland, and myself [made the tapes]. I asked all kinds of people to make new tapes to fit our scene. We played anything in the world, from western to classics. A lot of classics, actually. Electronic variations on classic themes. Ella Fitzgerald, jazz. Tomita, new wave… We tried to avoid basic disco, references to females, references to 'let's dance,' things like that. Our music became famous because we didn't follow the mainstream. We were about kink. Mineshaft members knew what kink was. They weren't out on a blind date, nor to emulate the straight world in terms of sexuality, lovers, dogs, and family.[81]

As Wallace's description suggests, The Mineshaft was a self-consciously macho space. Punk musician Camille O'Grady prides herself on being one of the "three" women to be allowed in. O'Grady shares many similarities with Carole Pope, including a fascination with gay leather culture and iconography, and it seems likely that the inclusion of Pope and Madelynn von Ritz on the soundtrack may have been inspired by her regular performances at The Mineshaft:

> Wally Wallace not only let Camille in to play, he invited her to sing at the Mineshaft's 1978 anniversary party where she belted out her piss song, 'Toilet Kiss.' She wrote all of her songs from a gay man's point of view. Camille had assembled her own band dubbed 'Leather Secrets' who were a prototype of punk and new wave.[82]

The music therefore participates in the destabilizing project of the film, which from the very first scene suggests that violence and hatred are central components of *all* male sexuality,

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[80] Fritscher, Jack, and Mark Hemry. 2008. *Gay San Francisco: eyewitness Drummer : a memoir of the sex, art, salon, pop culture war, and gay history of Drummer magazine, the titanic 1970s to 1999*. San Francisco, CA: Palm Drive Publishing.

[81] Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco*, 461.

[82] Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco,* 319.

not exclusively gay or straight, hegemonic or subjugated. Two cops—played by Mike Starr and

Joe Spinnell, the latter of whom would go on to play his own psychosexually stunted killer later

that year in *Maniac* (William Lustig, 1981)—patrol the area around the leather bars. DiSimone

(Spinnell) complains about his wife who has left him. Desher (Starr) responds comfortingly by

telling him that "They're all scumbags… All of them. You're better off." The pair locks onto a

pair of sex workers in full leather drag—the only feminine drag we see in the entire film—

threatens them with arrest and forces them to perform oral sex on them in the patrol car. The

scene itself reads like an SM scenario, echoed during the "Precinct Night" scene later on in the

film (a scene from which Burns, an actual cop, is ejected for not having dressed the part). "[T]he

film's persistent comparisons of gay S/M practices to law enforcement procedures (and vice

versa),"[83] as film scholar Derek Nystrom puts it, intensifies this destabilization of sex roles

through a mapping of those fantasy roles onto the gendered job roles they emulate. Angell, the

New Yorker critic with whom this discussion began, has many questions following his

destabilizing experience with *Cruising*:

> Who is that gigantic, nearly naked figure in a precinct station (a black man wearing only
> a jockstrap and a cowboy hat) who slaps around the first supposed killer brought in? A
> *policeman?* Why is he dressed like that? Is he a rough-trade homosexual, too? …Are all
> cops, or most cops, gay?[84]

Given no real glimpse into Burns' interiority, presented only with the overwhelming

sounds and sights of gay macho masculinity and other violent and threatening masculinities, the

audience must grapple for themselves with their investment in the perverse spectacle unfolding

before them. Music seals us out of identification in the usual sense, while completely immersing

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[83] Nystrom, *Hard hats, rednecks, and macho men,* 29.

[84] Angell, "The Current Cinema," 2.

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us in what radical anti-SM feminist John Stoltenberg, sole male contributor to the 1982

collection *Against Sadomasochism*, attacked as "the convergence of what was once deemed a

'gay sensibility' with what was once deemed a 'heterosexual sensibility.' That convergence is

conspicuously a male sensibility, and it now reveals itself fully as thriving on female

degradation."[85] In *Cruising*, sexual oppression and violence exists at all levels of masculinity,

and feminine representatives are hardly necessary for its exploration. As David Savran read it:

> Relentlessly, both in the film and in so much of the discourse surrounding it, S/M is both universalized and minoritized, rendered the 'natural' and inevitable expression of an inherently violent male sexuality and at the same time a psychosexual disturbance of the few. So, on the one hand, both straight and gay masculinities, even the most apparently innocuous ones (like Ted Bailey's) are shown to be always already hostage to an S/M dynamic.[86]

The result of this universalization *cum* minoritization of S/M is a blurring of the lines

between hegemonic masculinity and the queer Other that puts it on. Friedkin's film is most often

interpreted as suggesting that homosexuality is inherently violent, continuing a long line of

thinking about homosexuality that asserts its deviance and pathology. Drawing on

contemporaneous discourses of serial killing, the film also betrays an anxiety that the very

features of hegemonic masculinity that differentiate it from queer masculinity are themselves

subject to manipulation: that masculinity is not a reliable indicator of sexual normality. The

enthusiasm of the leather extras in the film regarding their representing an embodiment that

would counter "stereotypes" about the effeminacy of homosexuality registered both a liberatory

impulse and a misogynist one, garbled in the thoroughly macho soundtrack of the film.

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[85] John Stoltenberg, "Sadomasochism: Eroticized Violence, Eroticized Powerlessness." In Linden, Robin Ruth. 1982. *Against sadomasochism: a radical feminist analysis.* East Palo Alto: Frog in the well, 125.

[86] Savran, David. 1998. *Taking it like a man: white masculinity, masochism, and contemporary American culture*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press. 216.

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The incoherent world of *Cruising*—a film that, like *Texas Chain Saw*, made many editorial concessions in exchange for a lesser rating—is created in part through a highly stylized soundscape that blurs lines between gay sexuality, misogyny, hegemonic masculinity, and the many nonhegemonic iterations that both shore it up and undermine its claims to authenticity. The *concrete* sound aesthetic in *Cruising* is almost entirely devoid of humor; gay macho's mirroring of hegemonic masculinity and eroticization of sexual oppression is presented to the audience as seriously as possible. Whether the nightmarish tableaux presented are dystopian or utopian, though, is a question the audience must answer for themselves.

V. Conclusion

Concrète Surfaces and Soundtracks

In this chapter, I have presented two differing examples of what I have labeled a *concrète* sensibility, a sensibility that, instead of using camp's characteristic contrast between masculine and feminine to underscore the conventions and artifice and theatricality of gender, uses a performance of sameness and comparison to undertake the same kind of procedure. In *Texas Chain Saw*, this procedure equates the normative family with the pathological family, and in *Cruising* this procedure presents heterosexual oppression alongside misogyny with homosexual S/M. Nystrom labels this "extra masculinity," stating:

> This post-Stonewall project [the development of the leather/clone aesthetic] did not so much subvert the naturalness of [hegemonic] masculinity as place alongside it another kind of masculinity, which looked very much like the first—an extra body, so to speak. This new, extra masculinity activated the same circuits of desire that attended the first, only to foreground the erotic nature of this desire.[87]

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[87] Nystrom, *Hard hats, rednecks, and macho men,* 154.

As Newton's discussion of female impersonation suggests, masculinity is rarely understood to be a performed or artificial 'surface' that reflects a hidden, masculine essence. Masculinity is not regularly seen as being put on, at least not in the same way as femininity. However, it can be: as illustrated quite clearly in scenes in which Burns scowls at his reflection in the mirror as he pumps iron and defines his thick eyebrows with mascara.

In my definition of this sensibility, I have provided details of each soundtrack's embodiment of the New Hollywood's preference for musical realism, and the ways that embodiment is enmeshed with concurrent discourses of hegemonic masculinity's investments in objectivity. This enmeshment is complicated and rendered especially anxious by the nascent discourse of serial killing and sexual deviance that attempted to locate psychosexual deviance in a pathological family structure. Finally, I have attempted to track each soundtrack's trajectory where hegemonic masculinity and its Others—rural and queer—are concerned, to unpack the affects that accompany this trajectory. *Texas Chain Saw* employs a raucous and high-octane combination of chainsaw sounds and screaming as the medium—the "fantastical gap"—through which to compare normative and pathological family formations, ultimately suggesting that the latter is simply a reflection of the most repressed aspects of the former.

Cruising obsessively labors to realistically recreate the sounds accompanying explicit scenes in which the oppressive power of hegemonic masculinity is revealed as such, and subsequently eroticized: a scene it observes as objectively as possible, an observation that highlights the fragile nature of the objectivity on which hegemonic masculinity stakes its power. In their deployment of the denaturalizing strategies of *muqisue concrète*, these films ask the audience to consider the ideological relationship and visual similarities between hegemonic

masculinity and its rural and queer Others as indicative of an internal incoherence and instability at the core of hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter Five: Conclusion
The "Basic Formula" Revisited

Throughout *Monstrous Resonance,* I have argued for the horror soundtrack's importance as an archive in interdisciplinary and intersectional histories of sexuality. The genre's polymorphous crystallizations of pathology and perversity—often mixing racialized and gendered logics in its representations of sexuality—along with its thoroughgoing ambivalence, is enabled and textured by the genre's direct and near-denotative musical devices and distinctive "sound architecture[s]."[1] Working with and against audience expectation, the seventies horror soundtrack often aims for an immersive affective environment, whether the affect in question moves through Classical Hollywood's empathetic devices or New Hollywood, realist or anempathetic ones.

Music generates, if taking the emotivist tack (represents if taking the cognitivist), the genre's traditional aversive circuits of fear and disgust, the horror musical's affectionate and contemptuous camp and satire, the "sex-vampire" film's experimental and exploitative sensuality, or the slasher film's cold realism and graphic violence. The horror soundtrack also often aims to stimulate the bodies of the audience directly and immediately in pursuit of that goal, a quality that for some places the horror soundtrack closer to sound effects than to music. These embodied qualities and their relation to representations that broil connotatively with sexual meaning—sometimes thinly veiled, sometimes more overt—are what have drawn me to the genre as an academic. I, like Wood, believe that there is great diagnostic value in the study of the horror film, and that the soundtrack in particular provides a wealth of archival information concerning the circulation of affect. If, as Sontag asserts, sensibility is "not only [an era's] most

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[1] Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound,* 93.

decisive but also its most perishable aspect,"[2] then I have argued throughout that the soundtrack is one of the most important preservationist sites that exist.

In the Introduction, "Affective Economies of the Horror Soundtrack," I set down my theoretical and analytical approaches, united in a focus on emotions and the body and their marginal or minoritarian cultural location. Functioning as a system of excess within an excessive genre, the soundtrack in the horror film is often categorized as a particularly low form of music, if not lumped in with sound effects entirely (this on the basis of the ways in which it attempts to solicit an immediate, embodied response in the audience). What can horror soundtracks tell us about attitudes towards sexuality, and by extension, what can they tell us about those subjects whose oppression depends upon an alignment with damning sexual stereotypes? These are the two basic questions I have explored in *Monstrous Resonance,* and in the asking I have, by necessity, found myself eschewing singular focus on any particular sexual practices, identities, or subjects. These practices, identities, and subjects are all intertwined in a broader affective economy, as I demonstrated with my opening discussion of Joseph Epstein's homophobic musings on sexual identity, and the soundtrack allows me to leave them more or less intertwined.

As Ahmed's invocation of Fanon vividly demonstrates, emotions do not necessarily move from the interior to the exterior (the subject who "has" feelings about objects) or move from the exterior to the interior (the subject who learns and absorbs feelings from the outside world), but instead create "the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside to begin with."[3] Fear can therefore be seen as transforming bodies into its subjects and objects, securing relationships between the fearful and the fearing in

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[2] Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 65.

[3] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10.

ways that limit the social space of the bodies in question, their mobility. *Monstrous Resonance* has documented three characteristic patterns through which these aversive relationships have been mapped musically, a mapping that has consequences on the securing of those relationships in the physical world.

Each chapter traces the outline of a differing iteration of Wood's basic, three-part formula—the Monster, normality, and the relationship between the two—focusing on specific monstrous figures and the musical strategies used to frame them. In Chapter Two. "Monstrous Genre, Monstrous Gender, and the Cult Sensibility in the Horror Film Musical," I discuss the concurrence of differently gendered sensibilities—camp (feminine/effeminate) and "paracinematic"[4] (masculine)—in the cult horror film musical (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Phantom of the Paradise*). In Chapter Three, "Consciousness Raising and the Message Sensibility in the Minoritarian Vampire Film," I explore the ways in which minoritarian filmmakers and performers—white lesbian feminists and Black men and women—make use of the audiovisual conventions of art-horror and exploitation film to depict the processes of consciousness raising and liberation: what I call a message sensibility, communicated by way of the vampire seduction narrative (*Daughters of Darkness, Ganja and Hess*). In both of these chapters, I analyze the fantastical soundtracks these films deploy in service of their aesthetic and political goals, stated and unstated.

These chapters focus on subjectivities denied legitimacy under heteropatriachy and white supremacy, subjectivities frequently positioned as the monstrous Other to white cisheteromasculinity. In the final chapter, "Masculinity and the *Concrète* Sensibility in the Slasher Film**,"** I turn my focus from the fantastical to the realist, considering two depictions of

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[4] Sconce, "Trashing the Academy," 101.

pathological white masculinity—rural and gay (*The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Cruising*)—and the *concrète* sensibility I theorize is often called upon to represent it. Where the cult and message discourses accompanying horror musicals and art-horror exploitation meditate on the artifice, theatricality, and objectification of femininity and the colonization and epidermalization of Blackness, *concrète* discourses in horror tend to meditate on the supposed authenticity and nontheatricality of majoritarian masculinity, as well as its unsentimentality.

I study the representation of sexuality (perennially disparaged in the academy) through an analysis of music (an overlooked and deemphasized topic in both film studies and musicology) in the horror film (a debased genre). The films I analyze all occupy a marginalized space in relation to mainstream media scholarship and reception, along with other devalued genres such as melodrama and pornography, because they revel in graphic displays of emotion, violence, and sexuality: elements of film that stimulate the body and emotions of the viewer. Likewise, the formal analysis of film music style has, until quite recently, been marginalized within film studies with disproportionate focus given to the study of the narrative and/or visual language and aesthetics. It was my hope that when combined these marginalized approaches would produce a method of audiovisual interpretation uniquely attuned to areas of cultural production that are often left unanalyzed because of their close engagement with emotions and the body. It is essential that we be able to engage with these volatile and tricky areas of human existence and creativity, and this dissertation develops the tools to do so, vis-à-vis a three-pronged formal-historical-theoretical approach to the films and concurrent public discourses of sexuality.

My formal analyses of the relationships between music, characters, image, and narrative in film are paramount to this project. While feminist and queer musicology in recent decades have developed an impressive array of tools for analyzing gender, sexuality, race, and a host of

other aspects of identity and experience in the styles and forms of music, film music generally

and the horror film music specifically, remains relatively underanalyzed. My historical

contextualization unfolds along two lines: an examination of the material history of film

soundtrack production, and an examination of contemporaneous cinematic, musical, and political

public discourses of sexuality. While film music studies has expanded its scope in recent years,

moving from more-or-less decontextualized formal analysis and "great works" approaches to

collaborations between well known directors and composers, there is still much work to be done.

In the documentation of soundtrack composition and production practices, especially the

production of soundtracks featuring pre-existing and/or originally recorded songs. Furthermore,

though an approach examining film music as a powerful ideological tool was pioneered by

Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler early on in *Composing for the Films* (1947)*, there remains a

dearth on the subject relative to historical studies of other art forms. My project addresses these

absences by combining a material approach to production history with an ideological critique

undertaken through the examination of contemporaneous political discourses of sexuality.

Finally, a central goal of my work is the expansion of an affective archive of queer

negativity. Muñoz, Halberstam, and others have criticized Edelman and Bersani for their singular

focus on sexuality (i.e. white, gay, male subjectivity in which sexuality is the sole source of

difference from the dominant subjectivity), but urge scholars not to abandon the project of queer

negativity. Muñoz labels his queer-of-color project "anti-antirelational,"[5] while Halberstam

provides a list of the "occlude[d]…suite of affectivities associated with another kind of politics

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[5] Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising utopia: the then and there of queer futurity*. New York: New York University Press.

and a different form of negativity."[6] This theoretical vector is inspired by my interest in tracking

intra- and intergroup minoritarian debate on the meanings of various identifications,

counteridentifications, and disidentifications with majoritarian sexual ideology, and can be traced

throughout each chapter.

The horror musical, seeming to exist in the camp archive, in fact represents a more

conflicted constellation of affects, marked by upward and downward forms of contempt resulting

in conflicting uses and representations of femininity and effeminacy that have spawned decades

of bitter antagonism between minoritarian subjects with differing relationships to and

investments in majoritarian or mainstream forms of femininity. The minoritarian vampire film

embraces the "low" and "high" equally, using two conflicting yet equally over determined

aesthetic body genre systems to make space for the transmission of a "total experience" of

consciousness raising. Rage against objectification and epidermalization moves through open

eroticism, and the audience is granted intimate access to a variety of viewpoints ranging from

assimilationist to radical. But the general aim of the sound architecture is of conversion. Finally,

the slasher uses realist and *concrète* musical strategies to contemplate and problematize the

seeming "authenticity" of majoritarian masculinity, an anxious probing that leaves the audience

to navigate disorienting soundscapes uncannily constructed from everyday sonic materials

(roaring chainsaws, creaking leather) rendered strange.

In these films, sexuality is that which threatens to undo normality, a threat that sometimes

repels and disgusts, sometimes compels and entices, and more often than not oscillates rapidly

and unpredictably between the two poles of affective response, engaging a number of other

affective responses in the process. These opposing poles, labeled by Wood in the case of *Der*

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[6] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 109.

Erlkönig as "the strife of repression [and] the relaxation of play and dance,"[7] mark the boundaries of the affective realm of the horror film and, Wood argues, the boundaries of the affective realm of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. Through empathetic and anempathetic musical procedures, subjective and objective, the audience is drawn to and repelled by the Monster, and sometimes normality as well. Music is an integral part of the engagement of these affective responses to sexuality in the horror film and, I argue, an integral part of the affective responses to sexuality in the broader political sphere as well, yet it is rarely considered in literature on the subject. *Monstrous Resonance* enriches the fields of musicology, film studies, and gender and sexuality studies in its interdisciplinary approach to sexuality in the soundtrack.

In organizing my work by figure and aligning those figures with a sensibility, many topics were left unexplored, and perhaps an artificial sense of sameness bestowed. What, for example, of the genre's many other figures (witches, demons, animals, aliens, ghosts, zombies, etc.) and what of the sensibilities they tend to circulate? An expanded view of these Monsters would only strengthen and add depth and detail to my claim that the horror soundtrack allows for a uniquely intertwined consideration of cultural fears around difference. And what of films with Monsters I have considered (mad scientists, vampires, slashers and serial killers) whose musical representation produces affects that contradict the claims I have made here? Exploring not just patterns of similarity but patterns of difference in sensibility would likewise add depth and detail to my claims about the circulation of horror around the Others of dominant ideology.

But I am most disappointed at my inability to include one particular configuration of monstrosity that connects my work to the work of the first wave of feminist horror film scholars I credit with initially inspiring it: the vengeful victim. As suggested by Williams, often in cases

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[7] Wood, *American Nightmare*, 32.

in which the Monster is human, the site/sight of horror is the mutilated body of the victim, and

not the Monster itself. In these films, she argues, "the recognition of affinity between woman and

monster of the classic horror film gives way to pure identity: she *is* the monster, her mutilated

body is the only visible horror."[8] Of all the films discussed here, *Last House*, with its rape

revenge narrative arc, comes closest to approaching the phenomenon described by Williams, but

because the girls are both killed, it is the parents that must exact revenge. The girls are not

agents, but instead representatives of normality who fall victim to monstrous violence, and the

true objects of critique—the parents—are the embodiment of that normality's bloody retribution.

Both Monsters and parents are implicated in the film's majoritarian, satirical critique of

dominant ideology. But where does this leave the girls?

Hess interprets the physical, gendered reality represented on screen much in this way,

musing that *Last House* is

> about a heinous crime, but if you look at it from a spiritual point of view, if you can get
> into that, it's about rebirth. It's about the young generation pushing from underground,
> striking out to find their own world. *Last House on the Left* is really about the girls,
> which is why that lyric 'the road that leads to nowhere' is a central part of the score. The
> road *does* lead to nowhere, unless we get our act together. But there is always going to be
> a road, and there are always going to be kids taking that road… the fact that those two
> girls dies in the movie is immaterial.[9]

The immateriality of the girls' deaths consists precisely in the ubiquity of their

constitution as victims. Means Coleman traces this to the very beginnings of cinema in her

consideration of early representations of Black monstrosity: Gus in *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W.

Griffiths, 1915) and Frankenstein's monster in Whale's 1931 film adaptation in particular.

> Though the films appear nearly 15 years apart, spanning the silent and sound era, such a
> comparison is apropos as both films capably center the audience's attention on a

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[8] Williams, "When the Woman Looks," 33.

[9] Hess, quoted in Szulkin, *Wes Craven's Last House on the Left, 126.*

dangerous thing, highlighting and signifying monstrosity through the juxtaposition of a triumvirate of purity—Whiteness, womanhood, and child. What becomes central is how these films variously treat their monsters and how they ask the audience to feel about them.[10]

As this dissertation suggests, white femininity and white youth—the most vulnerable representatives of normality—are often called upon to serve in the role of victim in the horror film, while racial and sexual minoritarian subjects are often called upon to serve in the role of Monster. But what happens when one of these "triumvirate of purity" subjects is a Monster, and one of these racial and sexual minoritarian subjects is a victim? I have hinted at this dynamic in Chapter Three, where I gesture towards the differing implications the white lesbian and Black vampire present for those subjects' historical relationships with and constitution via discourses of sexual deviance. But what of examples in which the victim and Monster exist no just in the horror of the mutilated female body, but in a single monstrous figure?

Take two films that, from very different vantage points, adopt strikingly literal approaches to the representation of minoritarian sexual monstrosity: Jamaa Fanaka's *Welcome Home, Brother Charles* (1975)[11] and Brian De Palma's *Carrie* (1976). *Welcome Home* is concerned with an incarcerated Black victim of police brutality ("Brother Charles" who is beaten and, it is implied, partially castrated by a racist cop wielding a radioactive knife). When Charles (Marlo Monte) is released, he discovers that he can preternaturally will his penis to grow, and subsequently seeks out all of the representatives of the juridical system that imprisoned him to exact his revenge: their deaths by phallic strangulation, preceded by the seduction/hypnosis of

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[10] Means Coleman, *Horror Noire,* 24.

[11] Produced as a student project while in film school at UCLA, later distributed by Crown International under the title *Soul Vengeance* in the declining years of Hollywood's Blaxploitation cycle.

their wives. *Carrie* is concerned with a much-abused teen (Sissy Spacek) who discovers her own supernatural abilities at the onset of her period.

Carrie's narrative trajectory, of course, can be accommodated within the structures of purity outlined by Means Coleman. The audience is positioned ambivalently towards Carrie because of her abject powers, but also invited into a particularly intimate relation via an establishing shower sequence scored by Pino Donaggio. A slowly swelling crescendo in the strings, gently undulating piano arpeggiation, and beats accentuated by celesta flourishes, the music floats the audience into the girls' locker room shower where the protagonist is bathing. Carrie's theme, a consonant flute melody, aligns with the pink and blonde tones of the sequence, highlighting the white delicacy and femininity that will soon be shattered by the discovery of menstrual blood. Throughout the film, figures from school, home, and religion torment Carrie, and the audience, initially apprehending her as sexual object, has little choice but to identify with her, even when her flute melody gives way to shrill and dissonant tone clusters borrowed directly from Herrmann's score for *Psycho*.

In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* Clover uses Carrie to introduce the idea that men might be asked to identify with a feminine figure in film. Carrie White, eponymous heroine and monster of Stephen King's hit 1973 novel, is, in King's words "a social outsider in every situation."[12] He suggests that by rolling the Monster and victim functions into one, he has created a figure that can appeal to anyone "who has ever had his gym shorts pulled down in Phys Ed or his glasses thumb-rubbed in study hall."[13] Writing in 1987, Clover is struck by the suggestion of this remark. "What this 'gym shorts and glasses' remark of King's admits, glancingly but

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[12] King, *Danse Macabre,* cited Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 1.

[13] King cited in Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 4.

unmistakably, is a possibility that film theory, film criticism, cultural studies analysis, movie reviews, and popular political commentary seldom entertain: the possibility that male viewers are quite prepared to identify not just with screen females, but with screen females in the horror-film world, screen females in fear and pain."[14] Clover goes on to argue "that by any measure, horror is far more victim-identified than the standard view would have it—which raises questions about film theory's conventional assumption that the cinematic apparatus is organized around the experience of a mastering, voyeuristic gaze."[15]

Pushing back against critics—popular and academic alike—who argued that the horror film's depictions of violence against women were variously cause and symptom of deep-seated societal problems, Clover argued that "horror is far more victim-identified than the standard view would have it,"[16] and that ultimately the sadism (gendered masculine) of which the genre was, and is, so often accused, was matched if not overridden by masochism (gendered feminine). The flexibility she traces in processes of identification in horror film allowed for bold reinterpretations of gender in the genre, based on the reinterpretation of the diegetic relationships between Monsters/killers and their victims, and the relationship projected audiences have or are invited to have with those characters. The function of a character type, she states, "preexist[s] and constitute[s] character. Although a gorilla, a blob, a shark, and a motel attendant are superficially very different entities, they all do more or less the same job, narratively speaking… Likewise, the categories victim and hero, roles no less prefabricated and predictable for their

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[14] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 5.

[15] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 8-9.

[16] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 8-9.

being performed by one or many, tall or short, dark or light, male or female."[17] However, the majority of representations under discussion in Clover's book do offer a fairly stable gendering of these roles: victim, female; monster, male.

Clover goes on to consider the victim: "gender inheres in the function itself—there is something about the victim function that wants manifestation in a female, and something about the monster and the hero functions that wants expression in a male. Sex, in this universe, proceeds from gender, not the other way around. A figure does not cry and cower because she is a woman, she is a woman because she cries and cowers. And a figure is not a psychokiller because he is a man, he is a man because he is a psychokiller."[18] What Clover does *not* consider is the ways in which race inflect this dynamic and these figures (she glosses this in "dark or light" but goes no further). Means Coleman elaborates on this in her discussion of the trope of the "enduring woman": her argument being that Black women in horror films have access neither to the desexualized androgyny of the Final Girl, nor to the pure victimhood of the countless victims, who must embody normality.[19]

Brother Charles' function as victim/Monster is therefore of a different constitution than Carrie's, in that the Black male figure occupies a fundamentally different position in affective economies of fear (as illustrated by Ahmed's invocation of Fanon). His victimhood and monstrosity are therefore quite distinct. Unlike Carrie's configuration of victimhood and monstrosity—represented as different states of being in both the contrasting musical accompaniment and her physicality—Charles' is homogenous. His theme first occurs attached to

[17] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 12.

[18] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 13.

[19] Means Coleman, *Horror Noire,* 131-8.

an image of the symbol of his monstrosity, not directly to his own image. The opening credits

consist of a long and flexible shot that pans around a carved figurine with a giant phallus.

Charles' theme (composed by William Anderson), is the combination of four sounds: a

saxophone producing a repeating octave jump, frenetic simian hooting, an almost imperceptible

whooshing wind sound, and uneven timpani rolls that give way to thunder crashes and hand

drumming. The camera slowly zooms in on the figurine, and the music builds to a climax as the

camera regards its profile and the size of the phallus becomes visible. This music occurs both

during the montage of stills depicting Charles' imprisonment, and all of his seductions and

murders, tying these to an abstracted conception of a particularly male Black sexual monstrosity.

After the credits, the film fades to red and into a close-up of Charles' face. There is a

moment of musical silence—though we still hear the calm twittering of birds and distant

traffic—and then the previous texture is taken up again, as Charles surveys the ground below (he

has been cornered by police on top of a building). The sequence, we will see, is from the end of

the film, and is strikingly similar to the one that concludes *Blacula*. The police have brought his

wife, Carmen, to try to talk him down. She appears to acquiesce to their pleas, and moves toward

Charles. At the opening of this film, this fades directly into the events that led to this situation:

Charles' arrest and brutalization by racist cops. At the end of the film, a wobbly electric guitar

moves up stepwise chromatically, until Carmen, instead of trying to coax Charles down screams

"jump!" The frame freezes on Carmen's anguished face, with the words "Let them indulge their

pride if thinking I am destroyed is a comfort to them; let it be." The end credits then roll to a

gentle song "Imagine" by Andre Douglass and performed by Douglass and his group the Gliders.

While this is an anempathetic choice, the effect is not one of stark contrast as with *Last House*

following the brutal conclusion of the revenge sequence—Mr. Collingwood dismembering Krug

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with a chainsaw—but instead one of quiet introspection. Framing the narrative with Charles'

impossible situation—trapped by institutional forces between incarceration and suicide—effects

a different kind of audience attachment to the victim/Monster figure.

In future iterations of my work, I will pursue the mapping of the figure of the victim in

far more detail, beginning with examples such as *Carrie* and *Welcome Home Brother Charles*

that take pains to help audiences identify with a character that will transform into a Monster

somewhere along the line. These mobile configurations are particularly suited, I think, to the

kinds of tracing projects outlined by Stilwell in "The Fantastical Gap," projects tracing the

trajectories of identification between audience and film. How do horror films produce the desired

affects and responses in their audiences? What is the significance of these affects and responses?

While there have been two anthologies—Neil Lerner's *Music in the horror film: listening to fear*

(2008) and Philip Hayward's *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror cinema* (2009)—aiming to

play the "ear" to Clover's "eye of horror,"[20] these collections stop short of attempting any kind

of theorizing on a wider scale.

In *Monstrous Resonance* I began a project of such wider theorizing, leveraging the very

qualities for which the horror soundtrack is often derided—in academic and popular circles,

musicological and cinematic alike: its tendency toward denotation and its visceral directness—in

service of a diagnostic cultural end: the examination of the circulation of fear, disgust, contempt,

joy, and curiosity, to name a few, around sexuality. I dove deep into debates over the

representation of sexuality, uncovering contentious histories in which various minoritarian

counter- and disidentifications with majoritarian ideology via horror film clashed, jockeying for

position. In Muñoz's words:

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[20] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws,* 202.

Although the various processes of identification are fraught, those subjects who are hailed by more than one minority identity component have an especially arduous time of it. Subjects who are outside the purview of dominant public spheres encounter obstacles in enacting identifications. Minority identifications are often neglectful or antagonistic to other minoritarian positionalities. This is as true of different theoretical paradigms as it is of everyday ideologies.[21]

Over the course of these five chapters, I have aspired to the creation of a method that

allows for these forms of neglect and antagonism to live and breathe, that their examination can

best be undertaken in the ambivalent and shadowy realms of the horror soundtrack. In short,

what I undertake in this project is the historicization of the affects and sensibilities that

accompany, circulate, complicate, reinforce, and undermine oppression. I have attempted to

capture some of these actions in their speculative motions across the here and now and the there

and then—within minoritarian communities and discourses, and between those discourses and

the dominant ideology with which they are linked in fearful relation—through the

incontrovertibly and unabashedly embodied horror soundtrack. For a project that requires such a

great amount of interpretation the audiovisual figurations and conventions of American film, the

premise is surprisingly literal, which I feel I must assert here, at the end, after a serpentine path

through the irrationality of human emotional responsivity and the vagaries of audiovisual

meaning. Horror films represent the erotic dimensions of the relationship between normality and

its Monsters (dominant ideology and its Others). Soundtracks represent the affective economy of

a film, often endeavoring to ensnare an audience into the mimicry of the emotional machinations

depicted and explored. The horror soundtrack is an affective archive of sexuality, and should be

regarded as such.

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[21] Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 8.

Appendix: Filmography

Altered States (Ken Russell, 1980)

Amityville Horror, The (Stuart Rosenberg, 1979)

Beast with Five Fingers, The (Robert Florey, 1946)

Black Cat, The (Edgar Ulmer, 1934)

The Black Hole (Gary Nelson, 1979)

Blacula (William Marshall, 1972)

Bride of Frankenstein (James Whale, 1935)

Carrie (Brian De Palma, 1976)

Cruising (William Friedkin, 1980)

Curse of Frankenstein, The (Terence Fisher, 1957)

Daughters of Darkness (Harry Kümel, 1971)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Victor Fleming, 1941)

Dracula (Todd Browning, 1931)

Enter the Dragon (Robert Clouse, 1973)

The Evil of Frankenstein (Freddie Francis, 1964)

Exorcist, The (William Friedkin, 1973)

Exterminating Angel, The (Luis Bunuel, 1968)

Fearless Vampire Killers, The (Roman Rolanski, 1967)

Flesh for Frankenstein (Paul Morrissey, 1973)

Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931)

Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell (Terence Fisher, 1974)

Frankenstein Created Woman (Terence Fisher, 1967)

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed (Terence Fisher, 1969)

Friday the 13th (Sean Cunningham, 1981)

Ganja and Hess (Bill Gunn, 1973)

Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978)

Haunting, The (Robert Wise, 1963)

Home for the Holidays (John Llewellyn Moxey, 1972)

The Horror of Frankenstein (Jimmy Sangster, 1970)

The Hunger (Tony Scott, 1983)

I Was a Teenage Frankenstein (Herbert L. Strock, 1957)

Interview with a Vampire (Neil Jordan, 1994)

Jeanne Dielman (Chantal Akerman, 1975)

Last House on the Left (Wes Craven, 1972)

Last Year at Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961)

Lifeboat (Alfred Hitchcock, 1944)

Lust for a Vampire (Jimmy Sangster, 1971)

Manhunter (Michael Mann, 1986)

Night of the Living Dead (George A. Romero, 1968)

Notte, La (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1961)

Omen, The (Richard Donner, 1976)

Pan's Labyrinth (Guillermo del Toro, 2006)

Phantom of the Paradise (Brian De Palma, 1974)

Pink Flamingos (John Waters, 1972)

Profondo Rosso (Dario Argento, 1975)

Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, 1982)

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

La ragazza che sapeva troppo (Mario Bava, 1963)

Rebecca (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940)

Revenge of Frankenstein, The (Terence Fisher, 1958)

Rocky Horror Picture Show, The (Jim Sharman, 1975)

Scream Bloody Murder (Marc B. Ray, 1973)

Shape of Water, The (Guillermo del Toro, 2017)

Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1992)

Silent Night, Bloody Night (Theodore Gershuny, 1972)

Texas Chain Saw Massacre, The (Tobe Hooper, 1974)

Topo, El (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 1970)

Twins of Evil (John Hough, 1972)

Vampire Lovers, The (Roy Ward Baker, 1970)

Viol du vampire, Le (Jean Rollin, 1968)

The Watcher in the Woods (John Hough, 1980)

Welcome Home, Brother Charles! (Jamaa Fanaka, 1975)

Wizard of Oz, The (Victor Fleming et. al., 1939)

Wolfman, The (George Waggner, 1941)

Young Frankenstein (Mel Brooks, 1974)

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