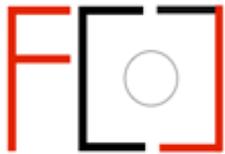


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DOI: 10.15664/fcj.v20i0.2512



Frames Cinema Journal

ISSN 2053-8812

Issue 20 (Winter 2022)

<http://www.framescinemajournal.co>



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Emotional Registers of Queer Representation: Gothic Expression in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Vivienne Medrano’s “Addict”

John Francis

Whatever happened to Fay Wray? Even as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (*TRHPS*) (1975) cemented itself within popular culture as a queer cult extravaganza, many of its references to early Hollywood science fiction and horror cinema icons and experiences fell by the wayside. The power that the film and the midnight, costumed sing-a-long screenings retain is its orgiastic appeal of queer excess played out across a backdrop of horror and Gothic genre tropes, functionally substantiating the production of a popular queer epistemology indelibly linked to the cultural development of speculative fiction. In essence, *TRHPS* successfully exercised in popular imagination the potentiality of Gothic and Horror to represent queerness within the phenomenological production of emotional affects. The “Floor Show” sequence at the climax of *TRHPS*, consisting of the songs “Rose Tint My World,” “Don’t Dream It,” and “Wild and Untamed Thing,” summarises the film’s thesis on interplay between queerness and speculative genres. This thesis links queer survivability to emotional and physical excesses beyond the boundaries of normative practice. *TRHPS* tells us to embrace the transgressive aspects of existential difference. In turn, Vivienne Medrano’s animated music video “Addict” rearticulates *TRHPS*’s polemic while also pushing deeper into the chaotic and contradictory repertoire of affects within the realm of the abject. Namely, “Addict” embraces the dangers of being the abject where survival is sometimes couched within self-destructive pursuits of fleeting moments of pleasure. As a result, rather than showcase a representation of queerness drawn from the neoliberal frameworks of easily digestible visibility, *TRHPS* and “Addict” showcase representation divulged from the emotional registers of queerness aided by the lexicon of speculative fiction genres.

Queer Representation: Thinking Beyond the Human Subject

The contentious issue at the heart of queer experience is the position of identity, subject, and self. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner position queer social practices as resistance to heteronormativity.¹ This resistance is met by neoliberalism working to arrest the elasticity and fluidic character, what Lisa Duggan calls “the new homonormativity”.² This homonormativity, in turn, supplies the state with ideal subjects to redefine the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in advancing the state’s political and economic strategies internationally, what Jasbir Puar defines as homonationalism, or “an exceptional form of national homonormativity”.³ Following Althusser’s theory of ideology, homonormativity functions through multiple layers of society including cultural institutions and practices. As Rosemary Hennessy contends, the centres of cultural critique and education, primarily within the United States, are implicated within the (re)production of neoliberal ideologies.⁴ Within this system, queerness is provided a tenuous visibility through commodification which “invariably depends on the lives and labour of invisible others”.⁵

Normativity is seductive precisely because it carries the promise of safety and security. The further one resides from the socially proscribed dimensions of normativity, the greater the sacrifice required to appear as normal. Since normativity is marked by more than just sexual practices,⁶ the dimensions of race and ethnicity, of psychic and bodily ability, class and citizenship, figure into even further proscriptions that one does not always have the privilege to “fix,” what Puar calls “biopolitical failures”.⁷ When Sara Ahmed argues for the effects of deviation and disorientation, as produced through a politics informed by how one lives, they provide as an example “the very act of describing queer gatherings as family gatherings is to have joy in the uncanny effect of a familiar form becoming strange”.⁸ Ahmed’s turn to queer phenomenology centres on “a way of inhabiting the world by giving “support” to whose lives

and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place,” an orientation “toward queer moments of deviation”.⁹ Rather than treat queer representation as those “representational mandates of visibility politics”,¹⁰ I argue that queer representation must be an affect, assembled by recognising one’s proximity to feelings, emotions, exclamations, and dis/order. These queer affects are central to how Gothic and Gothic-derived genres like Horror, function.

(Dis)orienting Space: Chaos, Void, and the Inscrutability of Affects

At the heart of the Gothic genre is the conflict between the rational and irrational. Queer affects in Gothic media come from the structural components of the genre—components like plots, tropes, language, and composition—and the genre’s cultural, material, and historical dimensions. The historic origin of the term “Gothic” emerges as a derogatory trope in enlightenment period art that failed to cater to “neo-Classical tastes” and the growing fetish of rational humanism.¹¹ From the outset, then, the assumption of Gothic, either by means of dismissive critique or enthusiastic association, is an alignment with “low” taste and popular culture. Fred Botting attaches two components to the historical emergence of Gothic media and subsequent relegation to the world of disreputable pop cultural production. As the genre developed with greater economic mobility and literacy, its popularity was decoded as “a symptom of a voraciously consumeristic commercial culture in which pleasure, sensation and excitement come from the thrills of a darkly imagined counter-world”.¹² Hence, “Gothic” was saddled as both expressively indulgent and tarnished by capital. At the same time, the subject material of Gothic media embraced diverse flows of transgressive desires that “predate sexuality’s codification” in the nineteenth century,¹³ but then they develop alongside one another. The lurid gravity of Gothic pulls from the life codified by society as right and proper with the promises of pleasures beyond the bounds of binary registers of good or bad. Mair Rigby suggests that in the Gothic, “we really recognise... our own construction as uncanny

beings, bodies of knowledge that ought to be repressed”.¹⁴ These cultural links between Gothic and the queerness construct a recursive pattern of recognition and adaptation, constantly pushing the boundaries for what is imaginable for queer life. Gothic enables a “low theory” of queerness in culture, enabling the recognition of life beyond the normative.¹⁵

Emotions are interstitial, suspended between recognition and inscrutability. This leads to the need to “reign in” or “tame” our “irrational” emotions. The irrational world, unlike the rational world, contains all that cannot be codified in language and emotions and provides us with a glimpse into what might reside in such a space “beyond imagining”. Manuel Aguirre argues that “Gothic can be said to postulate two zones... the human domain of rationality and intelligible events; on the other hand, the world of the sublime, terrifying, chaotic Numinous which transcends human reason... These are separated by some manner of threshold, and plots invariably involve movement from one site to the other”.¹⁶ Aguirre invokes the Mandelbrot set fractal as a metaphor for Gothic structure,¹⁷ highlighting how in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* “distance is lengthened through partition, thresholds multiply, each move creates ripples which generate new obstacles and dangers... the whole threatening to stretch advance ad infinitum, to indefinitely frustrate it, or to consume it”.¹⁸ The queer affect here is in feeling the desire to embrace the space beyond, to embrace those expressions deemed irrational, abhorrent, or excessive. That “Gothic” space is best expressed by Karen Barad’s poetic experiments in trans theory and theoretical physics described as “the materiality of imagining together with the imaginative capacities of materiality... Electrical energy runs through disparate topics in what follows: lightning, primordial ooze, frogs, Frankenstein, trans rage, queer self-birthing, the quantum vacuum, virtual particles, queer touching, bioelectricity, Franken-frogs, monstrous re/generations”.¹⁹ Barad establishes theoretical physics as both a metaphor and an ontological basis for queerness, telling us that, at the quantum level, “the void is “the scene of wild

activities.”²⁰ Perverse and promiscuous couplings, queer goings-on that make pre-AIDS bathhouses look tame. The void is a virtual exploration of all manner of possible trans*/formations. Nature is perverse at its core; nature is unnatural”.²¹ Life is Gothic all the way down to the quantum level and within us is the kind of vacuous potential of infinite possibilities despite our own material finiteness. These paradoxes or contradictory aspects are at the heart of the queer affects in the Gothic, where emotions run rampant in ways rationality cannot possibly always anticipate.

Gothic Contemporaries

Why then does this case study select *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Medrano’s “Addict” to analyse when far “better” examples of Gothic/Horror media exist? After all, *TRHPS* is a popular parody of late-night cinema and “cheesy” science fiction. However, *TRHPS* is a reorientation of the Gothic from a queer (phenomenological) perspective. When Tim Curry appears as Dr Frank-n-Furter it is in a black vampiric mantle that is cast off to reveal the platformed and corseted figure beneath. Like Dr Frankenstein, Frank is also making a creature, and like Frankenstein’s creature, Rocky flees his creator. *TRHPS* is the queer irony of the Gothic; a monster let out of the closet and on full display in a marriage between the gaiety of musical theatre and the over-the-top drama of genre cinema.

“Addict” is an animated music video produced by artist and animator Vivienne Medrano’s SpindleHorse Toons and composed by songwriter Silva Hound, with vocalists Michael Kovach and Kelly “Chi-Chi” Boyer reprising their roles from Medrano’s *Hazbin Hotel* pilot. The video is connected to a multimedia project from the mind of Medrano that is set in a Christian inspired Hell populated by sinners and Hell-born demons. The two major media projects are *Hazbin Hotel* and *Helluva Boss*, and both contain a significant element of musicality. In the *Hazbin*

pilot characters break out into songs and reprises in the style of musicals, while *Helluva* features musical segments in the style of Fosse's *Cabaret* where songs occur within the logic of daily life on radios, in theatres, or in classrooms. As Medrano works as both writer and designer, both projects are thematically and aesthetically similar. The characters present in "Addict" are from *Hazbin Hotel* and the song can function as companion to the pilot and future series as character formation, or it can function as an independent entity. Like *TRHPS*, Gothic feeling is not at work, but the elements of Gothic entities are, as is the framework of the "sinful." Additionally, the work is excessively queer, populated with both queer characters and creators/actors, just like *TRHPS*. Both "Addict" and the Floor Show from *TRHPS* provide the "queer moments" of affective resistance to the normalising effects of identity-based representation.

Rose Tint my World, I am a Wild and Untamed Thing

The "Floor Show" is a ten-minute sequence at the conclusion of *TRHPS* consisting of songs "Rose Tint my World," "Don't Dream It," and "Wild and Untamed Thing".²² The main cast performs the songs on a theatre stage with the camera assuming the position of the audience. Unlike previous uses of this camera positioning, this is the only time that *we* are positioned as the diegetic witnesses. This sequence enacts a phenomenological shift by placing us, as the audience of film, into the film as the audience members. Dr Frank-N-Furter is a mix between monster and damsel. When they first appear, they are wrapped in a floor length black cloak, appropriating a particularly vampiric silhouette.



Figure 1. Tim Curry as Dr Frank-n-Furter on stage wrapped in a shimmering black cape and wide silver collar in front of a banner with part of “Annual Transylvanian Convention” visible. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975)

This image of Frank is as both Dracula and Dr Frankenstein, both monsters with the power to birth other monsters. Having already “birthed” the libidinal Rocky, Frank dresses up film characters Brad, Janet, Rocky, and Columbia as mirrors to Frank’s own “perverse” costume. Each one shares their experience since meeting Frank, with Columbia and Rocky concluding their sections with the titular “Rose tints my world/keeps me safe from my trouble and pain.” Brad and Janet sing of how they have been released; Brad feels “sexy” dressed in corset, fishnet, platform heels, garter, and panties. Janet’s “confidence has increased,” her “mind... expanded;” Frankie’s “lust is so sincere.”

The scene transitions via a fanfare as the stage curtains rise and reveals Frank at the base of a stage prop radio tower. Frank sings of their desire to be “dressed just the same” as Fay Wray, declaring from the unfolding staircase about giving “yourself over to absolute pleasure.” They then jump into a pool with “The Creation of Adam” depicted on the bottom, surfacing in an S.

S. Titanic lifebuoy singing “don’t dream it, be it.” This recreation of the Biblical creation erases the distance between God and man, through an unchained libido and undifferentiated gender. The four join Frank, swimming into a single snake like mating mass. As the action heats up, the chorus of “don’t dream it, be it” repeats in an ethereal, dreamlike loop until, suddenly, the music snaps into the bombastic drive of “Wild and Untamed Thing” with Frank rising from the pool on Rocky’s shoulders. Frank sings a solo stanza but is soon joined by the rest of the cast in a very wet chorus line. All the while, we are in these seats; the message is as much for us as it is for the performers on stage declaring their formerly repressed desires. This sequence is then broken as Riff-Raff busts into the theatre with Magenta, ending the climactic revelry.

Textually speaking, the sequence draws notice to the lines “rose tints my world, keeps me safe from my trouble and pain,” the second stanza of “Don’t Dream It,” and the final chorus of “Wild and Untamed Thing.” At first it is just Columbia, the veteran Frankie-fan, and Rocky, Frank’s seven-hours-old creature, who sing of the rose tint. Rose tint is an obvious reference to the western idiom of rose-coloured glasses, describing an unduly optimistic or positive outlook. Here it is presented as part of longer phrase, describing the rose tint as a form of protection. However, “rose tint” is presented in a circuitous fashion as both the source and the protection from “trouble and pain”. If we consider “trouble and pain” to be necessary, inevitable facts of existence, then one lesson the line imparts is the importance of seeking a pleasure that makes the pain both survivable and worth it. Brad and Janet, new to Frank’s company, are in the process of discovering the rose tint, allowing them to join the company for “Wild and Untamed Thing” along with Dr Scott.

The second segment of the Floor Show, “Don’t Dream It,” begins with Frank-n-Furter appearing as the stage curtain rises. For the second stanza, Frank descends the staircase one step at a time:

Give yourself over to absolute pleasure
Swim the warm waters of sins of the flesh
Erotic nightmares beyond any measure
And sensual daydreams to treasure forever²³

This second stanza is an embrace of hedonism, of the rose tint, and to “be it” not “dream it.” Line one signals an absolute, rather than an “ordinary” pleasure, which is further defined by the “sins of the flesh” in line two. Rather than merely signal an absolute sexual pleasure, it directly highlights the culturally endowed negativity of sex. It is not pleasures of the flesh, but *sins*. This signifies not simply a more conservative extra-marital heterosexual act, but a collective experience of what constitutes sinful bodily acts. This feeling is echoed by “erotic nightmares,” which is where this sequence starts dipping into the incomprehensibility of feeling where emotions register paradoxically and out of phase with the linear promise of normative emotional orientations. Nightmares are, for most people, negative experiences that issue forth negative effects such as insomnia, anxiety, nausea, and fear. These negative effects are imbued with the adjective “erotic” which ties to “sins” and “absolute pleasure.” Erotic becomes the rose tint, recolouring the nightmare into something incomprehensible and “beyond any measure”. An erotic eruption from the softer etherealness of “sensual daydreams”, perhaps? Either way, both nightmares and daydreams are invoked as something beyond the rational promise of measurability.

These emotional excesses endeavour to entangle the familiar with the unfamiliar, the conscious (daydreams – desirable) and the unconscious (nightmares – undesirable). The rest of “Don’t Dream It” is the recurring dreamlike “don’t dream it, be it.” This simple phrase insinuates a lot. What are we dreaming? What are we being? It calls on us to externalise the internal, to emote what we feel. From the interstitial space between Adam and God, Frank centres their uncanny self at the spark of all creation. The literal orgy that follows is presented as the expanding and contracting universe spawning new possibilities. The “rose tint” is a fantasy Frank is keen on teaching us, alongside Brad and Janet. We should not merely swim in the fantasies of erotic nightmares but to materialize those desires in our flesh.

With the lesson taught, and adherents earned, Frank launches into the sequence’s final climactic section:

I'm a wild and untamed thing

I'm a bee with a deadly sting

You get a hit and your mind goes ping

Your heart will pump and your blood will sing

So let the party and the sound rock on

We're gonna shake it til the life has gone

Rose tints my world keeps me safe from my trouble and pain²⁴



Figure 2. The final chorus line of “Wild and Untamed Thing”. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975).

The stanza is sung three times, once solo by Frank, and the rest by the company. Frank is not the only “wild and untamed thing” as everyone else joins in singing. With the four back on stage, they are all dressed the same. Only Frank is marked with distinctive colours and make up. For these “wild” and “untamed” things, the rules of society’s propriety simply do not apply. Not only that, but the design of their makeup and costumes run counter to normative frameworks of attractiveness. In effect, they adopt a monstrous image to signal their belonging. The water only serves to equalise them more as their makeup runs.



Figure 3. Frank, Rocky, Columbia, Brad, and Janet in the pool above of “The Creation of Adam” kissing and clutching one another. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975).

When Frank is hoisted out of the pool on Rocky’s shoulders, they fully exhibit the wild and untamed thing as their makeup runs and their perm now plastered to their head. Furthermore, the section’s significance comes with the three bottom lines, which can be summed up as “party until life has gone keep[ing] me safe from my trouble and pain.” The party, the fun, the extreme life depicted throughout the sequence and the rest of the film is a way of seeing beyond the pain. It is hyper reality of pure sensation. However, this promise of the eternal “erotic nightmare” is interrupted, and the rose tint is smashed. Riff Raff storms in singing “Frank-N-

Furter it's all over/Your mission is a failure, your lifestyle's too extreme." Frank is forced to face their pain in the next song sequence, but the Floor Show ends with the declaration of "too extreme." The lifestyle pushed through the whole sequence is a "failure" and "too extreme" resulting in the execution of Columbia, Frank, and Rocky.

In summation, the interplay of lyrics and visuals diverge from a linear progression of normative affects. The character's invocation of "rose tints" links queer survivability with monstrous eroticism. By showcasing whirlwind narratives of contradictory emotions, sharing in both pain and pleasure, they align to the symbol of "erotic nightmare" inherent in the body and performance of their creator Frank'n'Furter. This orientation leads them into the wilderness of undifferentiated sexual desire and the conversion to "wild and untamed" things as their façades melt away. However, they are interrupted by the intervention of colonial/military authority of the "new commander" who deems the "wild and untamed" as "too extreme", proceeding to straighten the lines diverging from the norm. As a result, they destroy not only the creator, Frank, but the space as well, leaving Janet, Brad, and Dr Scott in a crater. This is a reminder that these escapist fantasies, the rose tint, is contingent on both time and space, and places the survival of the self in danger from the structures of hegemonic power. Frank was the point of departure for the three, the force that knocked their narrative line askew. Without the old guard of Frank and Columbia, or even a tangible connection to *that* world through the "Frankenstein place", they are left to crawl in hole left by the foundation, without direction.

Leave my Soul to Burn and I'll be Breathing it in

About 45 years after the release of *TRHPS*, Medrano launched the full-length pilot for *Hazbin Hotel* on their YouTube channel, Vivziepop, depicting a Hell overrun with sinners. Charlie, the daughter of Lucifer and Lilith, launches a "rehab" hotel with the goal of preventing the

annual Heavenly purge. However, this is Hell, and the sinners are not necessarily looking for redemption, their bodies twisted into impish and animalistic monstrous representations. Angel Dust (voiced by Michael Kovach), an androgynous anthropomorphic spider, and Cherri Bomb (voiced by Kelly “Chi-Chi” Boyer), a cycloptic woman, perform the song “Addict” composed by Silva Hound. The music video was released on the tail of the *Hazbin* pilot, joining a handful of paratextual media providing more narrative context and development of the world glimpsed in the pilot. There is a level of difficulty in considering a text like “Addict” because it is a self-contained music video that also happens to be part of an early portfolio of a developing franchise. Essentially, there is no master narrative to slot “Addict” into within a *Hazbin Hotel* timeline of events and developments. At the same time, only the lyrics can be detached from this still fractured narrative because both the visual and aural experience of “Addict” is inseparable from *Hazbin*, featuring recognisable vocals and character art. However, without the context of *Hazbin Hotel*, the significance of those recognisable sounds and images are lost. For clarity, this analysis recognizes “Addict” as sung by the *Hazbin Hotel* characters Angel Dust and Cherri Bomb but assumes an otherwise limited narrative perspective regarding the larger franchise narrative.

The music video opens with Valentino, the owner and operator of a large adult media conglomerate, smiling widely as the scene shifts to a stage. The curtains rise to reveal Angel Dust entwined with a pole. As the music starts and the lights flicker on, the demons in silhouette all fixate on Angel, who appears, at first, only as a black silhouette against a florescent pink spiderweb with a heart shape at the centre. Angel’s verse opens with “till death do us part/but we’re already past that phase/this is a brand-new start”.²⁵ This institutes a new life phase occurring after separation and after “death” from which Angel can recreate themselves. They are cynical and emotionally excessive, they’ve “let their emotions go” as though nothing

matters after overdosing (“and ending up comatose”). Now they live by their mantra “fuck being a sober hoe.” Their life is yours to play with “till the end of the night.” In this case, “you” adheres to the viewer, Valentino, and Angel’s audience. Toward the end of the opening stanza, it cuts to Valentino who breathes out a red smoke cloud which orients to Angel. Angel dances down the pole platform and down the stage runway toward Valentino.



Figure 4. Angel Dust gesturing toward Valentino. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020).

At the wind up to the chorus, the clouds of red smoke briefly coalesce around Angel’s wrists and neck before being inhaled. Down here in Hell, “surrounded by fire,” their “passion ignites.” They take “a hit of that heaven and hell/ a helluva high.” Immediately, Angel presents themselves as unapologetic and exhausted by the control and expectation of society. As the song shifts into the first chorus section, with Cherri Bomb’s voice doubling Angel’s, the video goes through several jump cuts. From Angel, reclined on their back with eyes closed, continuing to dance, the scene cuts first to Cherri comforting Angel in a bed. The series of three cuts begin with Angel in the same orientation in bed as on stage (on their back with the camera

positioned straight above). Unlike on stage, Angel is clutching themselves and violently crying. The subsequent cuts have Cherri moving closer (first sitting on the side of the bed) and Angel shifting to their side until Cherri is the one staring up into the camera and Angel is turned away.



Figure 5. The cut to Cherri Bomb comforting Angel. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)



Figure 6: Cut immediately after Figure 5, with Angel smiling up at the camera. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)

Can these two realities exist side by side? Can they exist separately? Or does the neon rose-pink tint of the scene suggest that Angel, despite the pain, is surviving as they can—where who they are brings both pain and pleasure in a cyclical fashion of divergence from a “straight and narrow” existence?

As the chorus continues, the scene focuses on the cartoonish representation of a discarded alcohol bottle that transforms into an improvised explosive device as the scene transitions to Cherri’s volatile assault on the metropolis outside. The video cuts between shots of Cherri jumping across rooftops and lobbing cherry bombs and Angel who leaves the floor, climbing hands over hands (they are a spider, they have extra hands) up the pole. Over the closing lines of the chorus, the pair are slowly drawn together until they occupy the frame simultaneously on either side of a pole. With a final close-up, Angel and Cherri give their most menacing look with wide smiles filled with pointed “teeth” and pupil-less eyes, glowing like pinkish-red lanterns.



Figure 7. Cherri Bomb and Angel Dust with glowing eyes and sharp teeth meeting beside the static dancing pole. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)

Through the instrumental bridge into the second verse, we are given glimpses of Cherri continuing to throw bombs and dancing through rooftops, smoke, and explosions. Angel continues dancing among falling money and flashes of erotic and aroused expressions. As Cherri blows up a screen with a picture of Valentino the video transitions to the mobster's limo where Valentino is counting cash before pulling Angel into their lap and violently forcing a kiss. The scene cuts to Angel in a bedroom, they violently throw a glass against the wall before sinking to the floor and crying, alone in the dark. This sequence of shots from the end of the first verse to the beginning of the second verse show the intense highs and lows that Angel experiences. Valentino and Cherri are objects in Angel's orbit, and Angel is currently oriented on a line that leads to Valentino (and a bed with their back to Cherri).

The second verse is sung by Cherri Bomb from the city rooftops. The lyrics shift from the self-reflective focus of the first verse to an external "you". The opening line "Yeah you fell in love/but you fell deeper in this pit" has no strong referent. "You" can be Cherri narrating their own past experience, the phantom image reflected in the puddle, or Angel. Like Angel, Cherri is unapologetic about their behaviour, "so what if I misbehave/it's what everybody craves." The referential ambiguity continues in the middle of the verse with Cherri addressing "you" again "to come if... feeling brave and fancy yourself a mate." Here "mate" refers to friendship (Cherri Bomb is/was Australian), however, it is left ambiguous as to if this friendship pre-exists or will be established. "You" come because you are a mate, or "you" come because you want to be a mate. Later, Cherri's "sinful delight" is likewise ambiguous as to it attaching to "your money and power" or the reiteration of "a hit of that heaven..." Here "your" more solidly adheres to image of the mysterious demon, but the other "yous" do not have to have the same referent. The verse closes with the same line as Angel's. Cherri's "sinful pleasure," the hit that gets them high, is explosions, with the scene shifting from the mysterious demon back to Cherri

pressing the detonation button. Rather than recalling Ahmed, Cherri's proximity to explosions is more akin to Puar's terrorist assemblage with Cherri as the explosive interruptions in normative lines of flight. By first exploding the image of Valentino and then the glitzy neon "Addict" sign, Cherri appears to be interrupting Angel's line of flight as it pertains to Valentino.

The chorus is sung twice, drawing Cherri and Angel closer and closer together. The first iteration is Angel and Cherri in unison while the second time they trade between the third and fourth lines. The second half is then sung twice more, once to end the song and once more to bridge from the credits to Angel's reprise.



Figure 8. Angel and Cherri dressed up for the final dance and chorus. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)

I'm addicted to the madness

This hotel is my Atlantis

We're forever gonna have a fucking reason to sin

Let me leave my soul to burn and I'll be breathing it in

I'm addicted to the feeling
Getting higher than the ceiling
And we're never gonna want this fucking feeling to end
Just concede and give in to your inner demons again²⁶

The chorus elaborates on the “hit of heaven and hell” as they describe to what they are addicted. Only the second line “this hotel...” is out of place. Madness, sin, burning soul, higher, never ending, and inner demons all play to this antisocial alignment toward which Angel, as a queer sex worker and drug addict, and Cherri as a 1980s inspired anarchist punk, are oriented. Atlantis alludes to the hotel as an unfound, mythical place, or simply a fabrication. The line “Let me leave my soul to burn and I’ll be breathing it in” poignantly represents the refusal of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation does not fix the conditions, their “reasons to sin.” By letting your emotions go, you’re also “giv[ing] in to your inner demons *again*.” Here addiction does not automatically attach to narcotics, but to feelings and emotions. Angel and Cherri have found this feeling and a way to attain this feeling, and it is a way that is considered antisocial as they are both positioned as outsiders, as against *our* society.

The second chorus occurs after Cherri blows up the “ADDICT” sign and jumps off the roof. The video’s colour palette shifts and Angel and Cherri both don their own colourfully tinted glasses. Whereas the start was an off-vibrant rose hue, the closing is vibrant with whites appearing white and the pinks as unfiltered neon. As the music bridges into the next instrumental section, they are shown individually in a changing room from behind, Angel tightening a corset and donning long pink gloves, and Cherri pulling on a fluffy coat. These actions parallel the dressing up from *TRHPS* with Angel’s wardrobe being strongly evocative of Frank-n-Furter’s. The instrumental section cuts to another rendition of the chorus with the

two dancing on stage, Angel in pink tinted glass, Cherri with a yellow tinted star on their one eye. Cherri then blows up the theatre and the pair strut out together as the block of Valentino-owned sex shops explode behind them. The video ends with Angel parallel with Cherri and their back to Valentino and their entire corporate sex enterprise.

In Marvel Cinematic Universe style, “Addict” includes a scene after the credits. The reprise thematically follows the juxtaposition of “hit of that *heaven* and *hell*” by doubling down on mixing negative and positive emotions.

I’m addicted to the sorrow
When the buzz ends by tomorrow
There’s another rush of poison flowing into my veins
Giving me a dose of pleasure that resides by the pain

I’m addicted, I’m dependent
Looking awesome, feeling helpless
And I know I’m raising Cain by every highway in hell
Maybe things won’t be so terrible inside this hotel²⁷

The end of the first stanza focuses the reprise on “a dose of pleasure that *resides by* the pain.” Here the cycle presented in the opening verse with the video cutting between Angel singing and breaking down is reproduced as a form of survivability. When they primp in front of the mirror (looking awesome) there is a quick cut in the reflection to Valentino holding Angel in a position of forced penetration (feeling helpless). The flash is a reflection of what is/was behind them, as a reminder of what may recur; one possible avenue their life/death can take. “The

sorrow” is any number of negative emotions and feelings from circumstances or coming down from a high. This reprise is the general come down or mellowing out after the high of the chorus. The emotions it communicates is a particular state of alienation, of the temporary alignment that is forced to return to an orientation out of alignment, from the feeling of a place beyond the social back to the antisocial. Those moments on stage, or high on PCP, Angel can imagine belonging, but when Valentino assaults them, they are reminded of their alienation from the objects they try to cling to. With only Cherri as an affective guide, Angel wonders if things will be less bad in the hotel, if it may contain such things as allies who accept them rather than exploit them. Meanwhile, to survive, Angel is cycling through these unbounded states of extreme emotions, seeking alignment however painful and exploitative they are. Getting high is the temporary solution to a wider structural problem of intense alienation. As the music dims for good, Angel crawls into bed; a faint smile forms after their pet pig licks their cheek.



Figure 9. Angel frowning in bed during post-credit reprise with their pet Fat Nuggets approaching to lick their cheek. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)



Figure 10. Angel smiling after Fat Nuggets licks their cheek. *Addict* (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020)

The Wild and Untamed

The only significant thematic difference between *TRHPS* and “Addict” is death. By the nature of the setting, “Addict” takes death off the table as an outcome. The only threat is an eternity of the cycle of emotional pain and pleasure. Angel’s monstrous excess is not going to result in annihilation like Frank-n-Furter’s. Both sequences share in metaphors of sexual and emotional excess, trading in talks of demons and sins. In other words, both are celebrating a particularly antisocial outlook based on the rules of social propriety dictated by western norms produced from theological connections between evil and excess. With Frank and company, and Angel and Cherri, their monstrous antisocial behaviour is salient to queer experiences. What “Addict” adds to this framework in particular is a “fuck it” attitude that underlines the emotional excess expressed through Angel’s verses and the chorus. They refuse both help and cure from anyone outside their alignment net, especially from those who come from positions in traditional frameworks of power. The power that monsters have is fully embraced through a meta-narrative commitment to the antisociality of desire and indulgence. With queer positioned as

monstrous, this is the same as staying queer and refusing the normalising gestures of discourses. This demonstrates a form of emotional or expressive representation that resists the commodification of visibility politics. Whereas representation based on identity visibility relies on linguistic codes, particularly social and legal definitions, “Addict” and *TRHPS* rely on inherent expressive politics that perform their queerness. Operating as they do from the genre position of Gothic; they reveal the queer potential within the expressive canon of Gothic media and produce a queer theory from within the widely accessible realm of the popular.

Notes

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- ¹ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): p. 548.
- ² Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), p. 50.
- ³ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 2.
- ⁴ Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 82.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- ⁶ Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," p. 548;
- ⁷ Jasbir Puar, "Bodies with New Organs: Becoming Trans, Becoming Disabled," *Social Text* 33, no. 3 (2015): p. 46.
- ⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006), p. 177.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.
- ¹⁰ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, p. 204.
- ¹¹ Fred Botting, "In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Putner (Oxford, UK & Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 3.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹³ George E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 2.
- ¹⁴ Mair Rigby, "Queer Theory's Debt to the Gothic," *Gothic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): p. 55.
- ¹⁵ For definition of low theory: Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 15-17.
- ¹⁶ Manuel Aguirre, "Geometries of Terror: Numinous Spaces in Gothic, Horror, and Science Fiction," *Gothic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): p. 2-3.
- ¹⁷ Aguirre defines Mandelbrot as "paradigmatic" of fractal geometry, "characterized by an increasing complexity at its very edge: the closer one comes to the 'frontier' between it and the 'outside' (the complementary set), the more complex the structure of this frontier is shown to be".
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11-13.
- ¹⁹ Karen Barad, "Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," *GLQ* 21, no. 2-3 (2015): p. 388.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 412.
- ²² "The Floor Show," Rocky Horror Wiki, accessed November 17, 2020, https://rockyhorror.fandom.com/wiki/The_Floor_Show.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ "Addict," Hazbin Hotel Wiki, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://hazbinhotel.fandom.com/wiki/Addict>.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*

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Filmography

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. (Jim Sharman, United Kingdom, 1975)

Addict. (Silva Hound and Vivziepop, 2020) <https://youtu.be/ulfeM8JGq7s>.

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