

January 2017

# The Devil in the Details: Popular Demonology, Addiction and Criminology

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THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS: POPULAR DEMONOLOGY, ADDICTION AND  
CRIMINOLOGY

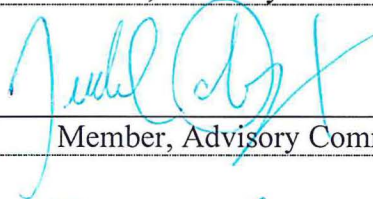
By

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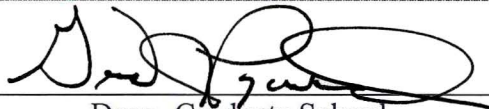
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Date April 12, 2017

THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS: POPULAR DEMONOLOGY, ADDICTION AND  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
May, 2017

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## ABSTRACT

Theories of diabolism have, since antiquity, made manifest societal fears of the unknown. Demonology, as discipline, flourished within the West accordingly; to function, at the inception of early modern science and during the “transition” to capitalism, as a device to translate alterity. At this juncture, theories of the demonic were occulted under scientific methodologies and institutionalized across the structures of modernity. “Evil”, as discursive paradigm, was politically incarnated, canonized, and absorbed under the auspices of the state towards the consummation of socio-political “diabolic” enemies of society. In continuity with the past, “evil” continues to operate in the contemporary as a primary thematic frame by which alterity is isolated, cauterized and criminalized. The phenomena of “addiction” is a marked example, which is both affected by and reflective of a “popular demonology” that proliferates throughout the political and the socio-cultural in the justification of systematic repression. By taking one season of the popular anthology, *American Horror Story*, as heuristic device, this paper intends to trouble the rhetoric of “addiction” and to elucidate its fixity within “long forgotten” theories of “demonic possession”. Narratives which horrifically depict “addiction” as demonic tenure, within the popular, not only actively incarnate but politicize the “addict” under a mythology of drug use that reifies their “evil” and underwrites their liminal positionality and perpetual suspension on the axes of sin/sickness. As hyperbolic dramatizations of drug use fail to produce, but conversely actively defuse, viable counter-narratives of “addiction” they negate broader structural critique of the phenomena and, in effect, grossly delimit the conditions of possibility for the “addicted” subject- whose outcomes are always and already known.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank my Olivia, whose refusal of the rules has manifested a compassion that never fails to lend clarity. Without you, and our walks, I would not have made it. Thank you, as well, to Dr. Travis Linnemann, for whose generosity I lack the words to truly express my appreciation. It is certain, however, that without his steady guidance, significant insight, and willingness to involve me, I would not have learned half as much. As well thank you to Dr. Judah Schept, for being an incredible teacher, for believing in my ability and for always taking the time to comment exhaustively. Thank you, also, to Dr(s). Collins, Potter and Wall, and to my entire ECU cohort, especially Cesar, Kendahl and Jordan. As well, many, many thanks are given to Bill McClanahan, for all of the things- every single one of them. And finally, to my father Daniel, my brother Calvin and my grandparents, who have each offered me wit, challenge and affection throughout this journey. But particularly, to my mother, Cindy, whose advocacy has underwritten every word and for whom I am entirely, and in every way, grateful.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“There’s a monster in the shadows terrorizing the innocent, destroying families and taking lives.”* Across a dark and grainy background distorted by shadowy lines of ashen white, a spindly hand saunters across the screen, pausing to reveal an emblazoned eye of deep claret. The inkiness of the elliptical, snake-like pupil vexes as it becomes two, grows daggered fangs, and a disembodied sinister voice calls, *“Hello. I have been watching you. I am always watching. In fact, I know everything about you. But you don’t know me.”* Exactly whom, or rather what, is this abstruse and deific entity? In their “Out the Monster” campaign, the pharmaceutical company, Orexo, animates “accidental opioid addiction” through an obdurate, demonic beast. With grave immediacy, the company’s advertisement contends that a veiled, forsworn opioid epidemic is being nurtured within American society, and that this monster, “cannot be defeated alone”. *“Who”*, it asks, *“could be next? Why it is you”*, it replies, as the cadaverous figures of the “addicted” erupt tortuously from the frail and squalid hand before liquescing into an amorphic effigy that leaves the viewer utterly perplexed (The Opioid Epidemic and Accidental Opioid Addiction-Out the Monster).

On its website, testimonials of the “accidentally addicted” relate an inherent risk of enslavement to an opioidic “demon”, who lurks unrealized and desires nothing more than to live out its monstrosity through the adjutant bodies of society’s heedless. Ominous theatrics aside, Orexo’s take on drug use is nothing new. In 1914, the New York Times published an article written by the physician Edward Huntington Williams,

warning his frightened readers of how cocaine transformed “hitherto inoffensive negroes” into monstrous and superhuman fiends (Williams, 2014). More recently even, the US Navy emitted a campaign to warn its personnel and their families of the “nightmares” of “bath salts”, with outrageous imagery of monstrous transformation and demonic possession. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhlaHwnErBI>) These depictions of drug use, which employ hyperbolic images of corporeal decay, monstrous conversion and demonic possession, do not simply incite feelings of shock and disgust, they in turn powerfully rupture and suspend momentarily, the boundaries of self and other—conjuring the otherworldly monster/demon into the terrain of human materiality. This monstrous and demonic incantation is aided, in part, by a morbid curiosity towards the spectacle of the abject “addicted” body as a fascinating figure of transgression that both repels and attracts (Impara, 2016).

As can be easily perceived by the popularity of the horror genre, society rather graciously explores abject wonder through cultural text. Distinctive for the physiological and emotive responses it evokes, horror not only permits pleasure to be felt in pain but offers cathartic reprieve for our individual and collective fears (Grant, 2010). Although often representationally absent of the contingencies and complexities of historical analysis, the genre nevertheless serves as a meaningful register by which ideological and political struggles can be read. Presently depictions of demonic emanation as a uniquely human, rather than diabolic, potentiality speak to concerns in the contemporary over the autonomy, agency and authenticity. As the site of conflict is primarily established internal to, or of the individual, even when the threat emerges as an external figure it remains uniquely tied to the body as a threat which imperils identity (Stoddart, 2009). By this

paradigm, “addiction” rhetoric incarnates the “addict” not only as antithetical to “freedom”, but defines them as philistine subjects whose self-hood has been subverted by their dominion to the metaphysical essence of substance. As Eugene Thacker (2011) astutely relates, “Demons abound in popular culture, and yet we no longer believe in demons—at least, this is the story we tell ourselves. If we do indeed live in enlightened, technological times, we also live in a “post-secular” era in which themes of religion, theology and mysticism seep back into our world, often in obtuse ways.”

While cultural products may collapse with ease the boundaries between natural and supernatural explanations of societal transgression, the field of criminology has endeavored to recant its affiliation with demonological ideologies of correction and control (Einstadter & Henry, 2006). Regardless of this revocation, however, diabolic premises continue to operate within the contemporary field, as is conveyed by frameworks of “addiction” as disease which etiologically inflect antiquated notions of possession as biological theories of causality (Reinarman, 2005). Exemplary of this position, the article *Bad Brains: Crime and Drug Abuse from a Neurocriminological Perspective*, asserts that while “bad brains and bad genes do not *fatally* prescribe someone to a life of crime and drug abuse”, neurobiological models have nevertheless isolated structural brain variations that promote specific traits and “predispose” some individuals to drug abuse disorders (Jorgenson, et al., 2015). The unique traits they cite? Sensation-seeking, antisocial behavior, and impulsivity; all of which not only follow in logical structure seventeenth century theological accounts of demonic possession (Reinarman, 2005), but similarly gesture, even as they impugn forces beyond the individual’s control, to a degree of choice.

As I use it here, ‘popular demonology’, may be described as the study of the mythical use of demons to explain unexplainable societal phenomena and a host of human misfortunes. Within popular culture, as this paper hopes to convey, representations of the demonological can thereby be realized to mythically function as abstractive and oversimplified descriptions of complex social issues. As Nicolas Mirzoeff (2011) explains, “Culture is perfection, hence aesthetic, requiring forcible separation from its anarchic opposite.” Within criminology, as elsewhere, the vilification of persons whose conduct falls outside of the delimited bounds of lawfully cosigned behavior operates not only toward the production of “order”, but requires towards its reproduction, the existence of “atypical” individuals. To sustain the political and messianic belief in a natural order, there must always be individuals, therefore, whose dissension can be utilized towards the reaffirmation of societal boundaries. “Addiction” discourse functions respectively; to generate an opposable or devilish “other” in contrast to the autonomous, self-regulative and independent individual vital to, and shaped by, capitalist logics (Reinarman, 2005).

Exogenous possession by demonic force may no longer be a justifiable reason for the use of repressive violence, but demonological themes of possession thrive no less within the criminological literature to structure a dominative visual authority of “addiction”. By a cultural criminological reading of one season of the popular television anthology, *American Horror Story* (AHS), the intent here is to convey how everyday understandings of drug “addiction” produce, circulate and traverse products of the ‘popular demonological’ to suggest the “addict” as mere host to the supernatural power of drug. Contemporary scripts of “addiction” as possession not only inform broader

societal understandings of drug use, “addiction”, desire and identity, but even as they cross hallowed boundaries to trouble order they often remain ensconced in the myths and imaginaries of the state and neutralize, in effect, alternative ways of thinking.

Although scientific models of “addiction” as disease claim to relieve “addicts” of moral responsibility through expertise that absolves fault (Atrens, 2000), these paradigms are driven in practice by moral judgments which can be realized for the inequities they yield and the demonological methods they reserve only when situated within a broader cultural nexus. Disease models incriminate, just as they exonerate. Etiological models of “addiction” are tightly bound to an individual’s class placement within the hierarchal structure of society, with narratives of “addiction” as “possessive substance” a functional gauge for the individual’s alleged “threat” to “order”. Cultural depictions of “addiction” as demonic risk do not, therefore, simply inscribe disease unto the “addicted body”, but likewise operate to locate the “disease of addiction” within state security logics by the fundamental message of horror: *that the repressed will always return, in ever more monstrous form, to inflict destruction on those it holds responsible for its exclusion* (Grant, 2010). As considered earlier, the Orexo monster abides as portent of this avowal, in its concession that, while it “knows everything”, neither the individual nor society “knows” it.

To follow, the vitality which distinguishes this message of horror will be further discussed taking AHS’s season *Hotel* as heuristic to reveal the ways in which the demonological returns vengefully within cultural production to reinvigorate distinct understandings of the causes and consequences of illicit drug use in the social imaginary.

Assertions of a confirmed transference in theory, from the demonological to the scientific, will be revealed as crudely reductive- insofar as cultural practices can be understood as palimpsests inscribed by the current moment, but upon which history is etched. Examination of the abject, “addicted” body through analysis of contemporary representation efforts, therefore, to both disinter the presence of laundered demonological and superstitious themes within present theories of the criminological and to question these depictions as they currently aggravate and embolden understandings of addiction as disease of monstrosity.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

“Demonology”, as Thacker (2011) writes, “is not simply the study of demons, but of noise’s assault on signal- a media theory *avant le lettre*.” Presage, as his contention provides, to even the concept of media, demonic inquiry was manifestly immersed in its methods- consumed entirely by the communicative act. Certainly, the philosophical, political and socio-cultural implications of demonology are manifold, but it is perhaps best to begin with the evidential requisites the discipline conferred. As the presence of demons is marked by their absence, the attainment of physical “proof” of their terror became requisite to their expulsion as objects of apprehensible horror. Imperative to this revelation, therefore, is the exorcistic act; which *forces* demons, who communicate only in the negative, to speech (Thacker, 2011). As the field of demonology arose in the West, violence was utilized against the “afflicted” to make observable the assaultive tendencies of demons through coerced acknowledgment of their existence. Demonology must, in consequence, be stripped of its explicitly theologically perceived domain, as it did not occupy the realm of dogmatic belief- but of skeptical anxiety- that, in effect, conjured into materiality demons of a specifically socio-political conception (Clark, 1997; Thacker, 2011).

The growth of the field of demonology abided deep disturbances in the prevailing societal structure of fifteenth century Europe, with the pervasive spread of disease, religious conflict, rapid urbanization and the culmination of feudalism seeing an entire set of practices, beliefs and collective relations begin to collapse. The expansion of the state,

increased taxation and the privatization of land intensified greatly the anxieties bred by the era, with popular revolts developed in dissent during the “transition” to capitalism (Federici, 2004). Often these conflicts were led by women, and so it does not surprise that the era commenced a mass hysteria fixed upon the emblematic entity of the “witch”; with vast numbers of person -most of whom were women- tried, tortured and executed over the following centuries for their alleged ecclesiastical and secular “crimes” (Dashu, 1999).

While neither cause nor product of the “witch-hunts”, as Stuart Clark (1997) discloses, demonology found seminal ground within the volatility of the times and was integral to the persecutory regime that coalesced the tribunals. Reinforced by a peculiar synergy between advancements in early modern science and criminal procedure, the field aspired to, as influential writer on demonology Jean Bodin conveys, “spread terror among some, by punishing many” (Bodin, 1577; quoted in Federici, 2004). Within a larger societal context, as Laura Stokes (2011) conveys, the “witch-hunts” may therefore be realized less as ordeals of exception and revealed instead for their “terrible ordinariness” alongside a general increase in the “diabolization” of crime. Similar devices of rule to those utilized in the persecution of “witches” were, at once, being applied throughout the criminal courts across Europe towards the prosecution of the *schädliche Leute* or so-called “dangerous peoples” of society (Bever, 2013).

Contrary, then, to popular thought, as Mark Neocleous (2016) imparts, the “witch-hunts” were not merely the product of religious frenzy or pre-enlightened thinking fundamental to a world long departed, but a politically structured and legally ordained



campaign of terror enacted against an internal “enemy” precisely as the state sought to ground itself within logics of security. Neocleous contends that theological texts of decisive influence, such as *Malleus Malleficarum*, must be reexamined by this lens and read, not for their assertions of “witches” as a menace to God and Church, but rather as a threat to law itself. Diabolic theories, under the auspices of the state, thereby were naturalized as testimony to the demonically “possessed” state of a collective enemy whose eradication was held to necessitate nothing less than war.

The “crime” of “witchery”, as a state of tenure by forces of “evil”, was easily converted into public fear and mobilized towards the creation of a legal framework that rendered justifiable their political destruction. “Evil”, as concept, not only served here but continues to serve a recurrent refrain in the struggle for power across Western society. The “witch” was not the first, nor the last, “universal enemy” against whom “evil” was utilized as an ideological weapon of state in the striking down and subjugation of whole peoples and groups (Neocleous, 2016; Federici, 2004). As Michael Taussig (1984) contends, “Hated and feared, objects to be despised, yet also of awe, the reified essence of evil in the very being of their bodies, these figures of the Jew, the black, the Indian, and the woman herself, are clearly objects of cultural construction, the leaden keel of evil and mystery stabilizing the ship and course that is Western history.” Not only did the “witch” serve as a fundamental constituent to the construction of a single, yet *transmutable*, image of a diabolic “enemy”, but their threat to “order” was a significant “political technology” to the growth of a founding capitalism (Neocleous, 2016).

Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, seemingly discordant forces fused between the Church and state, science and law, to structure a politico-moral imaginary that little feared, but rather longed for, the existence of “witches” (Coudert, 2011). Broad concern over the occult pervaded, with demonology and “witchcraft” studies appealed to science for its provision of an occasion to inspect and adjust its systematic assumptions (Clark, 1997). Demonologists aligned themselves with an empiricist, and imperial, worldview, in the attempt to experimentally parse natural from unnatural phenomena towards the production of tangible evidence or “proof” of demonic presence in society. Presuppositions of the supernatural joined “old” knowledge of the world with “new”, to see the punishment of “witchcraft” as crime renew formerly discarded methods of “proof”, such as the ordeal, but *revise* them as rooted within epistemology based, not on divine guidance, but on investigate logic and fact-finding methodologies (Darr, 2014). As Alan Kors and Charles Peters (2001) relate, analysis of the supernatural is not, therefore, the study of pure folklore, but rather the study of how such folklore comes to be transformed through intellectual, conceptual, and legal processes to articulate a systematic demonology that compels systematic persecution.

As an involved “belief” in demons proliferated, fear was sustained to enable the state to apprise a farce of security by demarcation of the “enemy” from the “ally” and the “civilized” from the “savage”. As Sylvia Frederici (2004) contends, “‘cannibal, ‘infidel’, ‘barbarian’, ‘monstrous races’ and ‘devil worshiper’ were the ethnographic models by which Europeans entered the ‘age of expansion,’” with the colonization of America a zenith for inflection by the demonological. Popular interest in geographical essays and atlases, inspired by the explorations of the era, saw the spread of diabolical world maps

procured by demonologists which claimed to trace the movement of demons across the flow of history. These maps, as T. Maus de Rolley (2016) avails, were more than expressive of societal concern over ‘witchcraft’, but communicated significant fears of European infection by the resuscitation of demonic spirits previously thought to have been banished to the uncharted territory. Since demons were held to attach themselves to “wild, deserted, uncivilized [geographic] spaces marked by death or the idea of wandering”, they became the analogy by which alterity was translated and the unknowns of the “New World” could be comprehensibly reduced to the already known (de Rolley, 2016)

A “poetics of diabolical space” enlivened a cartography of devilish dominion by which the state could not only allege its conception of a circuitous field of the non-human or supernatural, but promise deliverance from demonic contagion through protective governance (de Rolley, 2016; Thacker, 2016). As America grew in complexity and scale, however, and as the strength of control over the population by ecclesiastical institutions and belief systems was attenuated the state moved to assume the previously “pastoral” role of guide to the flock. Religious pastoralism was therein adapted to a ‘spiritual’ form, with the pastor’s “statist avatar” taking jurisdiction over individual conscience, obedience and discipline (Golder, 2007). Religion was not supplanted, but hereby sifted, reorganized and reproduced towards a system of authority etched within the institutionalized and individuated bodies of the population through the “art of government” (Thacker, 2009). As Ben Golder (2007) relates, the sovereign claimed to espy ‘transcendental’ authority, but it nevertheless provided the very criterion of development for the modernized state; which continued to accept faith as a requisite of

morality and merely distorted the modalities of pastoralism into rationalized technologies of governmentality.

The role of cleric, leader, and administrator of the masses was adjoined to the state by act of self-positing or a “groundless self-grounding” and the redeployment of ‘truth’ towards the assembly of a populace of governable identities indexed and individualized by their subjectivity (Golder, 2007). As Foucault (1977) conveys, within the history of the state, the pastorate may be realized as the antecedent to governmentality, with the Western subject “whose merits [were] analytically identified, who [was] subjected in[to] continuous networks of obedience, and who [was] subjectified through the compulsory extraction of truth”, first constituted by theological doctrine. The religious question of “souls and lives” was hereby solved by the sovereign; able at once to individualize and unify its subjects under law, through the cross-institutionalization of a “non-sovereign” disciplinary power effused through the “juridico-political” rationale of its modern structures (Valverde, 2008, Levack, 2006).

The sciences, therefore, took up inquiries of the demonic; whose “evils”, once presumed to be invisible and hence irrefutable, were transformed into the visually perceivable and provable under an ever-emergent regime of ‘truth’ (Manderson, 2015). As discipline, demonology, Werner Einstadter and Stuart Henry (2006) suggest, has manifested itself in this regard as an academically irrepressible framework for its ability to intone and absorb a variety of conflictual opinions. Although the field may, in the contemporary, lack widespread adherents to the discipline, the diabolic lens and distinct methodologies it advanced importantly endure in socio-historical continuity with the past.

Ideologies of the demonic, Desmond Manderson (2015) imparts, as they arose with the “witch-hunts” attempted to quell existential anxiety during a time of great crisis in belief by conjuring into materiality evidence of “possession”, or the undeniable physical proof of an “evil” otherwise entirely metaphysical. Evidentiary requisites not only justified the violences of interrogative methods but fostered the institution of severely repressive laws. Laws that, he further conveys, are remarkably similar in structure to drug laws of the present, which attempt to alleviate a crisis of belief in human identity through a dramatization of drugs as “possessive” agents of entrapment and rampant degradation.

Depictions of drug users, specifically those recognized as “addicts”, continue to be articulated as an individual in forfeiture of their identity. Portrayed as hosts to the demon of drug, their alleged “possession” not only renders them the socio-political incarnate of “evil” but allows the societal collective to know, in contrast, their own autonomy. Crafted as a “disease” of free will, “addiction” rhetoric, as Reith (2004) concedes, bears the “addict” to “serve as the repository for widespread fears of social unrest...[as an individual] who had a deviant identity stamped upon them, so that they could just as forcibly be ‘cured’”. Despite popular belief, “addiction” was neither a medical nor a scientific discovery; rather, it was an invention of nineteenth century transformations in social thought; provoked by the disruptive capacities of governance as societal relations shifted with increased industrialization, urbanization, and an “influx” in immigration (Levine, 1978).

At this interval, drugs were isolated and cauterized as the source of fear beyond the troubles they reasonably evoked. Racial, sexist and class-based fears were funneled

through the “addict”, who was constructed both in reaffirmation of and to defend Western identity against “pollution” by “evil” foreign influences. Vividly the fabrication of mid-century “Chinese devils” portrays the intricacies of this course, with Chinese “dealers” depicted to lure [white] women into their “opium dens” where, by device of drug, they were said to become sexually disinhibited and enslaved under its pharmacological potency. Opium thereby served not only as a metonym for the Chinese to justify their racial exclusion and subjection to discriminative violence, but also functioned as the scapegoat by which the drug, as possessive agent, could be made responsible for the unwanted social behavior of young women (Manderson, 1993).

Dominant narratives of “addiction” construct the “addicted” subject as “inauthentic” exemplar and material antithesis to American values of autonomy and choice. The alleged failure of “addicts” to appropriately self-govern through the supreme, and even “ethical”, Western ideology of freedom locates their defiance of normative boundaries as a byproduct of their “possession” by drug (Reith, 2004). As this causal argument relates, the “addicted” subject would endeavor to, and is capable of, living a universalized Western “truth” were it not for their tenure by a demon drug who lives through them its pathologies. The attribution to illicit drugs unique powers, or what Mosher et.al (2016) call a “voodoo pharmacology”, underwrites the notion that such substances induce a metaphysical state of control that leads individuals to commit “bizarre” acts. Just as the “witch” emerged as a political technology that adhered dissent to demonic “possession” and in effect allowed for the “problem” to be treated apart from the individual and for society to be remitted of responsibility for the extremities of their punishment, the “addict’s” “possession” manifests likewise, with their refusal to live by

normative structures an “evil” that they are *forced* to articulate by the repressive punishments they face (Manderson, 2015).

In continuity with early modern philosophy, demonology intended to scientifically expose the pretensions of the demonic and to identify the limits of its efficacy (Clark, 1997). Within the contemporary, demonology continues to be directed through a “scientificity” embedded within the assemblage of institutions constructed to “treat” “addiction” to greatly delimit “addict” subjectivity by the evidential requisite that they profess their tenure to drug and subsequently submit themselves to exorcistic “cure”. Expressed both as signifier of moral pathology and “disease” of the will, the subjectified state of the “addict” is within popular debates over “addiction” suspended perpetually to a liminal existence at the intersection of “sickness” and “sin” (Davison, 2009). As Ryan Kemp (2012) notes, the “addict” crosses multiple political domains - “crime, justice, health and social cohesion”- to in effect function as blameful target in the state’s failure to achieve social tranquility.

Of this insolvency Levine (2002) remarks, “Drug addiction, abuse, and even use can be blamed by almost anyone for long-standing social problems and the worsening of almost anything. Theft, robbery, rape, malingering, fraud, corruption, physical violence, shoplifting, juvenile delinquency, sloth, sloppiness, sexual promiscuity, low productivity, and all around irresponsibility -nearly any social problem can be said to be made worse by drugs.” To this end, demonology, in its contemporary philosophical, political and socio-cultural expressions, has abetted a particular visual authority of “addiction”. A frame which has not only been acceded by the state, but by a “corporate pharmacopia”

that has, by metaphors of [demonic] contagion, written into the body politic a prescriptive framework to deal with the “addicted” state. These structures are, however, both predetermined and conditioned by class, race, sexuality, identity and their intersections, as well as by “moral geographies” inscribed within their built edifices (Smith, 2015). As Stanley Stepanic (2014) notes, however, no account of a particular demonic manifestation can be called comprehensive without situation of the *idea* which gave rise to the entity within its cultural, linguistic, literary and anecdotal roots. “Addiction”, as demonic incantation, can thereby only be fully realized by setting the phenomena within, and reading it through, the dramatizations of drug use in popular culture.

While the proliferation of horrific cultural narratives of “addiction” may indeed elucidate a desire within society to experience the transgressive sensations of the drugged effect through mediated account, they are simultaneously also meant as tales to caution and warn. Throughout the twentieth century in America, as Mosher, et. al. (2016). concede, the criminal justice system and the government have engaged in a well-documented, and rigorous, campaign to demonize *certain* drugs in defense of their prohibition, often with the help of popular media. Pointedly, they continue, a variety of strategies have been employed in this regard; to include, claims that drugs possess unique powers which encourage “normal” people to act bizarrely and engage in violence, that specific groups are the primary users and traffickers of these substances, and that they are an inimitable risk to the health of children. Often, these illustrations are established by a (mis)representation of scientific evidence that are abstrusely scripted into the (re)presentations of drug users/”addicts” into cultural artefacts.



“Addiction”, as Robin Room (2003) reminds, is a “culture-bound syndrome”, with significant differences, across place and time, emerging both regarding *what* substances are considered “dangerous” and *who* are deemed “dangerous” by association. Importantly then, as she further concedes, “addiction” is utilized as a narrative of storytelling; with the primary thematic refrain, often depictive of the “addict” as liar, cheat, thief, manipulator, sometimes killer, and by which the narrative tone can twist outlandishly and horrifically; “addiction” is a gothic tale- in *naturalistic* fashion (Room, 2003). A cultural criminological enquiry therefore enables fictive portrayals of “addiction” as “possession” to be critiqued in a humanistic direction, apart from, but in conversation with, the reifications of more orthodox “scientific” criminological approaches (Sothcott, 2016). If “addiction” is indeed a tale of the ungraspable and the unspeakable, of supernatural mystery in horrific form, and if demons communicate only in the negative, then the question arises: when the “addict” is exorcised, who’s speech is *forced*?

## CHAPTER III

### THE CORTEZ

The fourth season of *American Horror Story, Hotel*, centers on the enigmatic Hotel Cortez located in Los Angeles, California. At first entry, the precise geometric lines and rich ornamentation of the art deco style lobby evokes an order that is at once belied by a deject quality set within the dark wood, sleek metal undertones and deep crimson of the carpeting. As these two aesthetic forces contrast, clarity and obscurity, they accentuate the transgressive tempo and timeless contingencies which endlessly influence the rigid structures of the modern city (Dawdy, 2010). As a representational space, the Cortez is rendered into being by the ideologies affixed to the real places it is alleged to resemble and simultaneously enlivened by the imagined experiences and identities of the real people thought to traverse these threshold spaces.

Dominant notions of spatio-temporal linearity and historiography are directly challenged by the design of the Cortez, as the setting of the hotel relies on artifacts of the past to presciently convey its animative aura within the present. The fictitious site of the hotel on LA's notorious "Skid Row" intends upon the capture of the intricate symbolisms of the subversive and vernacular side of urban social life (Bloch, 2010). Drawn from the realities of these places as they are *lived*, the set of the Cortez craves to replicate what Edward Soja (1998) terms "thirdspaces", or spaces of the city which fundamentally manifest and surface alternatives to the naturalized dichotomies of modernity: subject/other, female/male, black/white, perceived/conceived.

Enriched by the potentialities they yield to negotiate and transform essentialist notions of identity, these spaces are never entirely knowable in their tendencies. Shaped by deep marginalization and tempered by the logics of resistance they provoke, their rich and flexible dynamisms must, therefore, be carefully conceived of in representational discourse. Tales of entropic decay and degradation, such as the narrative which abides *Hotel*, in effect dangerously subsume their inherent possibilities under dominative rhetoric, simply for horror's sake. As an interpretive site, the Cortez naively occults the transitional district, and while there is serious attempt to convey its historicity and cultural idiosyncrasies- its realist qualities remain only specter, present-but denied. To the detriment of the complex and oppositional contingencies it imitates, its "otherness" is emphasized with difference homogenized, ordered and abridged to the reinforcement of absolute binarisms (Duncan & Ley, 2013).

Realized as a vestigial structure, the Cortez is alluded to hew its power from the affectation of death. Portrayed as sought out rather than stumbled upon by its resident guests, the central characters are conceived to be drawn there by its fragmented rhythms to live their penchants for vice under the lawlessness it sanctions. Popular fears of the "real" places to which it is alleged to correspond are intimated as recessed within its walls, such that the "sensible" world can be closed off and horrifically dissolved through the abject state it inflicts. One by one the seasons cast emerge by this plotline as a perennial collection of the dead, undead and not yet dead, with each person's story conveyed as rooted within a rapacious desire to find a semblance of wholeness amid the existential angst and uncertainties of a fluid world. It is this ceaseless search for resolve that breathes life into the season's primary theme of addiction which, variably depicted

from drug use to sex to the habitual use of technology, finds imbue ment and persistent expression within every storyline as a demonically centered possessive force that inhibits the host any trace of authentic identity.

Often praised for its mediation on disruptive spaces and its symbolic rupture of normative structures (Subramanian, 2013), *American Horror Story's* animation of “addiction” as serialized risk and demonic compulsivity actively reifies, rather than unsettles, the dominant rhetoric that surrounds the concept. *Hotel* may appeal, seduce and even provide comfort for societal anxieties related to substance (ab)use (Sothcott, 2015), but its cyclical portrayal of “addiction” as degradative and violent “possession” concedes a distorted image that is excessively negative and portrays the phenomena as always life-threatening (Polak, 2000). Moreover, each character finds texture in familiar tropes of race, class, sex and identity-based clichés that are folded into and operate through “addiction” towards the edification of destructive and violent subjectivities which are harmfully debasing.

Although the “addicts” dramatize the “disorder” of the Cortez, the hotel plays the role of passive agent that lends “authenticity” to the deviancy of their acts (Picart & Greek, 2007). The character of the Cortez does not just express “addiction” by an elemental tone of insalubrity, but tacitly reaffirms by its constitution common sense theories of a reciprocal relationship between substance (a)buse and vice, drug culture and criminality. An alliteration of a “residential” hotel of ill-repute, the Cortez codifies the desirability of these places as rooted within an anonymity that they are imagined to behest. Shortly into the season, the hotel resonates as a reinvention of the “Murder

Castle” of notorious American serial killer, H.H. Holmes. With its hallways without doors, secret passageways and chutes, the Cortez is elucidated by the hotel’s manager, Iris, as capable of disappearing the worst of crimes. Show producer, Ryan Murphy, shared in a press interview that his inspiration for the season was drawn not just from the mysteries and uncertainties inherent to hotels, but by the simultaneous claustrophobic paranoia they engender. “It’s about hiding things”, he related, “[and] hotels by nature are a good place to store secrets.” (Stack, 2015).

Assembled to cognize the clandestine “disorderliness” of the sites it represents, the narrative of the Cortez exaggerates and inflects the individuals who move through them as corrupted/corruptive figures. The socio-spatial marginality of the environment, and the hardships suffered within them, are causatively ignored and an argument of political and institutional neglect and liability negated. A functional argument that contends an anomic environmental state reigns, as the hotel is impressed to embody the inability of society to enforce control such that human desires are left unbounded and the individual, “aspires to everything and is satisfied with nothing” (Applerouth & Edles, 2012). “Addiction” is thereby mapped onto the space by a particular imaginary which analogizes the “unnaturalness” or “sickness” of its topology, both in the mimetic and the “real”, in contrast to the “naturalness” or “healthy” topologies of spaces marked by privilege. Conceptualized under this pathological paradigm, as Christopher Smith (2012) imparts, the city’s purlieus become adjudicated as cartographies of “addiction” conceived of as systemic “disease”.

The Cortez can therefore be realized, in and of itself, as an infected and infective entity, an admonition distinctly explicated in episode six, Room 33. A recent resident of the hotel, Agnetha, unaware that she is dead, asks to be shown to the line for *Fast and the Furious- Supercharged*. Fretfully she conveys to Donovan, another resident of the Cortez, that she and her friend, Vendela, have been “lost in [the] hotel for so long” [because] it’s like a maze.” Donovan only coldly replies, “You’re never going to see Vin Diesel in 3-D. You can’t leave this hotel.” Vendela’s insistence that she and Agnetha will find a way out softens his resolve, however, and he imparts to them the exogenous force of the Cortez: “[The hotel] makes you lose your compass...your sense of self”, [ and the only way out is to] “find your purpose”. Replicative of the “treatment” services offered to “addicts” through organizations such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Donovan instructs them only their journey to find “purpose” through the story of Cara.

A school-teacher with “too much love to give and no one to give it to”, Cara checked into the Cortez where she committed suicide, sitting in the bathtub, “like a bouquet of rotting flesh” for months before being found. In her newly spectral state, as Agnetha and Vendela, she wandered aimlessly until she found her “purpose” in “terrorizing” the hotel’s living guests. The therapeutic “purpose” of AA/NA group organizations is here transposed and (re)presented as the very antithesis to a mended assemblage of “curative” “addicts”. The Cortez is in contrast evocated as a ruined assemblage of “ruinous” “addicts”. Their exchange is stenciled throughout the season by a “narco-geography” that in effect discursively inscribes within the spatiality neurochemical metaphors of infection and contagion (Smith, 2012). Embodied by the circuitry of a septic site, the Cortez is realized to, by its pathologized state, pathologize.

The specifically spatial argument adhered to the hotel, as representational space, is conceived by the “disease” paradigm of “addiction”, which is both reflective of and affective to popular and political visualizations of the localities it is alleged to signify. Contemporary assertions that an “opioid epidemic” proliferates throughout America are consistently expressed, as with the above-mentioned Orexo advertisement, in terms of endemic septicity. As an article titled “‘He’s Blue’: Louisville rattled by 151 overdoses in 4 days” conveys, “The [heroin] situation appears to be worsening. The four-day spike that began Thursday amounted to an average of 38 overdoses a day, almost double last month’s average.” While some contend that opioids are a critical and growing threat, however, such an assertion must be troubled. It is perhaps not an actual influx in heroin that is truly the issue, but an alteration in the demographics of users- white, rural or suburban, middle class, often females- creating a “new face of heroin” that has led to exaggerated claims and hype (Wood, 2014). Violent and horrific portrayals of “addicts”, such as the residents of the Cortez, are not only influenced by this hyperbolic publicity, but as well echo their sentiments of contagion and often complicate efforts to help users in need. As a volunteer with the Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition remarked within the article, the organization is often criticized as “enablers” that only ensure increased use (Moghe & Drash, 2017).

“Addiction”, as “disease”, takes ideological root in the individual “addict” as the site or embodiment of annihilation by “immoral” consumptive habits. Within a society where identity is largely defined by the ability to consume, the “addict”, portrayed as controlled by the product they consume, is pathologized and demonized for their “flawed” choice (Hayward & Yar, 2006). As Kemp (2012) relates, descriptions of

“addiction” by “addicts” reveal etymological discourses of “being tied down, constricted, perhaps even trapped”, and yet although all types of consumption can be argued to affect such feelings, drugs are recognized as products which require the individual be “exorcised” of their tenure and redirected towards appropriate patterns of consumption. As Episode One of *Hotel, Checking In*, conveys in close with the lyrics to *Hotel California*, “we are all just prisoners here, of our own device”, the “addicts” are regarded as responsible for the difficulties they face, with their asserted imprisonment by drug contended as reflective of their inherent want for felonious goods. As Michelle Brown (2009) conveys, the iconography of punishment, while not always distinctly apparent within representation discourse, is nevertheless often evoked to serve as a narrative resource. The insular texture, temporal and spatial displacement of the Cortez’s residents, as well as their perpetual abandonment within its walls (Brown, 2009) not only imaginatively and visually abridges the Cortez, as mimetic space, with real-life penal structures, but reveals it as a carceral edifice that intends to shape its residents by a dominant image.

More than insinuating of the Cortez as a prison, as these lyrics reveal, a penal subjectivity fashioned by the meaning and experience of the resident’s incarceration is moralized and attributed to personal culpability (Bosworth, 2017). Portrayed as at once rife with resentment and malice, shame and regret, the characters are depicted to accept their plight as consequent to their own actions. Despite their collective captivity under the despotism of the Cortez, they remain severed from the larger context of their position and settle themselves to live their penalty as mark of individualized failure. Although *Hotel*



does not imply a unified theory of addiction, the characters candidly live their “possessed addicted” state in continuity with a broader landscape of monstrosity and deviance.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ADDICTION DEMON

Manifested as a dramatized depiction of the ephemerality of thirdspaces, the Cortez, although unreflective of their realism, is animated by deeply held societal fear and excitement with respect to their indefinability. Such that even when the concept of “addiction” is afforded the nuance it desperately warrants during the season, the “addict” remains fantastically represented and politically articulated as an incarnate of “evil”. To this end the Cortez is, as well, modeled after the Hotel Cecil, a low-budget inn that still stands in Los Angeles today. The scripted performances of the fictionalized Cortez and its residents are reflective of the mysteries that mark the Cecil’s sordid history. Home to more than one serial killer over the years, the Cecil has seen many a suspicious death, but the most recent case of Eliza Lam found direct expression in Hotel by the earlier account of “Cara”, the school-teacher.

In early 2013, after patrons of the Cecil began to complain of a peculiar taste to the water, subsequent investigations of the rooftop water tank revealed Lam’s body to be floating inside. It was initially speculated that Lam, intoxicated at the time, had accidentally fallen into the water tank and drowned. An examination of the security footage on the day of her disappearance, however, portrayed a far more troublesome scene. Lam is shown to enter the elevator and press several floor buttons without success, before she appears to become disconcerted and hide in the corner. Seconds later, she nervously steps out and motions conversationally with her hands, although no one else appears on the tape. After toxicology reports officially ruled out drugs as cause of her

death, the mystery which surrounded the case led many to unofficially suggest that Lam may have been “possessed” or overtaken at the time of her death by a spirit of the hotel (‘American Horror Story: Hotel’, 2015).

The very real case of Lam, envisaged as either drugs or demon, illustrates poignantly the cultural slippage between “addiction” and “possession”. It is the underlying mystery and uncertainty that surrounds drug use and the marked inability to pinpoint “addiction’s” causation that entwines these two phenomena as analogous incarnates of “evil”. Derrida (1995), in “The Rhetoric of Drugs”, imparts that, “as soon as one utters the word "drugs," even before any "addiction," a prescriptive or normative "diction" is already at work, performatively, whether one likes it or not.” The “normative diction” of drugs in America, despite the illicit substance in question, predominately abides by a pharmacography which distorts the addictive properties of drug to relate the only outcome is an individual isolated by and enslaved by substance. The proliferation of theories of “addiction”, as medicalized “pathology”, have surfaced to provide an alternative narrative to depictions of the phenomena, but they have not allayed stigma - the “sin” paradigm continues to be a tool of great cultural power (Davison, 2009).

As a distinctly American story of horror, addiction cannot be told it seems without a melded schema of sin/sickness. Constitutive of this framework, as the previously noted opiodic demon of Orexo concedes, ideology is performed as horrific impartment of a mortification of morality that can be spurred even by temperate, socially-acceptable drug use. As the demon is portrayed to both avulse its power from “possession” of the subject and to successively reduce the individual to mere object, the “possessed addict” comes to

be entirely representative of dependence and irrationality. Although this dramatization claims to genuinely resemble loss of individual agency, responsibility and identity under “possession” by drugs, these representations animate a mythology of drug use that incriminates the individual and conceals the failure of law to, as promised, adequately resolve resilient social issues (Manderson, 2015). This supernatural discourse of drugs finds reification in *Hotel* through the “addiction demon” whose spectacle, as the Cortez’s most formidable beast, serves as reaffirmation of prevailing societal notions that moderation is inherently antithetical to drug use. The addiction demon, a sexually violent entity who uses a metal conical shaped dildo to assault his victims is comprised of a white waxy substance reminiscent of the “foam cone” that escapes the mouth at overdose. His form not only suggests that he hews his power at an addict’s demise, but upon his attack the clock spins backwards to mimetically suggest that the subject’s ruination comes by their inability, or refusal, to live in “real time”.

“Addiction”, as Karen Kopelson (2016) edifies, is often confronted as a “temporal disorder”, or a pathological incapability of the addict to live in time; that is, “intoxication kills time, wastes time, seeks to escape the objective reality of time, and thereby leads to an apathetic failure to *produce* in time.” The improper use of time insinuates decay of the individual. That the demon’s violence reverses time, however, implies that, as the mimesis of “addiction” and like the Cortez itself, an iterative cycle of purposelessness. In a culture regulated by the clock, drug use is portrayed as the neglect of other activities in that time is realized as a commodity that is used or spent instead of enjoyed (Room, 2003). The “addict” becomes, thereby, understood as a “hedonistic” subject, whose “evil” derives from their misuse of time, and hence their productive value.

The addiction demon seamlessly embodies a contemporary exegesis of the demonic who, in contrast with the demons of antiquity, manipulates not the body of the “possessed” but materializes as an entity of entirely separate form. Amassed at the release of inner “evil” at the use of drugs, he is not a diabolic but a uniquely human potential (Stoddart, 2009). James March, the Cortez’s personification of H.H. Holmes, relates of his existence to Sally, a resident of the hotel: “This Demon that you and your kind [addicts] have conjured with your diseased acts must feed. If not on others, then on you, dear Sally.’ Although the Demon is formed of Sally, she is portrayed as beholden to his control. Symbolic not just of the parasitic self-relationship drug use is proffered to manifest, Sally’s trade of lives to the Demon for spare of her own torture by him speaks to the dominative, externalized hold said to be produced by the cyclical “pathological” consumptive behavior “addiction” is said to create.

Siphoned through Western theories of selfhood and rationality, such accounts, as John Fitzgerald (2015) concedes, dramatize drug use as the villain which demoralizes the social bond of the individual to society. Although first usage of the concept of “addiction”, in America, emerged as a *group* level concern to articulate racial, sexist and class-based anxieties, contemporary theories of “addiction” describe the phenomena at the *individual* level through subjective notions of loss of control (Reith, 2004). Group-based fears retain considerable purchase, but under these terms “addiction” is portrayed as an internal site of contest of which an individual’s “authentic” self is regarded as being held captive by an “inauthentic”, drug-addled self. Popularly, the addict is feared- even hated- within society, as Kopelson (2016) concedes, because their pleasure is regarded as self-interested escapism. Situated within a broader narrative of “addiction”, the drug, or

pharmakon, thereby constitutes a conceptual binary within the pharmacia as both remedy and poison, the liberatory effects of which, as Derrida imparts, are continually contrasted against the inherently disordered antisocialism drugs are conveyed to impose.

Conceived of, by Derrida (1993), as a flickering and dizzying play between such binaries, within the space of the pharmakon, dichotomies, such as remedy/poison, good/bad, authentic/inauthentic, inside/outside are simultaneously constructed and deconstructed. The bivalent potential of which, as Kemp (2006) relates, is not only realized to be lived through “addiction”, but which also live in the words used to express “addiction”. Producer Ryan Murphy, expressive of this bivalence, related that the addiction demon serves as a metaphor or “representation of...what people go through fighting addiction” at the juncture of two worlds, to which Lady Gaga, who plays the matriarch, Countess Elizabeth, of the Cortez, conceded, “Its addiction as the public sees it versus how it really is and how that plays into each other.” (Sandberg, 2015).

The addiction demon may be realized, then, as the corporeal embodiment of this very bivalence as it is lived through “addiction”. Arising as a vertiginous flicker at the very edge of human perception, he is the tangible, yet spectral, incarnation of the moment that consciousness becomes seized by substance. Representative of both the disorientation and clarity of intoxication, the demon’s final act, rape, culminates his always and ever present threat. It is this final assault which adjudicates his reality; as it is the moment when the natural world wholly collides with the supernatural at the legislation of death. As anthropophagic of the dominant, naturalized, discourse of “addiction”, the demon, with this act, irrevocably defines the assumed pathology of

addiction as “possession”. Consumed by a transcendent nod, the demon’s first victim of the season, Gabriel, is startled from his rapture when the demon flips him over and thrusts within him the drill-bit phallus, as Sally, who crouches next to the bed, utters with cold empathy, “I can see the pain in your eyes. It’s very familiar. Oh, you’ve lost something. Frozen in time. Can’t go back. Can’t move forward.”

## CHAPTER V

### “MY DEAR, SWEET SALLY”

To be freed of the demon’s violence Sally is construed as having to work against her own; she is portrayed, at once, as being kind and empathic, but also manipulative and deceitful to this end. Sally’s character is almost effortlessly horrific, because she depicts the “addicted” female. While her character surfaces normatively through a diction of drugs that defies their grasp, her tenure by them can be realized as particularly abhorrent because it profanely breaks with the symbolic order. Hallowed notions of feminine identity are realized through her to be imperiled by drug, or to tip female desire, which is tied in the quotidian to notions of “excess” into a formless state “that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order” (Grosz, 1994; quoted in Kopelson, 2016). Sally is therefore the quintessential embodiment of “inauthenticity”, as she conveys the distinctive space within the socio-spatial imaginary of the “addicted” city which female “addicts” occupy. Specifically, however, it is her whiteness and her subtlety imparted by middle class childhood that fashions her truly as an agent of distress, because, as Nancy Campbell (2000) conveys, when white women use drugs it signals the end of respectability. As if in remark to this in episode two, *Chutes and Ladders*, Detective John Lowe begins to ask of Sally’s residency, “I can’t help but wonder...” But she knowingly interrupts him and asks for him, “How come a girl like me ends with tracks in her arms living in a dump like this?”

The desire of the female for drugs intimates her as hedonist exemplar; she is especially “evil” because she defies cultural expectations of womanhood for “self-



seeking”. Realized, accordingly, to subvert her role within the “totally other-oriented” economy that underwrites Western notions of feminine identity, her ambiguity often becomes directed through a mixed narrative of “victim” and “monster” (Bordo, 1993; quoted in Kopelson, 2016). To understand Sally’s distinct positionality, as a white female “addict”, it is important to consider first, as Jeffrey Nealon (1998) conveys, “[that] we hate the drug addict because...they are inexorably and completely [understood] as for themselves”. Notions of “victimhood” are, at times, employed to both render thinkable the causes of female drug use and to offer “reprieve” from this hatred and culpability. Often, however, they are simplistically applied narratives that assert a fixed relationship between “addiction” and “victimization”. While the significance of this lens cannot be underestimated, often they undermine efforts to consider justly the violences that abide the socio-historical subjugation of females. When these narratives are utilized, as they are with Sally, to dramatize and add texture to characterizations of the “addicted” female in (re)presentation, they are injurious and reductive. Not only do they further vitiate the strength of women, but these narratives also relegate and situate their plight as mere “sufferers”- who cannot possibly be “resistors”.

Intended or not, television shows like *Hotel*, which deny the complicated histories of the women’s struggle, only restate, confirm and endorse dominant conceptualizations of female drug use as simply the consequence of prior victimhood. Moreover, in their reliance upon storylines of “psychological damage”, as Sally’s own does, she is easily related by the Countess, to whom we shall return, to have “serious abandonment issues.” So even as she rebels against the normative boundaries of femininity, Sally’s desire to transgress is disarticulated, throughout the entirety of the season, from any notion that her

defiance may in fact be purposeful. Were her desire to use drugs portrayed simply as enjoyment she could not be understood; rather, she must be depicted as subjugated to their influence, with her “story” following to remediate the viewer’s anxiety as explanation for how she got there.

Sally is conceived of as wasted by her own vanity, with her alleged inconsideration for others perhaps best imparted by Gabriel himself. Blood soaked and hysterical, after killing another Cortez guest, he runs into Detective John Lowe on the threshold of the lobby. Nearly incomprehensible with panic, John rushes him to the hospital where he manages to say, “the junkie whore...she did this to me. She said I’d be free.” Sally evokes the “junkie whore”, a gendered construct not only occupying the lowest level of the drug scene hierarchy, but also quite frequently despised by male drug users themselves (Goode, 1995). Sally’s “addicted” state is narcotized under a particular visual authority, to convey her story by a moralizing narrative that positions her as existent outside the boundaries of “inauthenticity”. As Caty Simon (2016) notes, in the article, “‘Junkie Whore’—What it’s really like for sex workers on heroin”, the drug-using sex worker is “too wretched to be relatable, too scorned even for countercultural cred...she is repulsive, unclean and immoral”, with her murder dismissed even by the police under the lingo “no human involved”.

Condemned, retributively, to the Cortez for her life as a heroin user/pusher, Sally emotively denies that she is “a hooker”; however, her sullied articulation by a 90’s grunge-style sartorial that finds perfection with the cigarette she keeps clenched between her teeth tolerates the uncertainty of her claim. Yet it is not her libertine aesthetic which

avulses her horror, but the always fresh purple track marks that line her arms. The grotesqueness of her abject “addicted” body not only captivates the viewer, but also pollutes the boundaries of inter-subjectivity. She emerges in this way, not as signification of the “other”, but as an expression of ‘what must be permanently thrust aside [within us] in order for us to live’ (Kristeva, 1982; quoted in: Roberts, 2009). The disgust evoked by Sally thereby repels quite as much as it attracts because we realize ourselves not just in her, but also through her. The revulsion felt by her abjection is to quite literally feel the law’s charge pulsate and act through our very own bodies. This is the regulatory regime *par excellence*, as it allows us to know, in contrast, order, identity and system so that we can know ourselves in effect (Conroy, 2009).

Rather than represent Sally’s addiction as “embodied protest against patriarchal structures of containment” (Kopelson, 2016), the representation of her “abject addicted” body is scripted through the trope of “disease” in the development of a highly sexualized, mass mediated cautionary tale. The “disorder” she evokes is wholly subsumed and subjectified by the dominant order, with her “possession” by drug realized as foremost conditioned by her “diseased” femininity. Any emancipatory effect of drug, for her, is entirely suppressed by her enslavement not just to the addiction demon, but also to March as patriarch of the hotel who reigns over her. Heroin is thereby the metonymic device through which her intolerable behavior is incriminated, but it is simultaneously the evidence which justifies the sexualized and gendered punishment of her “addiction”. Sally’s story is one of both illness and innocence, as she is depicted to suffer not just through, but for the “male gaze”, in her “possessed” “addicted” state.

Sally's threat as "addict" is organized, shaped and engendered correspondent to heteronormative ideologies of Western society that find resolve, as if consequentially, by her subjugation to male power (Mulvey, 1999). "Addiction" may function as the discursive device which prevents her from "authentically" living "truth", but that is an assessment which can be made only under the pretext that to live "truth" she must live it within the confines of dominant structures. Sally's stay at the Cortez, as spectral resident, began as she was killed by the mother of a man she "overdosed" on China White. Her death here is not, however, to impute knowledge of death or meaning of death unto the viewer but rather to show the viewer instead their own death, or what could become of them should they choose this path. This is the abject form; it is death infecting life (Conroy, 2009). Sally's tale of horror not only animates, as the obdurate Orexo monster does, that "you could be next", but edifies her plight to harrowingly convey that female drug use will render you not just victim, but monster/victim, for whom the only way out is to submit to control. Illustrated as if such control is what Sally yearns for most, when John comes to question her about Gabriel, she replies, "Oh well, junkies. You can't believe a word they say... why are you wasting your time on junkies anyway? We only hurt ourselves." When he threatens her, irritated by her response, with arrest, she unzips his pants and says only, "Come on Detective, show me right from wrong."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COUNTESS

Contrary to Sally's "victimized" state, Elizabeth, the Countess, represents a familiar and quite comfortable archetype of the *femme fatale*. Her femininity, portrayed as tainted by venality, mnemonically manifests her as kith and kin to the illustrious figures of Lillith, Eve, and Pandora. Though each to have wrought upon humankind irreparable anguish by their seductive sexuality, the alleged duplicity of their narratives remains inculcated within explanations of female transgression in the contemporary. As Nicole Hahn Rafter and Michelle Brown (2011) maintain, writers on women and crime have historically described women's lawbreaking as pathological, and in emotional and sexualized terms that relate an exceptional depravity and inherent deceptiveness to their acts. These assumptions have largely preserved the patriarchal condition to reveal a deeply entrenched suspicion and societal fear about the "volatile" moral character of women that remains in the contemporary fixed upon and within the physiology of the female body.

As Stevie Simkin (2014) contends, Western culture has been preoccupied with tales of the 'deadly' woman, who, "fashioned in the fears and desires of the patriarchy", has taken on a mythic existence. Realized both within the 'real' and the fictive, these portrayals cyclically mold and distort interpretations of women's violence and the violence perpetuated against women to justify broader structures of containment.

Analogized by this form, the Countess finds cunning depiction by a foliate design of a Venus flytrap upon the columns of the Cortéz's lobby. As if in omen to those who enter

of her predatory allure and predilection for betrayal, her artful representation is as well illustrative of her selectivity, like the plant itself, over the suitability of her prey. Portrayed to be of a beauty which strikes and mesmerizes such that her “victims” are compelled, regardless of their disposition, to great risk for her benefit, it is her affliction by an ‘ancient blood disease’, or vampirism, that imputes her with the power to affect fully her dominion over those she considers worthwhile fare.

As Richard J. Walker asks, “What is the vampire representative of if not an addict-criminal, an individual compulsively driven to repeat an act of violation?” Yet unlike the narrative which presides well-known filmic representations of the vampire-addict, the Countess does not invoke the iconography of addiction by her dependence upon, or withdrawal from, blood. It is her ability, as vampiric *fatale*, to insatiate “addiction” within her ‘victims’ that constitutes her threat. Her violence, therefore, lies in her phallic eyes, which probe, penetrate and rivet (Paglia, 1990), to affect her victims, like the power of drug, to a possessed intoxicated state. The Countess is the embodiment of ambiguity two-fold- being, at once, as desirable as she is objectionable- but it is through her simultaneity as vampire and *fatale* that illustrates her power under a paradigm of “disease” that alliterates the biological pathologies utilized to frame women’s transgression. It is, therefore, the uncertainty that her sexual ambiguity evokes which is realized to permit her *criminality*.

The Cortéz is left in the proprietorship of the Countess after the death of her late husband, James Patrick March. She maintains the hotel by luring into its darkness those of value to her, only to then drain them of their worth and dispose of them carelessly.

Consonant with normative, binary presumptions of femininity, the Countess represents the “whore” set against a “virginal” alternative. She is realized as of such sexually subversive influence that, after her fortune is swindled by Bernie Madoff, she succeeds in saving the Cortéz from foreclosure by enticing renowned fashion designer, Will Drake, to not only purchase the building but to marry her, although he is gay, so that she can once more inherit the hotel upon his demise. The Countess, as addictive substance, personifies the deific properties, or notions of a “voodoo pharmacology” (Mosher, et al., 2014), often fitted to drugs. But she as well emerges as such by the vexing political history of the vampire as “foreign threat”, to retain and symptomatically reproduce vestiges of that narrative but to inflect them as a specifically feminized physiological threat of “addiction”.

At once a vampiric *fatale* and addictive agent, the pleasures promised by the Countess’s contravention are therefore depicted, as Simone de Beauvoir (2014) attests, to be profoundly menacing to ‘order’, because when “woman evades the rules of society, she [is understood] to return to Nature and to the demon, [or to loose] uncontrollable and evil forces in[to] the collective midst.” By this narrative, if the female drug user or “addict” imperils the reproduction of society by her refusal to live the normative “truth” of her reproductive capacity, then the feminization of the addictive “possessive” agent thereby situates the drug “epidemic” as a continuance of torture sited as wrought upon the world by women. Only what she is conceived to imperil is, in effect, autonomy itself. As Nancy Campbell (2000) conveys, “dope” was both primitivized and Orientalized to follow World War I, with primitivized rhetoric applied to the lower class whereas the self-indulgent middle and upper classes, to include native-born women “lures” or

“smugglers”, were orientalized. Specifically, as Sarah Graham Mulhall notes of the “vampire opium”, “Opium is among the women rich in idleness...[who] are trapped by the opium trafficker...they become drug scouts, they capture the young man whose outlook on life is still romance...they coax the older man in order to rob them. Under the influence of drug they stop at nothing...and those who are caught in the golden mesh of their drug nets, find themselves dragged down to death with them.” (Mulhall, 1926; quoted in Campbell (2000). The indecipherability of the Countess’s “truth”, as *fatale*, because “she is never as she seems to be” (Martins, 2017), asserts her danger to lurk- she is the internal and tantalizing “foreign threat”. And it is of this paradox that the Countess seems to speak when she states, “We have two selves: the one the world needs us to be—compliant – and the shadow. Ignore it, and life is forever suffering.” Her words intimate horrifically that the female, as shadow, animates entirely- the monster.



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Theories of diabolism have, since antiquity, made manifest societal fears of the unknown. Within the West, demonology, as discipline, flourished accordingly, functioning as a device to translate alterity at the inception of early modern science and during the “transition” to capitalism. Emergent spiritual, state, scientific and social anxieties were abridged and animated by the methodologies of the field towards the creation of politically intoned and collectively consummated “diabolic” enemies. Supernatural theories were occulted by the “scientism” of the era, with early modern fields of study in the natural, social and political sciences fascinated entirely by continual efforts to debate and define the limits of human perceptibility. Ideologies of the demonic, although skeptically regarded, were absorbed and institutionalized within their philosophies to abide the canonization of “evil”.

As a significant rhetorical tool utilized to atavize difference, the framework of “evil” was concretized under the auspices of the state to justify the exclusionary and violent practices of colonialist projects, both abroad and domestically. Specific groups and individuals perceived to be antithetical to the growth of economy and to the manufacture of a distinctly Westernized identity saw repressive punishment as the brutal consequence of “civilized religion”, which infused politics with religious fervor (Goodin, 1981). Dominant fields of study produced knowledges coincident with and functional as assemblages to new theories of state power and security logics that attempted to isolate and subsequently cauterize societal fears of the indefinable towards the affirmation of an

emergent capitalist (world) order. Fixed upon the suppression of phenomena cognized as oppositional to the progress of “civilization”, contemporary techniques of governance were applied and diffused multiplicatively in the immolation of the character and behaviors of some towards the inoculation of the population, as a collective, by “faith” in the sovereign as protector from their venality.

Markedly critical to a broader increase in the diabolization of “crime” were the “witch-trials”, as they saw previously rejected methods of supernatural “proof” transformed and regenerated through epistemologies based on tolerated practices of investigative logic and procedural justice. Devices of the demonological were here fused, parsed of their explicitly theological domain, to a naturalized testimony of “evil” as incarnated by the socially damned to validate and excuse the formation of regimes of systematic persecution. The precepts of demonology, already extant and suffuse within principles of correction and control were, with the development of criminology as a viable field of study, laundered but retained under its theoretical purviews. Early studies within the discipline were consumed by the study of criminality as a trait of inherency that little regarded social factors but was, nevertheless, manifold in its implications for the maintenance of a prevailing societal order.

In the contemporary, the field endures to facilitate this objective. Dominant narratives of “addiction” that proliferate throughout the discipline construct the “addicted” subject as directly opposed to American values of autonomy, choice and “freedom”. Apart, however, from the specifically “biological differences” these studies claim to scientifically assert, they also serve as the site by which defiance of normative

boundaries can be rhetorically strengthened and codified as a challenge that imperils the well-being, or even existence, of society and humanity itself. As early as 1928, filmic (re)presentations, such as *The Pace that Kills*, edified drugs as, “the most tragic problem that has ever confronted [human]kind... this octopus---this hideous monster that clutches at every heart. Creeping slowly, silently, inexorably into every nook and corner of the world...the demon DOPE! In its slimy trail follow misery, degradation, death; and from its clutching tentacles no community, no class, no people are immune.” (*The Pace that Kills*, 1928; quoted in Campbell, 2000). As Campbell relates, “addiction” not only operates as civilization’s “other”, but the “addicted” become expressed by this logic both as “passive vehicles” for the spread of contagion as well as “mediums” who seek most to make more of their kind (Campbell, 2000).

Under the contemporary paradigmatic frame of “addiction” as disease, a melded schema of sin/sickness has been discursively inscribed within the societal landscape by “neurochemical” metaphors of infection and contagion. The iconography of “addiction” flourishes by this archetype within cultural products, and very often remains directed through their particular visualities to over-dramatize the harms caused by drug use. Certainly, there is space for negation of and resistance to dominant conceptualizations of “addiction” within cultural narrative, but (re)presentations of the phenomena, such as within the here discussed *American Horror Story*, utilize the “popular demonological” to amalgamate a distorted image of the pharmacological power of drugs which reciprocates, and is mutually constitutive of, repressive frameworks that dehumanize the drug user/”addict”.

Moreover, these narratives injuriously reify the ideologies of “disease” that underpin, even as they endeavor to alleviate, the societal stigma that surrounds “addiction”. Primarily conceded by a thematic frame which suggests the “addict” as an individual who craves “normality”, yet is prevented from its actualization by their tenure to drug, these portrayals grossly constrain the ability the way society understands the “addicted” by dominative knowledges of drug use.

As such, storylines often draw their texture from familiar tropes of race, class, sexuality and identity, in the process further entrenching marginality and wholly delimiting the possibilities imaginable for, and by, drug users/ “addicts” themselves. “Addiction” as manifested both within the fictitious and the “real” by notions of “possession”, are not only unduly negative but are scientifically incorrect abstractions of the pharmacological effects of drugs. These tales blithely accept expertly disseminated mythologies, and ignore the socio-spatial implications for the geographies and the persons it intends to (re)present. Spaces of disadvantage, such as urban city purlieus, are exploited as the form by which horror can be expulsed, with their complexities coldly dissolved into a functional and moralized critique that becomes located within the individual alone, severed from structure and tailored toward arguments of “decontamination”. Narratives of the “popular demonological” as they affect, and are effected by, theories of criminality do not just fail to produce, but actively defuse, counter-narratives which hold promise, to the contrary, that the concept of “addiction” will meet the exorcistic act and be disabused of the dominant/demonic rhetoric it demands of its host.

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