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I.B. TAURIS

QUEER HORROR

film and television

sexuality and masculinity at the margins

Darren Elliott-Smith is Senior Lecturer in Film and Television at the University of Hertfordshire. His research focuses on queerness, gender and the body in horror film and television. He completed his PhD at Royal Holloway.

'Darren Elliot-Smith's well researched volume takes horror cinema's long held interest in the sexual "Other" as its starting point, before fully exploring how the concept of queer horror has moved from subtext to centre stage in a range of mainstream and indie film and TV representations. By drawing on relevant film studies, queer theory and psychoanalytic methodologies, *Queer Horror Film and Television* remains a rigorous study of the changing status of sexuality in the genre. Equally, by drawing in a wide selection of case-studies from body horror classics such as *Carrie* and experimental film traditions, to more recent "Gaysploitation" slasher film parodies and cult TV hits such as *American Horror Story*, this volume will appeal to scholars, students and fans alike.'

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QUEER HORROR
FILM AND
TELEVISION

Sexuality and
Masculinity at the
Margins

DARREN ELLIOTT-SMITH

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Introduction

The horror film's representation of the 'Other' has long been understood to be a symbolic representation of social ills, anxieties and unease. Non-normative sexuality (bisexuality and homosexuality) is often chief among these concerns. Scholars including Robin Wood, Carol J. Clover, Richard Dyer, Ellis Hanson, Judith Halberstam and Harry M. Benshoff¹ have covered significant ground in their respective analyses of homosexuality in the history of the horror genre. Their findings suggest that much of its representation has been symbolic or implicit, whereby homosexuality must be teased out of its place in the shadows via queer interpretation. Academic studies of male homosexuality in horror have been focused on gay masculinity as sub-textual and symbolic in relation to the genre's presumed adolescent heterosexual male target audience, which Carol J. Clover suggests is made up of 'a preponderance of young males.'² These considerations have often discussed the threat that queer, gay and lesbian sexualities pose to the assumed heterosexual spectator.³ Traditionally attributed to the monstrous, whether connoted, displayed or alluded to, homosexuality is traditionally presented as abnormal, predatory and evil, leading Benshoff to conclude that:

until society at large begins to realize and understand the signs and signifying practices of the horror movie contribute to the

social understanding of homosexuality, the construct of the monster queer [...] will continue to oppress many members of society.⁴

Conversely, the study of monstrous homosexuality in the horror film has also revealed the celebratory pleasures offered to queer, gay and lesbian viewers' oppositional identification with the very same monsters that threaten the norm. Yet, the vast majority of such studies have to first make the leap of reading the *symbolic* homosexual potential of the films' monsters; few consider the *explicit* presentation of gay villains and victims alike.

The aim of this book is *not* to reiterate the argument that homosexuality is a key element in the study of the horror genre; rather, it seeks to highlight the limits of a metaphorical understanding of homosexuality in the horror film in an age where its presence has become more explicit. I want to extend on Benschoff's substantive work in *Monsters in the Closet* (1997) beyond his study's conclusion, which proves that while homosexuality may indeed be symbolically present in horror film, it still 'dare not speak its name'. Homosexuality either bleeds into the film extra-textually via the authorial expressivity of their gay and lesbian directors, writers or producers (such as F.W. Murnau, James Whale, Joel Schumacher or Stephanie Rothman) or it is read into the film via subversive, ironic reading strategies or a camp appreciation of the films themselves. Though this book acknowledges both the continuing appropriation of the 1976 classic horror film *Carrie* (Brian De Palma) by the gay community as a key reclaimed queer text, its main focus rests on representations of masculinity and *gay* male spectatorship in queer horror film and television post-2000. In titling this sub-genre 'queer horror', I am designating horror that is crafted by male directors/producers who self-identify as gay, bi, queer or transgendered and whose work features homoerotic, or explicitly homosexual, narratives with 'out' gay characters. As a means of study, this book considers a variety of genres and forms from: video art horror (*Indelible* (Charles Lum, 2004)); independently distributed exploitation films (such as those directed by David DeCoteau); queer Gothic soap operas (*Dante's Cove* (Here! TV 2005–7)); satirical queer horror comedies (such as *The Gay Bed and Breakfast of Terror* (Jaymes Thompson, 2007)); direct-to-video (DTV) low-budget slashers (*Hellbent* (Paul Etheredge-Ouzts, 2004)); and

contemporary representations of gay zombies in film and television from the pornographic *LA Zombie* (Bruce LaBruce, 2010) to the melodramatic *In the Flesh* (BBC Three 2013–15).

This book's close study of queer horror and its representations of gay masculinity (whether it be via their monsters, victims or victim-hero figures) reveals more about gay male anxieties in the early twenty-first century than heterosexual ones. More specifically, I argue that queer appropriations of horror conventions foreground gay men's anxieties about their judgement by heteronormative standards. These anxieties encourage a homonormative apeing of heterosexual culture which, in turn, feeds further anxieties surrounding the cultural conflation of gay masculinity with a shameful femininity. In departing from the analysis of the queer monster as a symbol of heterosexual anxiety and fear, I want to move the discussion forward to focus instead on the anxieties *within* gay subcultures. Via close textual analysis and the application of key psychoanalytic theories to particular examples, I will reinterpret the conceptual language of horror film theory to highlight certain pervasive gay male anxieties. Furthermore, this book investigates the effects of contemporary queer horror's foregrounding of sexual difference in its 'out', but not necessarily proud, portrayal of gay and bisexual masculinity. It asks the central question – when monstrousness as a metaphor for the threat homosexuality poses to heteronormativity ceases to be coded and instead becomes open, *then* what does it mean?

Approaching Queer Horror

Previous studies of the history of homosexuality in the horror film have often followed gay and lesbian studies' rhetorically restorative approach. Whitney Davis (1992) suggests that, as a project, gay and lesbian studies endeavours '[to present and rectify] important but little known or new evidence'⁵ of gay and lesbian visibility which investigates artistic and cultural texts and imagery in order to amend a historical account which has largely excluded homosexuality from study. While gay and lesbian studies seek to restore the visibility of a gay and lesbian social group to culture and is inclusive and reparative in its intent, queer theory takes an alternative path. Focusing instead on the stigmatisation of non-normative sexualities (including, but not exclusive to, same sex

desire), queer theory views the project of their integration and inclusion into the mainstream as a process of cultural normalisation or assimilation. I want to define queer along the same lines as Harry Benshoff, in that it represents:

an oxymoronic community of difference [...] unified only by a shared dissent from the dominant organization of sex and gender [...] homosexuality should be understood as part of a continuum of human behaviours, not as a monolithic, preformed, static identity.⁶

Queer theory then, seeks to investigate, and therefore trouble, the ways in which the structures of heteronormativity pervade culture. Instead of attempting only to address the imbalance of scholarly attention through revisionist acknowledgement of gay and lesbian artists and filmmakers, queer theory questions the broader regulation of sex and gender. Taking this approach, my study of queer horror firstly aims to engender an understanding of the visual field and themes of typical heteronormative horror film and, with it, the assumptions through which *compulsory heterosexuality* is re-secured. Compulsory heterosexuality is understood by Adrienne Rich in 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' (1980) as the assumption of heterosexuality as the innate and natural form of human desire. This assumption compounds the inequality of power that is perpetuated between the sexes and, further still, between heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality. A queer approach allows for an investigation into the role that the stigmatised gay male subject plays in the construction of this heteronormativity and, more specifically, the ways in which homosexuality's stigmatisation is visualised both from within and without its sub-culture. Admittedly, the central focus on gay men in this book is more *identarian* than the term 'queer' might suggest; however, the texts under consideration extend beyond gay cultural identity to represent their protagonists as, variously, 'men', 'bisexual men' and 'gay men' and present their sexuality as fittingly fluid. My use of queer theory emphasises that the use of horror by queer directors and spectators alike allows for a fluid experience where viewers are able to take up positions of desire and undergo identificatory processes which are either unavailable or denied to them in heteronormative cinema.

The adoption of the term heteronormativity (and later homonormativity), which occurs frequently throughout this study, refers to the regulating effect of the assumption that biological sex dictates gender roles and sexual desire. Robert Corber and Stephen Valocchi (2003) define heteronormativity as ‘the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organise homosexuality as its binary opposite.’⁷ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) suggest further that heteronormativity can be understood as ‘the institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heterosexuality not only coherent – that is organised as a sexuality – but also privileged.’⁸ Traditional gender traits feed into heteronormative structures, ensuring the continuance of heterosexuality along binary oppositions of active-male/passive-female. Heteronormativity positions the gay man as feminine, as the ‘abnormality’ of his gender (perceived as feminine-masculine) seems to uphold the assumed deviancy of his sexuality and gives credence to the heterosexual man’s performance of masculinity.

In ‘Responsibilities of a Gay Film Critic’ (1978), Robin Wood’s comments on the conditional acceptance of homosexuality into mainstream culture are relevant for an understanding of the concept of homonormativity. He maintains that the norms of Western culture in relation to heterosexual love are marriage (legal, heterosexual monogamy) and the nuclear family and that ‘the possibility that people might relate freely to each other on a non-pairing basis’ is determined as ‘promiscuity’. He goes on to state that the choices offered to homosexuals as ‘acceptable’ are ‘the apeing of heterosexual marriage and family (with poodles instead of children) or l’amour fou, preferably culminating in suicide or alcoholism’. Yet Wood continues that ‘acceptance of the homosexual by society has its obvious corollary and condition: acceptance of society by the homosexual.’⁹ In *Homos* (1995), Leo Bersani also considers the effects of homosexuality’s increased visibility and cultural acceptance in more recent years and the impact this has had upon gay male representation in Western society. The exultant claim of gay protest groups that ‘We are everywhere’¹⁰ has been contradicted by cultural assimilation, resulting in a destruction of gay identity: ‘We are nowhere’. In acquiring social acceptance, homosexuals are argued to have ‘degayed’ their culture, risking a form of ‘self-erasure [that] reconfirms the inferior position within a homophobic system of difference.’¹¹ Bersani’s

consideration of this 'gay absence' is useful for an analysis of the queer use of horror in recent years, together with Lisa Duggan's (2003) critique of the recent rise of a more assimilative homonormativity, which she defines as:

a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a [...] gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.¹²

Duggan argues that this process constitutes to the 'good gay subject', whose relationships are built upon 'monogamy, devotion, maintaining privacy and propriety'.¹³ The consequence is a hierarchy of 'worthiness' with those that identify as transgender, transsexual, bisexual or non-gendered deemed less entitled to legal rights than those in relationships that mirror heterosexual marriage. According to Duggan, within the male homosexual community, homonormativity idealises homogenous 'straight acting' stable relationships founded on shared property. In relation to this, I will argue that the representation of gay masculinity, in what I term 'Gaysploitation horror', is curiously chaste, non-confrontational and assimilative, where homosexuality remains incidental to plot, and where characters' sexualities are secondary to genre conventions. This is also achieved by the same gay characters' adoption of macho performance (coded heterosexual), which replaces stereotypical femininity with an equally stereotyped gay masculinity.

Judith Butler's concept of the 'performative' nature of gender is entirely relevant to a consideration of the excessively theatricalised gay masculinity present in queer horror. Butler argues that the supposed biology of binary gender is constructed via the repetition of acts and behaviours where social performance creates gender, a performance which imitates culturally prescribed and impossible ideals. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), she exemplifies this performativity in:

acts, gestures and desire [that] produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body [...] such acts, gestures, enactments generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.¹⁴

Focusing on the fragility of gender performance, she asserts that the possibilities for a transformation of gender are found in a 'failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition'.¹⁵ In queer horror, the fragmented and parodic¹⁶ qualities of gay masculine and feminine performance clearly highlight gender's imitative elements. Queer horror's gender play can challenge supposedly natural gender binaries but can also function to repress and *cover up* anxieties about failed masculinity and the stigma attached to homosexual desire.

Cinematic masculinity is conventionally *impenetrable* in a physical and sexual sense, as opposed to the patriarchal view of the feminine subject as penetrable. Heteronormative culture demands the gay man's penetrability in order to place him within the symbolic phallic order. Yet the association of femininity with homosexuality need not be bound to penetration since many gay men choose not to partake in it. Merely *desiring* other men opens up the male subject to a shameful conflation with femininity regardless of sexual practice. Furthermore, gay men may also dis-identify with femininity and resist association with the cultural denigration of passivity and powerlessness that women are made to bear. As such, gay masculinity is situated somewhere along a socially-constructed binary of femininity and masculinity, with anal receptivity marking an extreme submission, which Leo Bersani remarks as akin to 'being a woman'.¹⁷ In *Disidentifications* (1999), Jose Muñoz explores the practice by which subjects outside of a racial or sexual majority negotiate with dominant culture by transforming, reworking and appropriating ideological impositions from the mainstream:

Disidentification is a performative mode of tactical recognition that various minoritarian subjects employ in an effort to resist the oppressive and normalizing discourse of dominant ideology [...] It is a reformatting of self within the social, a third term that resists the binary of identification and counteridentification.¹⁸

In terms of gay male identification, the subject simultaneously recognises himself in the image of an unattainable phallic masculine ideal (symbolised in the heterosexual male) but also acknowledges that it is different *from* his homosexual self. Of particular interest are the anxieties that arise from gay men's negotiation with the phallus as a symbol of idealised masculinity.

Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (2004) define the phallus in psychoanalytic terms as that ‘which underlines the symbolic function of the penis in the intra – and inter-subjective dialectic, the term “penis” itself tending to be reserved for the organ thought of in its anatomical reality’.¹⁹ I wish to define the phallus in Lacanian terms as an ever-elusive signifier of authority within the symbolic patriarchal order that defines language, society and subjectivity.

According to Leo Bersani,²⁰ in the adoption of the gay-macho style, the gay man aspires to an idealised image of masculinity which, in its purest sense, is symbolised in phallic masculinity that is coded macho and heterosexual. I want to define this as *hypermasculinity*, that is, the exaggerated performance of manliness or machismo. Across this study, examples of such gay masculine parade include: the exaggeration of macho traits (this can be seen in [chapter 3](#)’s focus on the Gage Men from appropriated pornographic films like *LA Tool And Die* (1979)) as referenced in Charles Lum’s *Indelible* (2004); in [chapter 5](#)’s examination of *Hellbent*’s (2004) parody of Tom of Finland stereotypes; and in [chapter 6](#)’s consideration of queer zombie performance in film and television and the appropriation of horror genre conventions as seen in *American Horror Story* (2011–ongoing). In reply to Jeffrey Weeks’ claim that the adoption of the gay-macho style ‘gnaws at the roots of a male heterosexual identity’²¹, Bersani argues that the gay male who adopts this demeanour ‘intends to pay worshipful tribute to the style and behaviour he defiles’. He continues that if ‘gay men gnaw at the roots of male heterosexual identity’, it is not because of the parodic distance that they take from that identity, but rather that, from ‘their nearly mad identification with it, they never cease to feel the appeal of its being violated’.²² Bersani’s consideration of the gay obsessive worship of masculinity, so often represented in the form of straight machismo, together with the disavowal of femininity, is useful for an analysis of the gender anxieties evident in the queer horror film.

Despite my focus on the representation of homosexuality in queer horror that is, for the most part, explicitly declared, this is not to suggest that the type of gay male subjectivity depicted here is unapologetic, confident and proud. Here! TV’s gay Gothic horror soaps, *Dante’s Cove* and *The Lair* (2007–09) and gay slasher *Hellbent* (2004), for example, present gay protagonists who are unmistakably queer, yet their dialogue often shies away

from explicitly announcing itself as 'gay' or 'queer', and straight-acting performance styles pervade these texts. This would seem to support Bersani's acknowledgement of a parodic, worshipful tribute to a macho masculinity that, he argues, is defiled. However, closer analysis shows that the satirical potential of the macho performance in queer horror is often overwhelmed by the erotic potency of its portrayal of machismo, which seems to function as a masquerade-like disavowal of shameful feminine association. In queer horror, gay subjectivity is often fashioned by dis-identifications with both female *and* male subjectivity.

Psychoanalysis and Queer Horror

Psychoanalysis can shed light on the aesthetic experience that queer horror offers the gay spectator. I wish to do this via a re-reading of the psychoanalytic concepts of trauma, masochism and the primal fantasies alongside two of Sigmund Freud's case studies (The Wolf Man in 'A History of Infantile Neurosis' [1918] and Little Hans in 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy' [1909]) while also taking in Julia Kristeva's (1982) concepts of abjection. The subject and object of analysis are constructed through these psychoanalytic theories; Laplanche and Bersani's own critical and cultural commentaries on these works will be investigated later alongside the application of psychoanalytic concepts such as masochism by horror film theorists Carol J. Clover, Peter Hutchings and Barbara Creed.²³ But here it is important to acknowledge the difficulties of interpreting unconscious investments in gender and sexuality, where homosexuality does not remain at the margins of symbolism and metaphor but is rendered explicit. As such, this book is not bound to an uncritical reliance on psychoanalytic readings of the films and their representations of gay masculinity. Though part of my analysis will utilise psychoanalytic readings to assist in offering an explanation as to the symbolic function of the horrors and anxieties at work within the complex symbolism of the film text, these readings will also rely on close textual analysis and interviews with the directors and producers of these films, who themselves invest²⁴, to a varying degree, Freudian theory in relation to the horror film into their work.

There is little doubting the wealth of existing academic materials that contemplate the *symbolic* representation of homosexuality in horror, and the overview of the theorists that follows will situate the relevant works' comprehension of coded homosexuality within the genre. In 'Introduction to the American Horror Film' (1979), Robin Wood offers a reading of the monstrous metaphors that represent the cultural repression of alternative sexualities. Borrowing from Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1964), Wood defines basic repression as that which is 'universal, necessary and inescapable' to construct a civilised society. Wood continues that surplus repression provides a means by which a culture conditions its people into taking up 'predetermined roles' that eventually demand assimilation and, 'If it works [...] makes us into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists.' If it does not, those maladjusted individuals become neurotics or revolutionaries, or both. Wood goes on to question exactly what is repressed within Western culture. Whereas oppression indicates subjugation from an external, tangible force, repression, he suggests, is 'not accessible to the conscious mind' since it is 'fully internalized'. Conversely, in relation to the cultural oppression of homosexuality, 'what escapes repression has to be dealt with by oppression.'²⁵

Wood's discussion of sexuality (himself a gay film critic) strongly influences his analysis of horror's preoccupation with issues of non-normative sexuality. Initially, Wood focuses on the surplus sexuality that does not fulfil the procreative demands of 'monogamous heterosexual union'²⁶ that reproduces labour for capital. Further examples of this non-procreative desire include: bisexuality as an 'affront to the principle of monogamy' and a 'threat to the ideal of family'; female sexuality that does not adhere to archetypes of passivity, subordination and reproduction; and lastly, sexuality in children. Wood argues that horror offers the most 'clear-cut and direct'²⁷ example of the depiction of 'the Other' in the figure of the monster: 'One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses.'²⁸ The monstrous 'Other' represents 'that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with in one of two ways: either by rejecting and, if possible, annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself'. The 'Other' serves not only to symbolise that which either the individual or culture determines as

different, it also represents ‘that which is repressed (but never destroyed) in the self’ and, subsequently, is then ‘projected outwards in order to be hated or destroyed.’²⁹

Of the types of ‘Otherness’ represented in the horror, Wood argues that homosexuality and bisexuality are clearly evident in F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie Des Grauens* (1922) and in James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), both of which suggest the repressed homosexuality of their monsters.³⁰ Focusing mainly on this implied homosexuality as representative of heteronormative anxieties, Wood’s analysis of *homosexual* anxieties is fleeting. His discussion of homosexuality in the horror film, like that of many film scholars, remains limited to a critique of the monstrous metaphor for homosexuality. This limits gay spectatorship to a simplistic negotiation of identification between normative (straight) protagonists and the non-normative (queer) monster, overlooking the relevance of protagonists or peripheral characters that may be coded, or even explicitly represented, as gay.

Wood’s analysis of monstrous metaphors in the horror genre in the 1960s and 1970s can be understood to provide three variables: ‘normality, the Monster and, crucially, the relationship between the two’. His understanding of ‘normality’, however, is limited to heterosexual monogamy, to the nuclear family and social institutions such as religion, law, education and the military. For Wood, the Monster operates as a ‘return of the repressed’, reflecting societal contradictions and hypocrisies. However, Wood points out that the Monster is a ‘protean’ symbol that changes from ‘period to period as society’s basic fears clothe themselves in fashionable or immediately accessible garments’³¹, thus paving the way for this book’s discussion of more contemporary horror films that depict homosexuality explicitly and do not limit its representation to monstrosity alone.

Richard Dyer considers the metaphorical representations of the vampire as homosexual within literature and film in ‘Children of the Night: Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism’ (1988) and in his analysis of Anne Rice’s series of homoerotic vampire novels in ‘Vampires in the (Old) New World: Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles’ (1994). He argues that gothic literature and film since reflect social attitudes towards nineteenth and twentieth-century gay and lesbian identities. For Dyer, the figure of the vampire allows for a symbolic projection of ‘how

people thought and felt about lesbians and gay men – how others have thought about us, and how we have thought and felt about ourselves.’³² His reading of the vampire identifies ‘tell-tale signs’ or ‘gay resonances’ that point to symbolic queerness rather than explicit homosexuality. These signs include the vampire’s private double life, the concealing of a monstrous secret and night stalking. On the one hand, vampirism (sexual orientation) ‘doesn’t show, you can’t tell who is and who isn’t by just looking, but on the other hand there [...] are tell-tale signs that someone “is” and usually this leads to the vampire’s/homosexual’s painful outing and eventual destruction.’³³

In ‘Undead’ (1991), Ellis Hanson underscores the vampire’s longstanding affinity with homosexuality and its provocation of ‘homosexual panic.’³⁴ He argues that the potency of the figure was rearticulated with the onset of the AIDS crisis and in the search for symbolic indications of infectious queerness (such as wasting and pallor). According to Hanson, these are but new additions to a taxonomy of gay men ‘as sexually exotic, alien, unnatural, oral, anal, compulsive, violent, protean, polymorphic, polyvocal, polysemous, invisible, soulless, transient, superhumanly mobile, infectious, murderous, suicidal, and a threat to wife, children, home and phallus.’³⁵ Hanson’s list of queer tropes clearly fix the vampire as a liminal, ambiguous and elusive creature that simultaneously presents a recognisable set of behaviour traits. Due to the associations between queer monstrosity and AIDS, it is understandable that the potential for positive counter identification with such infectious and traumatised Otherness in Hanson’s discussion remains limited. Hanson also discusses the lack of identification offered to the gay male spectator in vampire horror. The softcore lesbian vampire cycle produced by Hammer and Tigon Pictures in the 1970s, such as *Virgin Witch* (1972) and *Twins of Evil* (1971), is said to provide a ‘heterosexualised’ space in which the male ‘revenant as sexual deviant is neither to be identified with nor desired.’³⁶

In *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995), Judith Halberstam considers monstrosity in the post-modern horror and in Gothic fiction as a technology of subjectivity in which the queer threat of ‘meaning itself runs riot’. In her analysis of films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), she argues that that they clearly show ‘the making of deviant sexualities and gendering’³⁷:

the queer tendency of horror film [...] lies in its ability to reconfigure gender not simply through inversion but by literally creating new categories.³⁸

Like Halberstam, I understand the monster in horror as 'the product of and the symbol for the transformation of identity into sexual identity through the means of failed repression.'³⁹ Her study highlights the horror film's obsession with skin (torn, broken, penetrated, rotting) as a metonym for the human, and thus also as a symbol of sexual identity within monstrosity. But despite her call for feminist and queer readings of horror in order to make a 'claim for the positivity'⁴⁰ of the genre, her study remains bound to a deciphering of its coded homosexuality.⁴¹

More centrally, Harry Benshoff's work considers several ways in which (mainly male) homosexuality 'intersects with the horror film' whereby 'monster is to "normality" as homosexuality is to heterosexual'.⁴² *Monsters in the Closet* (1997) includes an analysis of gay and lesbian representation within the genre that, yet again, centres on the monster figure as a queer metaphor. The study offers a consideration of whether the queer auteur (with James Whale as his prime example) infuses his/her sexuality into the text explicitly or implicitly and, perhaps most importantly for Benshoff, explores the associational function that homosexuality adopts within the 'closeted text' (the text in which homosexuality does not make itself explicitly known but can be read or alluded to). It is this last function that Benshoff's study seems to dwell upon, in that the representation of homosexuality in horror is historically 'allusive [...] it lurks around the edges of texts and characters rather than announcing itself forthrightly'.⁴³ Benshoff's work again is largely confined to the problematic of the symbolic and connotative 'representation' of alternative sexuality and draws on Alexander Doty's (1993) reservations that:

connotation has been the representational and interpretative closet of mass culture queerness for far too long [...] this shadowy realm [...] allows straight culture to use queerness for pleasure and profit in mass culture without admitting to it.⁴⁴

Benshoff's argument builds on Dyer's and Wood's understanding of the pleasures that oppositional identification with monster figures can offer