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‘That Melancholy Fiend’:
Charles Ludlam’s *Bluebeard* and the Horrific City

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‘I love New York... I feel the whole city is my instrument’.¹
– Charles Ludlam

‘In my master, Baron Khanazar, the Bluebeard, you see the vilest scoundrel that ever cumbered the earth, a madman, a cur, a devil, a Turk, a heretic, who believes in neither Heaven, Hell, nor werewolf: he lives like an animal, like a swinish gourmet, a veritable vermin infesting his environs and shuttering his ears to every Christian remonstrance and turning to ridicule everything we believed in’.²

– Sheemish, Bluebeard’s minion

US President Gerald Ford might never have *actually* told New York City to ‘DROP DEAD!’ – the infamous *New York Daily News* headline was poetic license, to say the least – but the apocryphal response to the city’s near bankruptcy in the midst of its 1970s fiscal crisis resonates nevertheless.³ Not only does the phrase continue to aptly reflect some of the nation’s lingering tensions – between conservatism and progressivism, urbanity and rurality, disinterested federal government and struggling localities – but its grotesque bluntness also evokes the New York City landscape of the 1970s, a period often understood as equal parts ‘freedom in the unkempt metropolis’ and ‘real danger’ in the ‘decrepit city’.⁴ It was a period, in a word, of decadence, using David Weir’s understanding of the term as ‘historical decline’ or ‘social decay’ that bespeaks the fundamental limits of modernity’s optimistic promise of progress.⁵

For some theatre scholars and practitioners, few artists straddled (and exploited) that decadent period more colourfully than Charles Ludlam, who from 1967 until his death in 1987 produced twenty-nine original, wild, eccentric, brilliant, queer plays through his Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Though ‘startlingly few people outside of the theatre community have ever heard his name’,⁶ Ludlam had by his death secured a legacy not only as a downtown New York City innovator but also as a singular voice in US theatre. His work brought uptown audiences and

critics outside of their mainstream comfort zone without sacrificing an experimental approach bridging high and low art, the epic and the personal, the zany and the ambitious, the artificial and the authentic, the ‘avant-garde and popular’.⁷ Given their impressive stylistic variety,⁸ Ludlam’s plays offer fertile ground for analysis of the continuity between the classical, literary playwriting tradition, and post-dramatic contemporary theatre reflective of a volatile world. In fact, it is in relation to a particular era of volatility – New York City on the brink of fiscal crisis – that I intend to position Ludlam and his landmark 1970 work *Bluebeard*. Through a focus on Ludlam’s use of horror tropes in the play, I argue that he designed and staged a production whose grotesque, decadent aesthetic offered its contemporary audiences a reflection of their city as it navigated its own decadent decline. More specifically, I illustrate how Ludlam’s use of horror expressed a deep ambivalence that simultaneously recognized and valorized the reality of decay, both through the play’s construction and through its correlation to the city from which its first audiences were drawn.

While it is not new to read Ludlam’s theatre, or even *Bluebeard* specifically, in relation to its discursive social quality, his work has traditionally been characterized largely through a queer lens, as a form of camp. Most of the posthumous scholarship tends to approach Ludlam *in toto*, grappling with his oeuvre as a reflection of the period’s tumultuous identity politics. For instance, Sean Edgecomb reads Ludlam’s work as a ‘queer entity based on a queer sensibility’, and his style as ‘a secret language [...] used to communicate exclusive codes to his gay audience’;⁹ Kelly Aliano defines Ludlam’s ‘Theatre of the Ridiculous’ largely through its ‘gender performativity’;¹⁰ Rick Roemer identifies Ludlam’s aesthetic as ‘ridiculousity’, whose core is ‘the concept of a gay identity’;¹¹ and Jordan Schildcrout focuses on Ludlam’s embrace of ‘queer villainy’.¹² There is a good reason for this general framing: Ludlam’s plays frequently challenge the heteronormative both in content and through liberal use of drag; his early success arrived in the era of Stonewall; his untimely death from AIDS-related illness gives his career a tragic resonance; and he was openly, unapologetically, fabulously gay.¹³ Further, framing an artist via *milieu* is hardly uncommon,

especially for the 1970s, whose ‘plays and playwrights’ are largely analysed through the ‘prism’ of ‘identity politics’,¹⁴ and since so many of that period’s social indignities remain unresolved, understanding Ludlam through a queer lens is an important framing.

But Ludlam did not want to be camp; he wanted to be Molière. In fact, he often resented being categorized as ‘gay theatre’, as though he was ‘like an Indian on a reservation selling trinkets to the tourists’,¹⁵ and he actually preferred to play to ‘a more general audience’ who would understand his work more broadly.¹⁶ My argument here is not intended as a challenge to the queer framing of Ludlam’s work, but instead as a widened consideration of the resonances it might have had for this ‘general’ audience. Of course, ‘general audience’ is an abstraction, and surely Ludlam didn’t mean that sexual preference alone guided reception, so I proceed here believing that he meant less to bifurcate (i.e., separate gay from straight) than to expand, to describe an affect that functioned *regardless* of sexual orientation rather than simply *in relation to* it. To that end, instead of considering Ludlam’s career *in toto*, I choose to focus specifically on the decadent resonances of *Bluebeard*, one of his best-known works. As *Bluebeard* was the play ‘that put the Ridiculous on the mainstream map of New York culture’,¹⁷ it offers an opportunity both to understand Ludlam as part of the 1970s zeitgeist, as well as to consider the audiences of that zeitgeist.

I believe *Bluebeard* reflected that zeitgeist specifically through its generic and affective use of horror, a particularly important mode for Ludlam. While his use of horror as inspiration has hardly been overlooked, it is typically washed into a larger aesthetic of what Kelly Aliano calls ‘remix’, the practice of ‘borrowing, referencing, quoting, or sampling’ from other works and genres, an aesthetic that other scholars connect to Ludlam’s camp sensibility.¹⁸ How, then, might the play’s horror tropes have resonated for its contemporary audiences?

In what follows, I will explore how the horror in *Bluebeard* functions as an affective corollary to New York City on the cusp of the 1970s, as it was transforming into what Kim Phillips-Fein would later call ‘Fear City’. I argue that *Bluebeard*’s bodily grotesqueness, transgressive perversity, and generic horror conventions resonated socio-geographically for audiences who were

confronting the city's decline on a day-to-day basis, offering them a means by which to navigate their own ambivalence about their shifting urban environment. With a focus on its initial production, presented at the 'sleazy [West Village] gay bar' Christopher's End,¹⁹ I will examine how the play, both as text and onstage, provided a fertile ground for audiences to engage their socio-geographic reality through the work's explicit monstrosity. This reading is novel in large part because it understands the play's grotesque horror affect not as one operating on a sexual binary – the queer freaks versus the 'hetero-normates', more or less²⁰ – but on one that appealed to audiences in geographical terms – the New Yorkers of the deprived, decadent island versus everyone else. By simultaneously acknowledging the reality of the city's decadent decay, while also performing a 'generative',²¹ emboldened pride (rather than shame) in that decay, the horror in *Bluebeard* can be understood as a reflection not only of its times, but also of the people looking to the theatre for clarity about their own ambivalent relationship with that perceived decay. While I intend no claim on Ludlam's overt intention nor on the audiences' conscious awareness, I do hope this inquiry might offer new insight into *Bluebeard*, into Ludlam's work overall, and into how transgressive or decadent performance interacts with periods of cultural transformation.

The scary story: Bluebeard and his island

Charles Ludlam loved horror. In his uncompleted memoirs, he identifies 'frightening' imagery as central to his development, spotlighting as influences films like *The Thing from Another World* (1951) and the ritual of Halloween, when he sometimes dressed as a ghoul to frighten other children.²² In a much-quoted story, he tells how he once snuck away from his mother at the carnival to visit 'the forbidden freak show', where he was 'enthralled' by the freaks, including 'armless black dwarfs'.²³ Indeed, grotesque horror tropes appear consistently throughout his largely comic corpus of plays. *The Ventriloquist's Wife* (1978) is a 'story of possession' based on *Dead of Night*, a 1945 British horror movie.²⁴ He produced an atmospheric horror short film called *Museum of Wax* (1987), starring himself as a murderous maniac. In 1979, he hosted a 'Victorian-style vaudeville of

carnival sideshow acts and circus freaks' called *Elephant Woman*.²⁵ Arguably his best-known work, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (1987), is a 'penny dreadful' that counts amongst its many influences *Nosferatu* (1922), and Théophile Gautier's 1858 novel *Le Roman de la momie* [*Romance of the Mummy*].²⁶ This list is hardly exhaustive – one can find moments of *guignol*-style gore even in some of his more 'serious' works, like *Stage Blood* (1979) – but I offer it to stress that while horror can be identified as one of many interchangeable influences comprising the Ridiculous 'remix', it might also be seen as particularly important, if not integral, to what Tony Kushner calls Ludlam's 'moral vision', a vision that was 'dangerous', 'appalling', and 'wicked' in its 'bloody comedy'.²⁷

Apart from *Irma Vep*, perhaps, there is no more horror-centric story in Ludlam's oeuvre than *Bluebeard*, and there are few plays that were more important to the Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Its fifth production, *Bluebeard* was quite distinct from Ludlam's earlier works; where those were huge, fragmentary 'mish mash' affairs,²⁸ *Bluebeard* was 'very traditional and formal, much more focused and carefully worked out', his first deliberately 'well-made play'.²⁹ Featuring a single protagonist in Baron Khanazar von Bluebeard (played by Ludlam himself) and a straightforward plot, the play matured Ludlam as both writer and director. Many in the cast also felt that they '[became] a company' with *Bluebeard*.³⁰ Further, the show was a hit: it won Ludlam his first Obie, toured several European cities, and remained an oft-reprised staple of the company's repertoire.³¹ It perhaps transcends coincidence that Ludlam, in fashioning the play that would focus his talents and kickstart his career, did so by engaging the overtly horror-centric influences that were so important to him.

While *Bluebeard* 'cannibalizes'³² many sources – H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), Charles Perrault's *Barbe Bleue* (1697), Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1592), Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* (1896), Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), the Bible, Shakespeare, 'every Gothic melodrama and "B" horror movie [...] ever created'³³ – its most recognizable influence is the 1932 horror film *Island of Lost Souls* (itself an adaptation of Wells's novel), which, like the play, is perhaps most succinctly described as a 'gothic thriller'.³⁴ In Ludlam's 'thriller', Baron

von Bluebeard inhabits an island off the coast of Maine, where he mutilates unwilling patients in search of a ‘third genital’.³⁵ The play opens as his two enslaved minions – Sheemish and Mrs Maggot (played by John Brockmeyer and Gary Tucker, in drag) – curse their cruel master, while anticipating the impending arrival of visitors. After the title character delivers a deliciously depraved speech about his ambitions and resentments, immediately establishing the play’s generously fecund wordplay, he welcomes those visitors: his ingénue niece Sybil (played by long-time collaborator Black Eyed Susan), her fiancé Rodney (Bill Vehr), and her tutor Miss Cubbidge (Lola Pashalinski). Throughout the play, Bluebeard cruelly seduces both women, prohibiting them from entering a forbidden chamber (his medical lab), knowing of course that Sybil’s curiosity will eventually overcome her reticence. Rodney uncovers Bluebeard’s plan too late; when Sybil enters the chamber, Bluebeard surgically replaces her vagina with a ridiculous monstrosity: a ‘loofah sponge with a movable bird’s claw’.³⁶ All seems lost until the ‘Leopard Woman’ Lamia (played by Mario Montez), another of Bluebeard’s victims, suddenly appears to disrupt the Baron’s unveiling ceremony. High jinks ensue and the visitors flee the island, Sybil’s genitals beyond repair. Bluebeard is left with his deformed minions, unhappy and alone.

If its plot alone does not evidence the play’s indebtedness to ‘gothic’ horror – specifically the golden-age ‘late-night’ horror of the 1950s and 1960s (for example RKO or Hammer films)³⁷ – its contemporary reviews certainly identified that influence in production. Those reviews, mostly written by uptown critics who had trekked downtown for the show, are liberally peppered with words like ‘ghoulish’, ‘lunatic’, ‘scared to death’, ‘menace’, ‘monstrous’, ‘terror’, ‘gothic melodrama’, ‘macabre’, and ‘grotesque’.³⁸ Clearly, the play was affectively received as one built on grotesque horror (fig. 1). I do not mean to ignore the play’s deliciously deranged comedy or camp aesthetic; many of its horror elements³⁹ were presented and received as ‘parody’,³⁹ a part of Ludlam’s ‘contemporary high comedy’.⁴⁰



Fig. 1: 'Charles Ludlam *Bluebeard* beard intact', first European tour, c. 1971.
Photo: Unknown. Courtesy of the Sean F. Edgecomb theatre and ephemera collection.

Consider Bluebeard's demented opening speech, which undercuts a dark, gothic style – 'Is to end desire desire's chiefest end?' and 'Yet chastity ravishes me' – with bizarre proclamations – 'And yet the cunt gapes like the jaws of hell' – or campy mad scientist tropes – 'They said I was mad at medical school'.⁴¹ Or the big reveal of Sybil's mutilated 'loofah' genitals, less gore than clown prop. Or perhaps its most (in)famous exchange, Bluebeard's 'seduction' of Miss Cubbidge, a wild eight minute 'scene of unprecedented eroticism'⁴² in which Ludlam and Pashalinski employed outrageous slapstick choreography and absurd theatricality, an exchange hilarious by practically every account.⁴³

Arguably the clearest indication of the show's camp intentions was Ludlam's casting of Mario Montez, since it indicates the way that he employed a decadent aesthetic for hyperbolic comic appeal. Montez was a drag performer (Ludlam wrote that he 'towers above all the [other drag queens] in eleven-inch Fuck Me Pumps'),⁴⁴ and a downtown camp icon for having appeared in Jack Smith's early films. Smith had not only been a pivotal figure in the early days of the Playhouse of the Ridiculous (the company from which Ludlam's own Ridiculous Theatrical grew after his split with its founder John Vaccaro), but also was a central figure in the New York City avant-garde of the period, particularly for his use of a 'trash' aesthetic. Ludlam's casting of Montez was more than simply a playfully queer cameo for a knowing audience; it also illustrates the extent to which Ludlam's central aesthetic was shaped not only by camp but by a tradition of decadence, a tradition that merges 'ornate style' with 'sadistic action' and transgressive humour.⁴⁵ Indeed, Ludlam continued to employ this mode of aesthetic decadence throughout his career, perhaps most notably in his late-career work *Salammô* (1985), which adapted Gustave Flaubert's 1862 novel about ancient Carthaginian decline into an epic play that '[celebrated] lascivious promiscuity' in part through the casting of professional bodybuilders whose talent was specifically to bring 'raw muscle onstage'.⁴⁶ Marked as much by its lavish design requirements and ornately stylized language as by this deliberately provocative casting, *Salammô* illustrates how Ludlam trafficked in 'civilized depravity' that is the stuff of decadent art,⁴⁷ much as he did in *Bluebeard* by employing a campy

'low' aesthetic by casting Montez while simultaneously marketing the work as mainstream. Thus, it is easy to understand why *Bluebeard* has traditionally been categorized as hilariously campy, its horror signifiers merged into the Ridiculous 'remix' rather than being analysed as a unique genre divorced from that remix. The decadent intent seems to be to confound any particular genre signification, to obfuscate rather than clarify through its use of multiplicity.

However, while acknowledging that there is much work outside the scope of this article to be done on investigating the overlap between horror and camp, I see in *Bluebeard* not merely a stylistic hybrid, but also indications of an unabashed and explicit embrace of horror style. Consider the script's parentheticals, used to clarify line readings – 'terribly frightened'; 'sadistically'; 'ominously'; 'horrified'⁴⁸ – all of which could indicate melodramatic excess, but which likewise point towards Ludlam's intentions. The plethora of horror genre elements – an on-stage 'operating table', evoking unanaesthetized mutilation; the 'dramatic music' as Bluebeard, 'his eyes ablaze', approaches Sybil to commit sexual violence; the 'sound of thunder and flashes of lightning', 'the candles and incense', and the 'science-fiction lighting effects'⁴⁹ – together insist that any faithful production ought to embrace a heavy dose of (admittedly, often schlocky) horror movie atmosphere. Its early set designs confirm that claim, as Ludlam's first fully-realized production used 'cardboard icicles of blood dripping off the stage, bats and cobwebs covering the furniture',⁵⁰ while a Zagreb production 'built their fantastic gothic set [...] with a cuckoo clock and candles burning'.⁵¹ As previously mentioned, the play was unabashed in its pursuit of a comic affect; however, I also see in its plenitude of grotesque, horror imagery evidence that *Bluebeard* seems to have been constructed not only to imitate but also to function as a horror story that was meant to unsettle, frighten, or gross out an audience on top of whatever else it did.

And indeed, as the reviews above indicate, it seemed to have achieved that effect for some audience members, who appreciated its horror tropes less from ironic, campy distance and more as genuinely engrossing terror. Ludlam once wrote of *Irma Vep* that 'there were two kinds of audiences': those 'that perceived it as [...] a parody of a gothic thriller, and [...] those for whom it

was a gothic thriller, [who] would scream with fright'.⁵² *Bluebeard* likely invited similarly ambivalent reactions. Even the play's ridiculous climactic reveal – Sybil with the new, third genital – merges the comic camp of a rubber bird claw with a horrific performative affect: she 'screams with horror' and 'growls with displeasure',⁵³ providing room for disgust and terror in addition to amusement. That people laughed does not mean that they might not also have been creeped out.

The play pursues this affect not only through its signifiers, but also through its construction. Its basic premise – a twisted, perverse scientist using butchery in pursuit of this 'third gender' – conforms quite closely to archetypal horror narratives. Philosopher Noël Carroll has identified how horror usually employs a figure – often but not always a monster – who '[breaches] the norms of ontological propriety presumed by the positive human characters in the story'.⁵⁴ Horror, then, is built around an 'impure' creature whom the audience understands as distinct from themselves.⁵⁵ Later in his life, Ludlam wrote that his 'early plays were all pain, all cruelty, all victims and predators', and specifically that *Bluebeard* expressed 'a lot of rage' as it 'explored surgery as a form of violence'.⁵⁶ These dark intentions are manifest in the play's monster, Bluebeard himself, whose alterity was defined both by the intensity of his fury and by his desire to express that fury through embodied violence. Employing what Carroll identifies as an 'overreacher plot', a horror tale 'concerned with forbidden knowledge'⁵⁷ and in which perverse ambition causes terror, *Bluebeard* tells a story of how monstrous ambition carries within it a rage that terrorizes those who encounter it. While there is no question that Ludlam performed *Bluebeard* with his much-lauded comic skill, he was likewise constructing an explicitly threatening character, one notably marked by rage and lunacy, a mad scientist we are meant to avoid even as he amuses us.

Further, horror is typically constructed around an oppositional quality, one delineating the monster from the normates. Carroll identifies how the genre typically positions its 'impure or unclean' element against 'positive human characters' whose 'affective responses' indicate what the audience is *supposed* to feel.⁵⁸ Through their anxieties over a monster's *otherness*, the characters in

horror provide audiences with ‘a set of instructions about the appropriate way’ to respond in a type of ‘mirroring-effect’ that links audience members and non-monster characters.⁵⁹ This bifurcation of normativity against queerness (defined broadly) was central to the Ridiculous from the beginning – one of its greatest influences, Jack Smith, was well known for work that intentionally positioned his community of ‘freaks’ against the ‘pasty normals’ usually understood to indicate the heteronormative⁶⁰ – but *Bluebeard* is unique in the way Ludlam develops that bifurcation through a horror affect, introducing his monster specifically through the lens of the terror he produces for others in the play. In the opening scene, Sheemish and Mrs Maggot exhibit palpable fear: they ‘dread the wrath of the Bluebeard’,⁶¹ immediately establishing how the audience is *supposed* to feel about him. That they are themselves mutilated (Sheemish a hunchback, Mrs Maggot a ‘deformed old crone’)⁶² complicates the construction; even the liminally human characters fear the villain, thereby doubly establishing his threat to the normative *status quo* as reflected in Sybil’s ‘lily-white body’.⁶³

However, the play’s oppositional quality – between threatening monstrosity and normality – manifests not merely through Bluebeard’s alterity, but also through the fear of being infected by him and his island. In a sense, both Bluebeard *and* his ‘Island of Lost Love’ operate as ‘impure’ forces challenging the otherwise ‘clean’ characters, since the monster’s perversity is manifest in the world he contaminates. Consider when Sheemish force-feeds meat to Mrs Maggot as a form of internalized rage produced through traumatic abuse, or when Rodney, after discovering Bluebeard’s intentions, attempts to strangle himself from the shame of his newly discovered, Bluebeard-inspired murderous feelings. Note also that Bluebeard refuses to simply kidnap Sybil; he insists that she *choose* her own mutilation by tempting her with the forbidden chamber, making her his accomplice. Through his viciousness, the Baron produces more than physical disfigurement; he also spreads mental and moral corruption.

Even worse, though the normate characters escape, they carry Bluebeard’s perversity back to the mainland: a now deformed Sybil speaks like him, spewing his deranged fantasies – ‘The

human heart [...] who knows to what perversions it may not turn, when its taste is guided by aesthetics?⁶⁴ – and Miss Cubbidge is pregnant with his child. The island's threat is viral, both to those who visit, and to the mainland to which those visitors return. Thus, the play's island setting is not merely a random trope; it evokes a continental fear of the cannibalistic alterity of insularity, and underscores the horror-centric opposition between the 'normal' and the 'impure'. The play's horror is xenophobic; the monsters are not simply freaks left to themselves but committed villains who want to infect and pervert what surrounds them. Again, Ludlam's work here reflects a decadent aesthetic, not only through its 'delight in disgust' as a work both horrific and comedic, but also through its indication that decadent depravity is not a character flaw so much as a defining community characteristic. If, as Weir argues, the 'taste-based community' engendered by decadent performance is one wherein 'author, audience, and character' together share that 'delight in disgust',⁶⁵ then *Bluebeard*, in its insistence that all within the Baron's vicinity enjoy his self-proclaimed embrace of vicious villainy, seems to threaten this same risk of decadent spread.

In fact, that framing within a decadent tradition offers insight into one deviation Ludlam *does* make from Carroll's horror conception: he makes his monster the protagonist. Ludlam insists that we inhabit the same mental space as his villain, who, by virtue of his delightful language, physical comedy, and flamboyant style, would be hard not to love. Naturally understanding that 'works of horror are in some sense both attractive and repulsive',⁶⁶ Ludlam used his play to both unsettle and entice, to frighten while insisting that his audience willingly subsist in and laugh along with the decadent depravity of Bluebeard's island. Like Sybil, who ultimately elects to open the door, Ludlam's audience must *choose* to be there.

The scary city: the island of downtown New York

Ludlam's embrace of horror can easily be understood as aligned with a particular characteristic of decadent art: specifically its use of a debased aesthetic as an ambivalent reaction towards periods of 'historical decline' and 'social decay', and a desire to uncover 'generative' profundity by

celebrating a diminishing civilization.⁶⁷ Ludlam once remarked that ‘decadence is to art what manure is to organic farming. It creates a fertile atmosphere.’⁶⁸ I want now to consider how New York City on the cusp of fiscal crisis might be understood as a ‘fertile’, generative influence not only on the play Ludlam crafted, but also on the way his early audiences might have responded. If horror is ‘a genre [...] through which the anxieties of an era can be expressed’,⁶⁹ and the excesses of decadent art employ ‘a mixture of subject and style’ to ‘express the illness of the age’,⁷⁰ so might we reasonably consider Ludlam’s decadent horror play as corollary to a period largely defined by unprecedented urban anxieties.

Central to my analysis is the horror-centric oppositional quality which I have identified in *Bluebeard*. Traditional readings of the play would correlate this oppositional quality with Ludlam’s queer intentions, understanding Bluebeard’s ‘queer quackery’⁷¹ as a challenge to the heteronormative. Despite being ostensibly straight, Bluebeard is typically understood by scholars as ‘metaphoric personification of the contemporary homosexual’, the ‘third genital’ as ‘a clear metaphor for homosexuality’, and the play overall as some degree of ‘wicked satire’ of heteronormative ‘pathologizing attitudes to sexuality’.⁷² I accept that such a binary – between the queer freaks and the heteronormates, as it were – might have resonated for audiences at the time, especially at its early venue: the ‘sleazy gay bar’ Christopher’s End, where Ludlam had to stack wooden planks on the bar in order to construct a playing space, and where reviewers from some of the city’s top periodicals might have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with ‘young, handsome men, some in leather and all in dungarees [...] [clinging] to each other lustfully’.⁷³ Christopher’s End might have functioned as corollary to Bluebeard’s ‘Island of Lost Love’, offering through its defiantly queer rage a confrontation for normative society: *So you think we queers are scary, do you? Well, you have no idea!*

Yet the dual functioning of horror, its use of transgressive grotesqueness to entice as well as repel, might ironically have allowed for a grander *communitas* than one simply open to the queer community. Whereas Ludlam’s earlier plays had indeed served to offer ‘political valence’ to ‘gay

people coming together in a shared space’,⁷⁴ *Bluebeard* offered that potential *in addition to* a confrontational thrill for those for whom that space was not designed, thereby engaging more than ostracizing this ostensibly normate patron. Especially given the production’s early mainstream success, it may have functioned less to bifurcate its audience into a queer/normate binary than to offer an ambivalent space wherein all patrons were simultaneously aware of their positionality in relation to others *and* joined by an ‘acute, elevated sensibility attuned to [the] nuances’ of the ‘distasteful’, decadent *Bluebeard*.⁷⁵ Put another way, perhaps the play’s horror-centred oppositional quality inspired not some sentimentalized fraternity but rather an evocative, shared recognition of their ambivalent reactions to the play’s grotesque horror. That ambivalence might have even encouraged such oppositional affect *within* the uptown audience, the play’s ‘horrific, repulsive imagery’ serving to touch on ‘sexual wishes [...] [that] are forbidden or repressed’,⁷⁶ even, if not especially, for the ostensibly non-queer audience. So even within the traditional queer reading of Ludlam’s work, *Bluebeard*’s horror affect is deeply correlated with its potential profundities.

However, it is worth noting that the play’s original reviews ‘largely ignored (or missed) the [play’s] gay subtext and symbolism’.⁷⁷ At the very least, however the play might have functioned in terms of sexual identity, the dominant, normative critical culture chose not to highlight that affect in its generally glowing assessment. Given that absence, I propose that the play’s horror-centric oppositional xenophobia might be understood in geographical terms, as opposition between the perceived, excessive freakery of the depraved city and the ostensibly sophisticated ‘normal’ folk who feared it. Perhaps for some of its audience, Christopher’s End, that ‘sleazy gay bar’, may have resonated less as particularly ‘gay’ than it did merely ‘sleazy’, as semiotic metonym of its city, whose seemingly horrific decline was mirrored by the horror of the play that everyone was talking about, a play whose decadence then was not merely aesthetic – DIY sleaze treated with literary tact – but also socio-geographic.

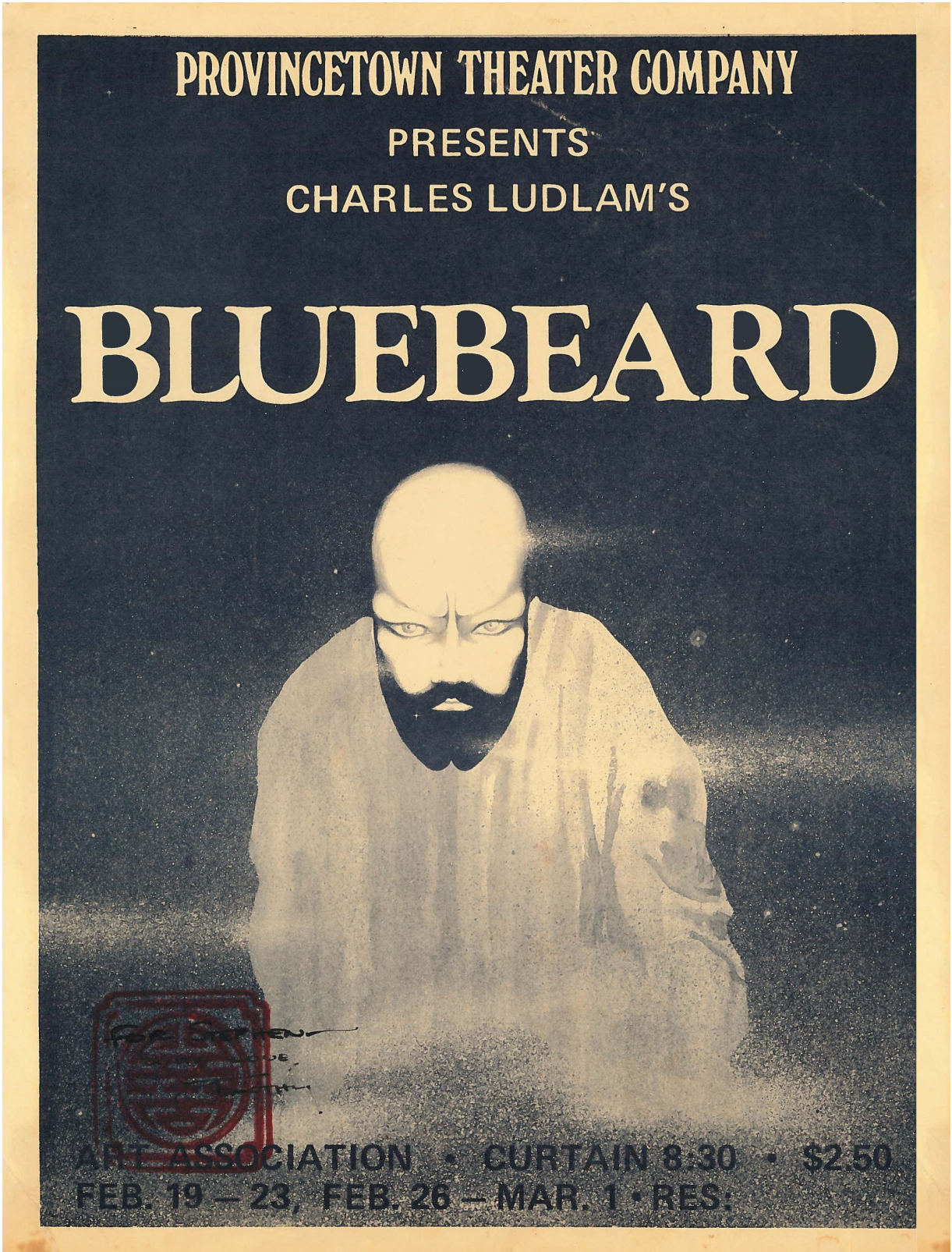


Fig. 2: Promotional poster from a 1976 touring production of *Bluebeard*.
Courtesy of the Sean F. Edgecomb theatre and ephemera collection.

At its height, the 1970s fiscal crisis gave New York City ‘the qualities of a grotesque’ as it declared bankruptcy in the wake of severe diminishment of public services and a loss of its long-held self-image as exceptional.⁷⁸ While *Bluebeard* was first produced several years before those heights, the city’s social, economic, and racial tensions had already been simmering for over a decade. Though very few scholars or historians have closely analysed how awareness of the fiscal crisis shaped or challenged artists to produce the particular work they made during the 1970s,⁷⁹ it seems unlikely that those artists could have been unaware how, in the popular imagination if not actuality, New York City had become ‘decrepit’ by the 1970s; as early as 1965, the *New York Herald-Tribune* was profiling the city’s ‘crisis’ in managing poverty, homicide increases, and a diminishment in essential social services.⁸⁰ By the decade’s end, the intertwined forces of post-Fordist de-industrialization, white flight, and the contraction of the federal welfare state left the city suffering not only corporate bankruptcies but also public financial crises like that of the Penn Central railroad, which owned Penn Station and Grand Central Station.⁸¹

That suffering was felt in the quotidian sphere as well. Following a 1969 recession, the unemployment rate increased alongside widespread property abandonment. ‘Once-beautiful parks were dirty and deteriorating’, while libraries, hospitals, and public universities struggled to fulfil their missions.⁸² And of course there was the crime, the most commonly-evoked manifestation of the city’s declining health (homicides rose over 150 per cent between 1966 and 1973 as public heroin use became common in some neighbourhoods).⁸³ While these struggles were hardly confined to New York City in the period, its decline carried a symbolic weight because it had long presented itself as a city of ‘promises’ and ‘visions’,⁸⁴ its robust welfare state touted as an evolved social contract whose promises were now being betrayed, its visions unrealized in the face of fiscal uncertainty.

Ludlam’s early adulthood in downtown Manhattan would have given him personal insight into the city’s potential for the ‘threat and disgust’ that is the stuff of horror.⁸⁵ He lived almost exclusively in the Lower East Side (defined broadly), an area that, more than most, shouldered the

reputation for decline; of all the ‘needle parks’ (sites of public heroin use), perhaps the most infamous were those around what today is known as Alphabet City.⁸⁶ That this area was presented by the media as ‘comically dismal’ as the fiscal crisis escalated only underscores how it was perceived by the city at large.⁸⁷ Until he secured a rent-controlled West Village apartment in 1972,⁸⁸ Ludlam and his colleagues lived like ‘paupers on the Lower East Side’;⁸⁹ his first New York City apartment was a ‘dumpy railroad flat in a tenement building’ on Broome Street, and he later inhabited a ‘tenement dwelling’ in ‘Heroin Alley’.⁹⁰ His early productions were staged in spaces like a porno theatre, where ‘all these guys [were] jerking off’ during the daytime, or in a ‘drug-sodden West Village apartment’.⁹¹ Crime and unruly crowds were on the rise even in the more desirable West Village where he would later produce his work.⁹²

Although it is impossible to know exactly what Ludlam or *Bluebeard*’s early audiences knew or felt about downtown Manhattan, it is fair to assume that many of them would have been aware of its reputation as emblematic of the city’s wider decline, an awareness they brought into the theatre. Theatre scholar Marvin Carlson has argued that any audience experience is influenced by more than the onstage presentation; instead, ‘the entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city, are all important’ in determining a show’s ‘social and cultural meanings’, as are the particular ‘social semiotics’ of any particular neighbourhood.⁹³ Thus, one might consider how the perceptions of a declining New York City, over-riddled with junkies, freaks and queers, would have fed into if not been mirrored by a play trafficking in overt horror tropes. Perhaps Ludlam, seeing the city as his ‘instrument’, was exploiting its resonances to enhance those of his horror play, working in the decadent tradition of using a seemingly debased aesthetic as semiotic corollary to the decaying material world around it. Indeed, while Ludlam had intentionally courted the mainstream with *Bluebeard* – both by writing a ‘well-made play’ and by initially securing a quickly-aborted run at La MaMa to attract wider patronage⁹⁴ – he nevertheless showed little interest in sacrificing his downtown aesthetic wherein ‘everything [was] made out of garbage’.⁹⁵ Inspired as it was by Jack Smith, Molière, and so much in

between, this dual embrace, of a DIY ethos alongside a professionalized sheen helps explain its multiplicitious appeal to the '[gay] crowd, the *cognoscenti*, and the mainstream critics all at once',⁹⁶ many of whom might have recognized in his decadent valorization of 'garbage' an awareness of the city's depravity without any corresponding shame. It was not simply that he had sympathy for the monstrous qualities of New York City; he was one of the monsters, and he loved it. *Bluebeard*, for those early audiences, then, might have offered intertextual reference not only to decades-old horror films, but also to their own changing urban environment.

However, I argue the play did more than merely reference the city's decline through its aesthetic; I contend that its embrace of horror tropes and pursuit of horror affects provided audiences with an opportunity to explore a shared identity as New Yorkers at a time when 'the mood in the city was dreary and pessimistic'.⁹⁷ Central to this reading is the play's island setting and its inherent oppositional quality. I will now consider two ways in which that oppositional quality might have resonated for contemporary New York City audiences: as an opposition between uptown and downtown, or as an opposition between the city *in toto* and the larger nation and world who were perceived as celebrating its decline.

We might first read the play's oppositional quality – between the 'pure' and 'impure', the normative and the depraved – as a reflection of the city's uptown/downtown dynamic. *Christopher's End*, in its 'sleaziness', might well have resonated for its uptown audiences as representative of the 'comically dismal' downtown neighbourhoods that were generally 'neglected'⁹⁸ during the period of the fiscal crisis. The theatre spaces in these neighbourhoods – even the more respected La MaMa – were 'clearly on the margins' of the highbrow culture, 'in locations both precarious and ambiguous', marginally and decadently impure at a geographical if not ontological distance from the uptown exemplar of the 'public monument' of Lincoln Center.⁹⁹

That divide has a clear parallel in Ludlam's perverse horror play, which straddles both insular, marginal depravity, and highbrow theatrical traditions. Perhaps its most striking semiotic highbrow reference comes in its printed form, which delineates a new scene with every entrance

or exit, a French neoclassical convention particularly affiliated with Molière. Though contemporary playgoers would not have had a printed text, the reference indicates Ludlam's desire to operate within a 'highbrow' theatrical culture. Of course, such highbrow signifiers are corrupted by the play's depravity (not to mention its sexualized farcical elements), much as Bluebeard's visitors are by their island sojourn. Carroll argues that horror affect often relies on its threat to 'destroy one's identity [...] [or] the moral order' by advancing 'an alternative society'.¹⁰⁰ Given that later in his career Ludlam was overt about a dream of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company displacing Lincoln Center as the 'national comic theater',¹⁰¹ we might see in *Bluebeard* the seeds of an ambition to unseat the normative in favour of the horrifically depraved. *Bluebeard* tells its audience that the Ridiculous does not mean to save the city through high art; they want the decadent depravity of their island to spread. Uptown and downtown critics and audiences alike may have appreciated the play's 'mirroring-effect' as it both repulsed them by evoking their daily fears and enthralled them by validating their own perverse affection for those fears.

Then again, *Bluebeard* remained popular after moving in late 1970 to a theatre on West 43rd Street – another space that might have paralleled the play's horror, being as it was in a former 'funeral parlor' in a neighbourhood known at the time for being the centre of the city's smutty underbelly.¹⁰² So, for those who saw its first productions, perhaps the play's oppositional horror functioned more broadly than simply as a reference to the uptown/downtown dynamic; perhaps it suggested an opposition between the island of a declining New York City, and the nation celebrating that fall from *schadenfreude*, if not disgust. In 1975, Allan Greenspan saw the city as 'the epitome of a nation and a culture that had veered into chaos', and as an emblem of 'a nihilistic mood'.¹⁰³ Or consider filmic depictions of the city from that time – think *Taxi Driver* (1976), *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971), *Serpico* (1973) – many of which highlight the perceived correlation between the city's urban and moral decay.

Ludlam's professed instrumentalization of New York City could indicate the correlation of Bluebeard's 'quackery' to the city's promises and visions, whose limitations were becoming all

too apparent as the social safety net diminished. Richard Schechner's original review noted that the play mocks 'utopian pretensions' in order to 'touch on the deepest aspirations and fears of modern, urbanized man',¹⁰⁴ an understanding we could read either as reference to the fine line between Bluebeard's ambitious brilliance and the horrific underside of such brilliance, *or* as reference to the much-lauded New York City system that was in the process of collapse. Not only the play but also the city are examples of Carroll's 'overreacher [horror] story', one in which ambition breeds terror: the play easily parallels how many in America saw New York City during the period, *especially* if they resided safely outside its figurative island. Hillary Miller describes the city in 1975 as 'an island within a country that took a relentless anti-urban, conservative, and anti-cosmopolitan stance towards the city';¹⁰⁵ in the same way that the 'Island of Lost Love' threatens the mainland, so was New York City already being defined apart from 'the real America', to borrow an anachronism, a place that needed to 'DROP DEAD!' lest its depraved values proliferate.

Perhaps *Bluebeard* appeared to anticipate if not intuit the intensity of that oppositional discourse, and rather than trying to convince anyone to the contrary, wickedly revelled in an exaggerative view of its city's dark side, embracing its very threat to the figurative mainland, as though to ask a version of that same question posed above – *So you think New York is scary, do you? Well, you have no idea!* – thereby allowing its audience to enjoy the thrill of embracing what they were otherwise expected to lament. *Bluebeard* does not fear its protagonist: it insists we valorize him because of his decadent depravity. While films like *Taxi Driver* depicted a tragic descent into nihilistic despair, Ludlam's play celebrates decay, engaging a dual 'attraction and repulsion' that could have had uptown audiences and downtown freaks identifying one another as fellow New Yorkers, as denizens of the same island. Bluebeard's 'mockery' of 'utopian pretensions' is, after all, more good-natured fun than it is dire warning: the Baron's island is without question cruel, vicious, depraved, and horrific, but it embraces that reality without judgement or shame, and through its ambivalent affective qualities asks the audience to do the same. As Bluebeard takes perverse glee in corrupting his normative visitors, so might *Bluebeard* have gleefully invited audiences to enjoy

the threat that their city seemingly posed to the terrified yokels beyond its borders, and to proudly identify themselves as the monsters, as though to say: *The city might be going to hell, but what does that matter to the demons who live there?*

Ludlam once wrote that ‘New York is the super-society that is, at the same time, the jungle. They both exist in man.’¹⁰⁶ Much as his play embraces the ambivalent, decadent, dual embrace of ‘delight’ and ‘disgust’ at a time when his city was grappling with such contradictions, so might his New York audiences have understood themselves ‘mirrored’ less by *Bluebeard*’s normative characters than by its brutally vicious villain and his depraved island. Faced with the reality of their long-vaunted city’s decline, those audiences may have recognized the cathartic comfort and pride *Bluebeard* finds in his embrace of decadent decay. That the play’s monster fails but soldiers onwards at the story’s end might be dismissed merely as a horror trope, but it might also have been for its first audiences a reminder that they were hardly dead yet.

Conclusion

Though Charles Ludlam remains most closely affiliated with the city in which he made his work, *Bluebeard* did not belong to New York City alone. It was the centrepiece of every tour the company ever made, and was a hit more often than not.¹⁰⁷ That speaks to its diverse appeal, but also perhaps confirms that its response to the fertile, decadent failure of New York carried resonance beyond national or municipal policies, instead hewing closer to the ‘universal’ concerns Ludlam aspired towards.¹⁰⁸

The reading of *Bluebeard* presented in this article is intended to widen consideration of the play’s often discussed *communitas*, one available not only to New York City’s queer communities, but in fact to all those demonized by a larger national culture for their city’s decadent decline. What I propose is a *communitas* built not on grief, but on a perverse form of pride, and a defiant embrace of a city’s decadent, horrific reality. Such a reading allows us to accept the play’s powerful articulation of queer identity while coming closer to understanding how such a bizarre figure as

Ludlam so thoroughly entered the mainstream as to earn a front-page obituary in the *New York Times* following his death in 1987.

If nothing else, *Bluebeard*, as a lens through which to understand the era that began to transform New York into ‘the highly stratified metropolis it is today’,¹⁰⁹ offers an opportunity to interrogate both the realities and the public imaginary of a city fighting to protect its identity, no matter the challenge. As the heroes of the film *Island of Lost Souls* abscond from Moreau’s island, someone warns them, ‘Don’t look back’. I hope my argument here might encourage us, whether as scholars, artists, or fans, to do the opposite, to re-examine this epoch as one not simply of failed promise but also of decadent triumph. As artists and citizens navigated the forces of decay and public disapproval, desperate to maintain their pride without lapsing into delusion, perhaps they took inspiration from the twisted glee of ambivalent decadence that *Bluebeard*’s horror offered, thanks to the bizarre, queer, grotesque and wonderful Charles Ludlam.

¹ Charles Ludlam, *Ridiculous Theatre: Scourge of Human Folly: The Essays and Opinions of Charles Ludlam*, ed. by Steven Samuels (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992), pp. 243–44 (p. 89).

² Charles Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, in *The Mystery of Irma Vep and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1999), pp. 239–40.

³ History, ‘Behind the Headline: “Ford to City: Drop Dead”’, 30 May 2012, <<https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/ford-to-city-drop-dead-video>> [accessed 13 December 2021].

⁴ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York’s Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), pp. 35–36, p. 39.

⁵ David Weir, *Decadence: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 41–42.

⁶ Sean F. Edgecomb, Charles Ludlam Lives!: Charles Busch, Bradford Louryk, Taylor Mac, and the Queer Legacy of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 30.

⁷ Charles Ludlam, 1982 Artist Statement, quoted in David Kaufman, *Ridiculous!: The Theatrical Life and Times of Charles Ludlam* (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2002), p. 351.

⁸ As a brief sample, his plays include: a Wagner adaptation, a two person/thirty-five character play, children’s puppet plays, a country/western musical, and a Noël Coward high comedy.

⁹ Edgecomb, p. 13, p. 33.

¹⁰ Kelly Aliano, ‘Ridiculous Geographies: Mapping the Theatre of the Ridiculous as Radical Aesthetic’ (unpublished PhD thesis, CUNY Graduate Center, 2014), p. 41.

¹¹ Rick Roemer, Charles Ludlam and the Ridiculous Theatrical Company: Critical Analyses of 29 Plays (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 1998), p. 46.

¹² Jordan Schildcrout, *Murder Most Queer: The Homicidal Homosexual in the American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), p. 82.

¹³ As Kaufman describes, Ludlam was proudly flamboyant even when growing up in suburban Long Island, displaying a self-confidence uncharacteristic of the era.

¹⁴ Hillary Miller, *Drop Dead: Performance in Crisis, 1970s New York* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), p. 16.

¹⁵ Kaufman, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 185.

¹⁷ Kaufman, p. 110.

- ¹⁸ Aliano, p. 7.
- ¹⁹ Edgecomb, p. 3.
- ²⁰ Throughout the essay, I employ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of the 'normate', the fantasy of able-bodied normality, both because *Bluebeard* implies that fantasy, and because, as should become clear, my understanding of horror is contingent on such a delineation. See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
- ²¹ Weir, *Decadence*, p. 45.
- ²² Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 7, Kaufman, p. 8.
- ²³ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 7.
- ²⁴ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 69, Kaufman, pp. 270–71.
- ²⁵ Kaufman, p. 298.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387.
- ²⁷ Tony Kushner, 'A Fan's Foreword', in Charles Ludlam, *The Mystery of Irma Vep and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1999), pp. vii–ix.
- ²⁸ Kaufman, p. 74.
- ²⁹ Ludlam, *Scourge*, pp. 23–24.
- ³⁰ Kaufman, p. 114.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124, p. 209.
- ³² Richard Schechner, 'Two Exemplary Productions', *Village Voice*, 23 April 1970, p. 44.
- ³³ Roemer, p. 91.
- ³⁴ Ludlam, writing as 'Althea Gordon' for *Gay Power*, quoted in Kaufman, p. 129. Yes, Ludlam reviewed his own play under a pseudonym.
- ³⁵ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 235.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- ³⁷ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 3.
- ³⁸ Mel Gussow, 'Laughs Pepper Ghoulish "Bluebeard"', *New York Times*, 5 May 1970, p. 57; Schechner, p. 44; Martin Washburn, 'Theatre: Bluebeard', *Village Voice*, 16 April 1970, pp. 44, 53; and John O'Connor, *The Wall Street Journal* review, quoted in Kaufman, p. 124.
- ³⁹ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 62.
- ⁴⁰ Schechner, p. 44.
- ⁴¹ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 234.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- ⁴³ We are fortunate that an audio recording of this infamous 'seduction scene' exists. The recording is special not only for preserving part of Ludlam's performance, but also for illustrating how raucous the scene was for the audibly laughing audience. See <<https://vimeo.com/87693838>> [accessed 12 December 2021].
- ⁴⁴ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 153.
- ⁴⁵ Weir, *Decadence*, p. 115.
- ⁴⁶ Kaufman, p. 405.
- ⁴⁷ David Weir, 'Afterword: Decadent Taste', in *Decadence and the Senses*, ed. by Jane Desmarais and Alice Condé (Oxford: Legenda, 2017), pp. 219–28 (p. 223).
- ⁴⁸ This sample of parentheticals is taken from throughout *Bluebeard*; most repeat several times.
- ⁴⁹ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 233, p. 268.
- ⁵⁰ Roemer, p. 67.
- ⁵¹ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 27.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- ⁵³ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 269.
- ⁵⁴ Carroll, p. 16.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ⁵⁶ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 128, p. 100.
- ⁵⁷ Carroll, p. 123.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23, p. 17.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31, p. 18.
- ⁶⁰ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xii.
- ⁶¹ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 234.
- ⁶² Kaufman, p. 116.
- ⁶³ Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 263.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.
- ⁶⁵ Weir, 'Afterword', p. 221, pp. 226–27.
- ⁶⁶ Carroll, p. 160.
- ⁶⁷ Weir, *Decadence*, pp. 41–42, p. 45, p. 195.
- ⁶⁸ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 55.

- ⁶⁹ Carroll, p. 207.
- ⁷⁰ Weir, *Decadence*, p. 195.
- ⁷¹ Lamia the Leopard Woman, in Ludlam, *Bluebeard*, p. 252.
- ⁷² Edgecomb, p. 22, p. 4; Stephen J. Bottoms, *Playing Underground: A Critical History of the 1960s Off-Off-Broadway Movement* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 328.
- ⁷³ Edgecomb, p. 3.
- ⁷⁴ Aliano, p. 9.
- ⁷⁵ Weir, 'Afterword', p. 223.
- ⁷⁶ Carroll, p. 170.
- ⁷⁷ Edgecomb, p. 22.
- ⁷⁸ Phillips-Fein, p. 9.
- ⁷⁹ For a significant exception, see Hillary Miller's *Drop Dead*, cited frequently in this article.
- ⁸⁰ Phillips-Fein, p. 39, p. 71.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50, p. 10.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 91, p. 49.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁸⁵ Carroll, p. 28.
- ⁸⁶ Phillips-Fein, p. 124.
- ⁸⁷ Miller, p. 49.
- ⁸⁸ Kaufman, p. 155.
- ⁸⁹ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 17.
- ⁹⁰ Kaufman, p. 34, p. 40.
- ⁹¹ Kaufman, p. 101; Edgecomb, p. 20.
- ⁹² Miller, pp. 33–34.
- ⁹³ Marvin A. Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 2, p. 205.
- ⁹⁴ Bottoms, p. 326. Ludlam premiered *Bluebeard* there to attract a wider audience; an argument with Ellen Stewart quickly ended that arrangement.
- ⁹⁵ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 80.
- ⁹⁶ Kaufman, p. 115.
- ⁹⁷ Phillips-Fein, p. 121.
- ⁹⁸ Miller, p. 16.
- ⁹⁹ Carlson, p. 68.
- ¹⁰⁰ Carroll, p. 43.
- ¹⁰¹ Kaufman, p. 315.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- ¹⁰³ Phillips-Fein, pp. 361–62.
- ¹⁰⁴ Schechner, p. 44.
- ¹⁰⁵ Miller, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ludlam, *Scourge*, pp. 243–44.
- ¹⁰⁷ Kaufman, pp. 142–46.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ludlam, *Scourge*, p. 29.
- ¹⁰⁹ Phillips-Fein, p. 23.