Edited by
Dominique Russell

Rape in Art Cinema

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Dominique Russell is the author of numerous articles on film sound and Spanish and Latin American cinema, including publications in *Jump Cut*, *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*, and *Literature Film Quarterly*. Her film and television scripts have been screened at film festivals (Yorkton, Sao Paolo) and on Canadian French- and English-language television (CBC, Radio-Canada, Bravo). Currently a Visiting Faculty in the Department of French, Italian and Hispanic Studies at the University of British Columbia, she has taught at a number of Canadian universities, including Brock University, York University, and the University of Western Ontario.

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Introduction: Why Rape?

DOMINIQUE RUSSELL

Several years ago, I gave a talk on rape in Buñuel's films at a centenary conference on his work. The reaction to it from a senior scholar stunned me into silence: "I congratulate you for your paper, but I must tell you, your question is strictly forbidden by the text." It was left to Zuzana Pick to come to my rescue and make the obvious point that if the text is designed to restrict our questions about something that is present in the work, such as rape, then surely it behooves us to ask why.

Later, I wrote on Mike Leigh's *Naked* (UK, 1993), trying to come to grips with my reaction to the sexual violence that pervades the film and its billing as "a bitter comedy of freedom," and "an exploration of the meaning of life." Nothing in the Canadian reviews I had read prepared me for a film where nearly every female character is assaulted. The film played out very differently in Leigh's Britain, where feminists protested the film by walking out shouting "five pounds for five rapes!" and Julie Burchill described it as "about as political as a mugging."[1]

The critical literature that had sprung up around the time I was writing about *Naked* dismissed these initial reactions in favor of a more "mature" feminist perspective. My article questioned the need to set aside a visceral reaction to the film to reach supposedly more profound intellectual conclusions. I argued that *Naked*, though it captures the ethos of decay of post-Thatcher England, and despite its extraordinary performance by David Thewlis, was deeply flawed by, and in its portrayal of, rape. Not because of the rapes themselves, or the fact that Johnny, the main character, who burns so bright he ultimately overwhelms the film, is an appealing misogynist (and not because I've confused the misogyny of the character with the director's or the film's) but rather because no price is extracted for the spectator's identification with him. Instead, a parallel is set up with an upper class thug, called alternately Jeremy or Sebastian (Greg Cutwell), who provides an unflattering and easily condemnable foil, letting Johnny (and the viewer) off the hook. The upper class cartoon of a rapist deflects questions about the sexual violence meted out by the unwashed proletarian.

Throughout the film, sexual violence runs the gamut from rough sex to hateful violence, the line between them murky at times. As one critic puts it: "*Naked* opens with a rape. At least what looks like one. Given what we later see of Johnny's modus operandi, probably consensual sex gone awry. Whatever."[2] A lurching tracking shot encourages us to leave the woman, and the question, behind as we join Johnny on his wild ride.

My argument was perhaps flawed; what surprised me was the suggestion that it was in some way illegitimate, somehow naive in the midst of so much philosophy. A Mike Leigh film — the director of films so sensitive to women — didn't deserve this type of enquiry. Obviously, I'd missed the point of the film. The film wasn't about Johnny as abuser — his "bad behavior with girls"[3] notwithstanding, but rather Johnny as seer. In staying with the question of rape, I had missed the whole point of the film.

I have since become convinced of the importance of "missing the point" and of asking "forbidden" questions, especially to hallowed art films beloved of critics. To dismiss the question of rape because it is supposedly unauthorized by the text or because it is outside the purview of our criticism ("Whatever") is to collude with the displacement and obscuring of violence that naturalizes it in our cultural imaginary. This collection, born of these experiences, brings together scholars who delve into rape in all the questions it poses to and about art cinema, and to criticism: questions of violence, of desire, of displacement, of rape itself. The questions have become more visible as directors such as Catherine Breillat, Gaspar Noé, Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi, dubbed the "New French Extremists" (pejoratively) by James Quandt, have placed rape front and center.[4] Rape's invisibility however, as I've suggested, continues to be an equally urgent challenge.

If, as Higgins notes "rape is a perfect crime for film," it is all the more for art cinema, where a defining characteristic is ambiguity.[5] Murder, of course, is fascinating fodder for narrative because violence excites, and because a corpse commands a story; rape, on the other hand, has the combined forces of sex and violence, and two competing stories: depending on which wins out, the crime itself can disappear, leaving only traces of seduction and feminine misunderstanding. In art cinema as in other forms of filmic narrative, rape is at once present and absent, a given, but not quite there. Akiro Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (Japan, 1950), a paradigmatic art film, is not accidentally anchored to a rape that is at once essential and incidental to the narrative. Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver note that "the simultaneous presence and disappearance of rape as constantly deleted origin of both plot and social relations is repeated so often as to suggest a basic conceptual principle in the articulation of both social and artistic representations."[6]

Despite this, there has not been a great deal of theorizing about sexual violence in film studies. Only the "rape-revenge" (sub) genre and Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise* (US, 1991), and Jonathan Kaplan's *The Accused* (US, 1988) especially, have received sustained critical attention.[7] This is a curious omission in the case of art cinema, given the numerous controversies that have arisen. As in the case of *Naked*, these have remained localized, and often quickly forgotten.[8]

Nearly 20 years ago, Higgins and Silver "raise[d] the question of not only why the trope of rape recurs, but even more, of what it means and who benefits" in their seminal anthology *Rape and Representation*, which included Higgins' influential reading of Alain Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* [*Last Year at Marienbad*] (France, 1961), reprinted here.[9] More recently Sarah Projansky has unearthed the vast and repetitive instances of rape as they appear (and disappear) in the history of

American film in her 2001 book *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*.[10] Higgins, and Projansky in her historical chapter, pose the problematic of re-reading rape as one of having to restore sexual violence's visibility, unearthing it from metaphor and euphemism, naturalized plot device and logical consequence. Along with critics such as Laura Tanner, Higgins and Silver and their contributors see their task as "listening to silences [. . .] restoring rape to the literal, to the body: restoring that is, the violence — the physical, sexual violation."[11]

Currently, with the explosion of discourse around rape both represented and real, the task seems to be other. Critics now contend with graphically violent and prolonged filmic rapes, particularly, and shockingly to some, in art cinema. As Tanya Horeck suggests in her book *Public Rape* — which along with Projansky's and Higgins' forms a sort of triumvirate of influence for writers on filmic sexual violence — rape is "a crime that dominates public fantasies regarding sexual and social difference."[12] The New French Extremists and their *cinéma brut* (a "cinema of brutal intimacy," as Tim Palmer terms it)[13] take this public visibility of sexual violence to a disturbing level. Far from straying from the "true" path of art cinema, as Quandt suggests, however, these directors' engagement with rape and its on-screen representation is part of their engagement with art cinema itself.

It isn't that rape has suddenly come to specialized screens; rather its role has been ever-present, though more discreet. The task of challenging rape's ubiquitousness and effacement has not been superseded by the trope's hypervisibility — even in as extreme an example as *Irréversible* (Gaspar Noé, France, 2002), critics sometimes treat rape as something to step around in order to get to the "real" (and important) meaning — rather, *cinéma brut*'s obsession with sexual violence invites critics to reconsider its role in the canon and definition of art cinema itself.

This is, of course, complicated by the problem of the nebulous definition of art cinema. Used functionally in marketing and academic writing, the term has associations of high culture, intelligence and prestige. It is by no means a static category, and has meant different things at different times. As Barbara Wilinsky points out, "like classical Hollywood cinema, the art film can be considered in terms of both its textual properties and its industrial context."[14] I am less concerned here, however, with an exact definition than with the critical consensus — "reading for maximum ambiguity," for example — that shapes a mode of reception and gives the canon its shape.[15] We have taken art cinema as films made for, or marketed to, a niche audience in which the style and subjectivity of the director is foregrounded. This "common sense" definition, along with a thematic focus, does risk de-historicizing and overgeneralizing. That risk is balanced by the specific focus of each chapter; ultimately, however, without some generalization, critical discourse remains anchored to specific cases without seeing patterns and drawing broader conclusions.[16]

To some extent, it is the critical discussion around a film that can situate it as an art film. Whether a film and a filmmaker can live up to expectations — about truth, surprise, "seriousness," and the "filmic"[17] — can be as key to the acceptance of a film as an "art film," as stylistic markers within the film or a filmmaker's aspirations. Art cinema is "at once a type of film, the alternative apparatus within the commercial cinema,"[18] and a marker of "quality." This is clear in Dudley Andrew's definition in

his *Film in the Aura of Art*, in which he asserts that "the art cinema promises to do something that no other group of films can: to question, to change, or disregard standard filmmaking in seeking to convey or discover the utterly new or formerly hidden."[19] But even the strictest attempt at objective definition reaches for some qualitative element, with, for example, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith concluding his summary in *The Oxford History of World Cinema* by asserting that "Jim Jarmusch and David Lynch's have at least as much claim to belong in this category as their European counterparts such as Wenders or Kaurismäki."[20]

It is a telling facet of this problematic that the debates around controversial films such as *Irréversible* and Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (Denmark/Sweden, 1996) (films that elicit ethical questions about the use being made of sexual violence), or Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (Italy/France, 1973), to use an earlier example, hinge on whether or not they can be considered "art."[21] Unlike other filmic classifications, like horror, where good and bad coexist (although a great horror film might eventually be claimed for art cinema), an art film is either good, that is, art, or bad, that is, "pretentious," "Euro-pudding," "Euro-trash." Political interrogations of art cinema, and particularly feminist ones, thus seem to threaten the very canon. What is at stake is a definition of art. Hence, I would argue, the heated debates around von Trier and other art cinema provocateurs, where ethics and aesthetics converge. Enquiring into the place of sexual violence in a canonical auteur seems to threaten this place — as though it would necessarily further Laura Mulvey's early project of "unpleasuring" beloved classics. To a large extent, however, this is less a matter of morality, or even of feminist politics, than of conventionality — perhaps a greater sin if an art film must by definition be "insistently different."[22]

It may also be that the line of enquiry also threatens to clarify the presence of rape and implicate us in the sexual violence of the films we love. Scott MacKenzie notes in his chapter how "the spectator's uneasy complicity" with images of violation fuels "a tension between the desire to look and the compulsion to look away." As Horeck demonstrates, moving beyond positions of praise or blame for "positive" or "negative" representations of rape, we begin to explore the "ambivalence of spectatorship," and our participation, as viewers and critics in the fantasy and "cultural investment in images of rape."[23]

The classics of the art cinema canon, with its touchstones decided by an ill-defined convention are, whether we like it or not, shot through with rape. From D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (US, 1919), Jean Renoir's *Partie de campagne* [*A Day in the Country*] (France, 1936), to postwar international films such as Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* [*Rocco and his Brothers*] (Italy/France, 1960) and *La caduta degli dei* [*The Damned*] (Italy/Germany, 1969), Ingmar Bergman's *Jungfrukällan* [*The Virgin Spring*] (Sweden, 1960), Vittorio De Sica's *La ciociara* [*Two Women*] (Italy, 1960), Robert Bresson's *Mouchette* (France, 1967), Bertolucci's *Il conformista* [The Conformist] (Italy, 1970) and the previously mentioned *Last Tango in Paris*, to Pedro Almodóvar's *Kika* (Spain/France, 1993), in addition to the titles discussed in this volume, all include rape. The reasons are multiple: rape serves as metaphor, symbol, plot device, for character transformation, catalyst or narrative resolution. These functions are much like in mainstream cinema, with some added dimensions.

Art cinema's hallmark, as I've stressed above, is ambiguity. Eugenie Brinkema suggests in her chapter that in *Rashomon* and Oshima Nagisa's *Tokyo senso sengo hiwa: Eiga de isho o nokoshite shinda otoko no monogatari* (*The Battle of Tokyo, or the Story of the Young Man Who Left His Will on Film*) (Japan, 1970) "the notoriously reflexive, complex, and ultimately irreconcilable narratives [. . .] are a symptom of the rape that (de)centers those texts." Rape, as an event that can be made to disappear through narrative (as the story of seduction, or sex), a trauma that depends upon interpretation and the possibility of multiple truths, introduces the very issues art cinema is centrally concerned with. When one side of the story is suppressed, rape can almost disappear: what remains is doubt, loose threads, many possible narratives, in short, ambiguity. Rape can be reframed, retold, explained away. As Higgins suggests, this retelling is at work in Renoir's *A Day in the Country* and in Resnais' *Marienbad*. It is at work in *Last Tango*, in reverse: Jeanne claims Paul was going to rape her; by all indications this is true, but he is dead before we know for sure, and critics are nearly unanimous that his murder is completely unmotivated.

When rape is represented as unequivocal, as in legal and popular discourses, it is stranger rape, violent and crippling. But in art cinema, where reflexivity, the elusiveness of truth and importance of interpretation are privileged, rape is less a fact to be avenged, judged or overcome through cathartic closure (marriage, legal action, death) as in rape revenge and Hollywood films, than a specter to cast doubt on those very words: fact, vengeance, judgment, closure.

Art cinema has historically had a role in extending the range of sexual content on-screen, and this also has some consequences for rape. Peter Lev notes that while the critical response to a film like *Rome, Open City* (1945) emphasized its "artistic and universal qualities, its success in the United States was based on a salacious advertising campaign." He notes, "*Open City* is basically two films: a story of heroism and suffering and a story of decadence and cruelty."[24] This double story prefigures what would become a dominant trend in the art cinema mode, to combine the "sexually daring," with aesthetic and intellectual challenges.

From the beginning, art cinema appealed as much to the libido of its spectators as it did to their intelligence. Indeed, the breakthrough figure for foreign art films was Brigitte Bardot.[25] In this sexual exploration, sexual violence plays multiple roles. Directors such as Jean-Luc Godard (*Vivre sa vie* [My Life to Live], France, 1962), Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Salò*, Italy, 1975), Lina Wertmuller (*Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto* [*Swept Away*], Italy, 1974) and Liliana Cavani (*Il portiere di notte* [*The Night Porter*], Italy, 1974) used the dynamics of power in the sexual realm, and rape itself, to comment on political power. The assailing of the bounds of propriety was part of a move to push boundaries, be they social, aesthetic or political. Pasolini's *Salò* is singular in this. The film's interpretation of Sade is hyper-aestheticized, yet so abstract as to be de-eroticized as well. Gary Indiana, noting the viewer's implication in scenes of "raw cruelty" that are also "extremely funny," adds: "What *Salò* frequently looks like is self-revulsion pushed to an insane limit of absurdity."[26] Few directors extract this kind of price for the placing of sensual and intellectual pleasure alongside fantasies of sexual violence.

Pasolini in fact holds sensual and intellectual pleasure — both metaphysics and

politics — in an impossible tension. They are both present in *Salò*: the former, however, is not in service of the other: the film's sensory pleasures cannot be offset by its political argument (a "pedantic cartoon," notes Indiana).[27] Unlike Leigh's *Naked*, to return to a previous example, there is no safe place from which to condemn sexual violence and disavow our enjoyment. Rather, Pasolini is determined to "implicate the viewer in this 'evil' while denying us the guilty pleasure of viewing it head-on."[28] More often than not however, as I've suggested, in analysis of art films, the exhilarating shock of sex or violence is subordinated to political or philosophical purposes.[29] Especially when "sex is not so much coupled with violence as equated with it,"[30] as in so many art film representations of rape.

The erotics of power are a great art-house theme, and indeed, one stereotype of the mode is bored and impossibly beautiful housewives dreaming of prostitution and/or rough sex. In films of the *Nouvelle Vague*, for example, female masochism is more often naturalized than interrogated. As I discuss in my chapter on Buñuel, sado-masochism in art cinema tends to reify the power balance in gender roles rather than challenge it, and at times conflates consensual and non-consensual force. In *Last Tango*, Jeanne is so ready for anything, so opaque as a character — as E. Ann Kaplan put it "a tool for Paul's self-exploration and for his acting out of his hostility"[31] — that the difference between her willing and unwilling submission is nearly (but not quite) imperceptible.

But if Maria Schneider felt violated by the demands made of her while playing Jeanne, it was only one sacrifice in the quest for Marlon Brando's extraordinary performance and Bertolucci's vision.[32] The similarities with more recent controversies are striking. (One could substitute Emily Watson and Lars von Trier.) More importantly, however, when on-screen rape, often casual and unacknowledged, causes controversy as in the case of Almodóvar, Leigh or von Trier, to use just three examples, that controversy is more often than not doused by evocations of art and a higher purpose — a stepping away from the complicated questions of the entanglements of rape and seduction, and the basic, but no less complex issue of "what does it matter who is speaking?"[33] — back into the myth of the misunderstood artist. This reinforces a hierarchy of masculine imagination over feminine body, as I'm implying here.

The very definition of art cinema most in common currency, that of David Bordwell, which focuses on stylistics — "a goal-less protagonist burdened by ordinary, everyday life made a heroic figure by a master of art cinema — masculinizes both the content and the creation of art cinema," as contributor Shelley Cobb notes.[34] The canon follows the line of "great men of history," who boldly defy convention, both filmic and social, through its challenge to the spectator (to endure silence, inaction, sexual explicitness and/or violence), is at this point itself an art cinema convention. (Including the inevitable walkouts and fainting women.) It's surprising that this nexus of masculine-defined genre and the female violated body within it — and what this means for female art cinema directors' interventions in the mode (Jane Campion, Catherine Breillat, to mention two) — remains so untheorized.

If, as Horeck and Cobb argue herein, Campion and Breillat emphasize subjectivity as an embodied experience (of the body, but not the body itself) touched,

but not determined by, rape and its threat, it may be because art cinema privileges subjectivity as voice, look, and intellect, and in some sense uses rape to shore up that abstracted subjectivity. András Bálint Kovács, describing the art cinema's anti-hero, comments: "the world is outside him, and he is totally absorbed by his inner psychic life" adding that this "makes his persona a manifestation of mental freedom."[35] This freedom, and our access to its fruits, is radically denied in the case of the violated woman. Laura Tanner makes the key point that while a woman is attacked for, in and through her subjectivity, "the victim of violation is the object rather than the subject of violence, a human being stripped of agency and mercilessly attached to a physical form that cannot be dissolved at will."[36] The contrast, and the ability to leave that body-object behind, accrues the greater disembodied subjectivity to the male protagonist, and to the spectator in the filmic fantasy.

Tanya Horeck's important contribution to the question of rape and visual culture, which I rely on here, is to bring to bear Elizabeth Cowie's notion of "public fantasy," and the complicated interplay of the real and the imaginary in psychoanalytic understandings of fantasy. That is, Horeck has us consider how "rape is structured as a scene through which a multitude of conflicts are staged." Not private denials of the "real event," but stories told and re-told, these fantasies "operat[e] as the ground over which the terms of the social — and the sexual — contract are secured."[37] This isn't to say that the fantasy has no consequences for reality, but rather the opposite, though not necessarily in as straightforward a way as is often assumed in the anxiety about how a rape scene might "teach" rape. Yet cultural assumptions about rape as a real event do underlie both critical and popular understanding of its representation. Art cinema is not sealed off from these understandings and "interrelate[s] with, produce[s], and subsequently reproduce[s] a cultural symbology" about rape.[38]

What careful study reveals is how few art films challenge or add shadings to this cultural symbology. Breillat and Despentes and Trinh Thi are exceptions, rejecting polarizations of violence and sex that have bedeviled discussions of rape. Rape in their films involves *both* sex and force. As Horeck argues in her chapter, Breillat's intervention in the feminist debate about rape is particularly nuanced, showing it not to be a fantasy so easily dissolved by feminism, as Susan Brownmiller's slogan had it.

Baise-Moi emphasizes that the weapon in rape is the penis. This makes the censors' cuts to the rape scene, notably by the Ontario Film Review Board and the British Board of Film Classification (discussed by Martin Barker here), absurd, as though eliminating the shot of violent entry makes the rape somehow less sexual and "safer" (or the rest of the film less graphic: as the directors note, if you censor the sex and violence, there isn't much left).[39] Even as the sexual nature of rape is asserted, rape and heterosexual intercourse aren't placed in parallel. This is in contrast to fellow New Extremists Dumont and Noé, whose pessimism seems to re-pose Catherine MacKinnon's question "what is the nonviolation of intercourse?"[40] Breillat and Despentes and Trinh Thi complicate matters by paying attention to the complexities of subjectivity and female pleasure.

Nevertheless, on one level, representations of rape, as Projansky notes, contribute to an environment where rape and its threat are pervasive.[41] The spectator may

find rape on-screen assaultive, as some critics have noted in relationship to Leigh's *Naked*, though a host of other films might serve as examples.[42] This isn't to equate one experience with the other, but rather to take seriously the embodied condition of spectators. As contributor Shana MacDonald puts it: "The visceral responses to sexual violence on-screen are [. . .] rarely articulated within scholarly critical frames. If women and men experience a heightened awareness of their bodies in their experiences of viewing rape, then the distinctions in their experiences are an important site for further investigations into the intricacies of embodied spectatorship." It is precisely because the shock of rape returns the spectator to their bodies that it is useful for the New Extremists; not unexpectedly, they are aware, if not obsessed with, sexual difference at all levels, including that of the spectator.[43]

Because art cinema has always pushed the bounds of acceptable representation of sexuality and violence, because its erotic and scopophilic pleasures are aimed at a "higher purpose," that is, because its physicality is so often subsumed to metaphysical and abstract questions, because it is so concerned with truth and interpretation and the specificity of film itself, and because its aesthetic claim is originality and unconventionality, it is essential to note how it relies on sexual violence for its ends.

To pose the question of rape centrally then, may pose the question of ethics versus aesthetics as it does in the critical debates around *Irréversible*, and it may threaten a reassessment of the canon, but its essential work is elsewhere. In focusing on rape the contributors here open up hypotheses about the meaning and function of sexual violence on-screen, about reception, canon-formation, spectatorship, about representation and the pleasures and power struggles involved in interpretation. The question of rape in art cinema is a question about art cinema itself, as genre, canon and mode of reception. It's also a question of what rape is conceived to be and how it circulates in high culture, in the imagination and craft of filmmakers as well as the theories and appreciation of critics.

The contributors here tackle these issues from a variety of disciplinary and philosophical perspectives. The first section treats classic films and canonical auteurs. We begin with Lynn A. Higgins' seminal analysis of *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, in which she argues that one of the potential narratives in this undecidable film is the story of a rape and its cover-up. Higgins' influential reading demonstrates how rape is rewritten as seduction within the film as well as by its critics, and how the very multiplication of potential meanings can serve as a "smoke screen" by obscuring the possibility of that particular meaning. Higgins' analysis of the place of rape in the struggle over narrational authority in postmodernity's indeterminate texts remains potent and her perspective informs many of the other contributor's reflections.

Eugenie Brinkema's previously mentioned reading of two Japanese art cinema classics is equally theoretically challenging and nuanced. In her essay she explores the way critical responses to the *Rashomon* and *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* pose rape as a given, fixing what remains indeterminate within the text. "A stain in the field of truth," rape is not the subject of these films, the event that provokes a host of doubt, she argues, but rather the very condition that makes the films' unresolvable doubt possible. Brinkema demonstrates that in setting rape aside as a given, the

critical-theoretical accounts return the raped woman to her role in the films: "in a repetition of the diegetic scenes of violence, Woman is defined as she who is always translated from a no into a yes. Forever producing imaginary affirmation in the other, she is emptied of her subjecthood through the process of rereading." Higgins and Brinkema's readings place the question of the representation of rape — the "why" in Higgins and the "how" in Brinkema — squarely in the form of art cinema itself. That is, the ambiguity so essential to art cinema is enabled, in these films, by an unrepresentable sexual violence.

My contribution joins this project of exploring naturalized and obscured sexual violence. Shining a light on a blind spot in Buñuelians' criticism, I interrogate the relationship between the director's great themes: power and desire. The chapter explores the tension between Buñuel's critical stance towards bourgeois society and the place of women within it, and his acceptance of some of these bourgeois social values in the representation of rape in his films. I focus on *Un chien andalou* (France, 1932), *Viridiana* (Spain/Mexico, 1961) and especially *Cet obscur objet du désir* (France/Spain, 1977), where rape is rewritten as an ill-starred romance that plays out as a game of cat and mouse.

Shana MacDonald, through a juxtaposition of Anne Claire Poirier's *Mourir à tue-tête* (Canada, 1979) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend*, poses the problem of the rape in terms of the lived experience of the spectator. Her reading of these films highlights "the crucial tension between rape as a metaphor, or trope for broader cinematic and social concerns" and rape as a social reality for the spectator. Her chapter tackles another important knot in the problematic of rape in art cinema: the way in which art cinema often requires viewers to separate their intellectual and visceral response and privileges the former over the latter, even as the body is deliberately engaged.

Victoria Anderson approaches the vexed connection between rape and marriage in her readings of Eric Rohmer's *Die marquise von O* and Lars von Triers' controversial *Breaking the Waves*. Using Samuel Richardson's Clarissa as a meta-text, she explores the rhetorical links that binds rape with privation and marriage itself and demonstrates how both films complicate notions of consent and will. In Anderson's subtle analysis the rapes that are displaced offer a "different understanding of how rape might function as a complex series of affects rather than a single, definitive act." Like Brinkema, Anderson posits the unrepresentability of rape as a problem of perspective and competing narrations. Without the woman's story — her interiority — rape is always shadowy, possibly not there.

Adriana Novoa takes up another mythical rape story in her analysis of Pedro Almodóvar's *Talk to Her*. Comparing it to Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill vol. I,* she shows how the myth of Sleeping Beauty undergirds both films. The unconscious woman supposes woman's availability and passivity in the former, her dangerous power in the latter. Both, however, can be understood as expressions of fantasies imposed on women. "One shows the power of female helplessness, the other of female omnipotence, two sides of the same coin." Like Lars von Trier, Almodóvar presents love as not necessarily reciprocal, but driven by one person's obsession. Where Almodóvar works to divert the spectator's attention from the rape (and leaves

his character unaware of her experience), Tarantino follows the pattern of the rape revenge film, graphically and gorily displaying both rape and its consequences.

The second section looks at English-language independents. Shelley Cobb considers Jane Campion's recent work in light of its engagement with postfeminist discourses. She argues that Campion's crossovers between mainstream and art cinema "manifest a queering of mainstream and art cinema conventions that critiques the family, heterosexual romance, and the myth of "having it all" by refiguring the postfeminist rape narrative." Campion's emphasis on the body undermines art cinema's (and high culture's) assumption that consciousness is a kind of disembodied seeing. Rather, as Cobb demonstrates, Campion's work presents subjectivity as always embodied, and shows within that embodiment, an awareness of the dangers of the body in patriarchal society.

Philosopher Ann J. Cahill considers Kimberley Pierce's *Boys Don't Cry* (US, 1999), paying careful attention to the rape scene and its consequences for the main character's gender. Cahill argues that the critics' assumption that the rape feminizes Brandon Teena is not in fact born out by a careful consideration of the film, and rests on "a misreading of the meanings and effects of the rape." She then considers how the film serves to problematize some fundamental issues in the more general scholarship on rape as a social and political phenomenon. Summarizing her theory of rape as "an embodied experience that figures prominently in the gendering of persons" (presented in her *Re-Reading Rape*), she shows how this more supple perspective can illuminate the meanings of the rape of Brandon Teena in a way that previously feminist theories of rape cannot.

Michelle E. Moore suggests that the work of controversial American auteur Todd Solondz both parodies and pastiches rape narratives of the 1970s and 1980s. The tension in the films, she argues, is due in part to the need to "negotiate between the critical parody of rape narratives, and the odd nostalgia caused by seeing rape narratives as the kitsch of a Generation X childhood." Moore analyzes *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (US, 1995), *Happiness* (US,1998) and *Storytelling* (US, 2001), demonstrating how they problematize common rape narratives and rhetoric with increasing complexity and bleakness. Like other auteurs, Solondz displaces rape, but it remains at the pivotal center of his narratives.

The last section of the book is concerned with recent French cinema — the New Extremists that I have discussed above. Martin Barker reports on a study of British audience responses to sexual violence, highlighting the way the diffuse category of "Frenchness" tempers that response. He divides his respondents into "Embracers" and "Refusers," showing how the former engage with the film as a "meaningful cultural experience," while the latter refuse the experience of the film entirely. The irony is that the same grounds are often cited in accepting or rejecting a film's representation of sexual violence. Barker's respondents touch on the ambivalence graphic representations of rape evoke, especially the extended rape sequence in *Irréversible*: on the one hand, spectators report feeling horrified, yet recognize the erotic potential within the spectacle.

Scott MacKenzie works through this ambiguity in his chapter. Proposing an alternate genealogy of what he calls, tongue in cheek, "pornartgraphy," he considers

a different set of antecedents in order to understand the aesthetic, political and spectatorial implications of these films. If Bertolt Brecht hovers over postwar French art cinema, MacKenzie argues, Antonin Artaud is the touchstone for the New Extremists. These filmmakers complicate notions of scopophilic pleasure and passive spectatorship, recalling the challenges put forth by avant-garde feminist cinema in the 1970s. MacKenzie posits Yoko Ono's *Rape* (UK/Austria, 1969) as a precursor to the *cinéma brut*'s concern with rape and representation. He shows how "the slippage between the metaphoric rape of the camera and the audience's desire for something more visceral and material comes to dominate representations of rape in the cinema." Like *Rape*'s "Brechtian-Artaudian hybrid," *cinéma brut* both distances the viewer and confronts them with their own violence.

Lisa Coulthard's chapter demonstrates this principle in relationship to Bruno Dumont's "experimental horror" film *29 Palms* (France, 2003). The shock ending at once comes out of nowhere and satisfies the spectator's desire for action, leaving the spectator feeling complicit and shaken. Coulthard argues that the inversion effected here — it is the male protagonist who is raped, and the woman made to watch — takes the film into the territory of the uncanny, as though cinematic male rape itself "traumatically disturbs" the film text. Her argument is bolstered by a careful analysis of John Boorman's *Deliverance* (US, 1972) as the paradigmatic example of male rape that Dumont engages in his indictment of American violence.

Historian Joanna Bourke reads Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi's *Baise-Moi* as an exploration of *jouissance* "an excess of Sadean spectacle and enjoyment in the abjection of self and others." The sexual violence the women endure, shot starkly and realistically, is not given as a cause or excuse for their subsequent murderous spree. Bourke argues that the film refuses the notion that women are constituted *as* women through violence, celebrating instead heterosexual pleasure. *Baise-Moi* situates rape as a reality, but not one that necessarily must lead to trauma and/or vengeance. Instead, writes Bourke, "for Manu, rape is an external act committed by someone else: it implies nothing about her subjectivity." Unlike rape-revenge films, the reason for female violence isn't safely anchored to trauma: "In response to the question: 'why do you sexually abuse and murder other people?' the leading characters of *Baise-Moi* posit a very simple answer: because we can."

Like Bourke, Tanya Horeck argues that rape is reconsidered in the work of another of *cinéma brut*'s female directors, Catherine Breillat. Horeck demonstrates how Breillat's exploration of rape is inextricably linked to her exploration of cinema, claiming "there is a visual specificity to Breillat's envisioning of rape that enables her to articulate something about violence and desire that is only attainable cinematically." Horeck reads *À Ma Soeur!* (known as *Fat Girl* in the US) in the context of classic feminist theory, arguing that this "cruel fairy tale" opens up provocative questions about shame and desire as it explores female adolescent sexuality. The rape that ends the film is not gratuitous, but rather, inextricably linked to Breillat's filmic project of exploring the unsettling ambiguities of female sexuality.

Collectively these writers take up the challenge to deepen our understanding of art cinema by addressing the prevalence of rape and its representations. Posing

questions that are authorized by the text, unauthorized by the text, indifferent to a text, even violently refused by a text, they attempt to delimit a critical approach that does not answer the problem of rape in art cinema, but continually re-poses the question: rape's prevalence, form, cultural purpose, ethical and political stakes in cinematic texts and criticism. This anthology is organized around the notion that no question is more authorized by a text than the question that it claims to forbid.[44]

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PART I

Canonical Works and Auteurs