

## Introduction

# New Shocks to the System: An Introduction to *Shocking Cinema of the 70s*

Julian Petley and Xavier Mendik

This collection was originally intended as a second edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s*,<sup>1</sup> which was published in 2002 and edited by Xavier Mendik. In the original volume, contributors discussed a wide range of films that Mendik bracketed around three core themes: 'Hollywood on the edge', 'the ethnic other in action' and 'seventies horrors'. Under these general headings, some of the topic areas that the authors considered included the 1970s disaster film, Michael Winner's films as emblematic of the era, American conspiracy cinema as reflective of the decade, blaxploitation horror cinema within wider ethnic contexts, Hong Kong cinema's constructions of the mutilated kung fu hero, Hammer co-productions of the 1970s, dystopic reflections of society in the cinema of George A. Romero and conflicting constructions of contemporary London across a range of 1970s British horror films.

Upon the book's recommissioning, it had been the intention of both editors to retain the full contents of the original volume, and to complement these with new chapters where appropriate. However, in the course of its long gestation, the new edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* has become an entirely new book. There are a number of reasons for not reproducing any of the chapters from the first edition of the volume, despite the innumerable merits of the individual contributions. Central to this decision is the fact that since the volume's original release in 2002, a number of monographs and edited collections have been published which have further recuperated many of the subjects discussed in the first edition, thus rendering them no longer particularly shocking or marginal. For instance, an invaluable primer on 1970s cinema and society such as Lester D. Friedman's edited collection *American*

*Cinema of the 1970s: Themes and Variations*<sup>2</sup> offers revised considerations of disaster film cycles and blaxploitation cinema formats alongside a further consideration of ‘disreputable’ horror entries such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974). Friedman’s publication is itself complemented by other recent works that include Barbara Jane Brickman’s *New American Teenagers: The Lost Generation of Youth in 1970s Film*,<sup>3</sup> which provides an updated reading of Hooper’s film in the context of wider discussions around 1970s teen movie constructions. Such publications have been complemented by more sustained studies on key topic areas covered in the first edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* that have been undertaken by the original contributors themselves. These include Leon Hunt, whose chapter ‘One-Armed and Extremely Dangerous: Wang Yu’s Mutilated Masters’ was then expanded as part of his wider book-length study *Kung Fu Cult Masters*,<sup>4</sup> while Linnie Blake’s contribution ‘Another One for the Fire: George A. Romero’s American Theology of the Flesh’ provided the basis for an extrapolation into her volume *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema Historical Trauma and National Identity*.<sup>5</sup>

The proliferation of such works indicates that the majority of the subject areas covered by the first edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* can no longer be considered as case-studies that require further review and reclamation, possible exceptions being *The Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972) and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, even though newer studies in the field have helped both now achieve ‘classic’ status in the horror genre. Equally, some of the films had ceased to be shocking even by 2002 when *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* first appeared. However, one of the purposes of the original volume was to analyse why it was that films that were found shocking were being produced in the 1970s, particularly in the US, and why they were found shocking at the time of their release. Mendik notes that:

In the light of Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, political and civil unrest, the construction of the Hollywood narrative altered to reveal a much more pessimistic and downbeat tone. Indeed, it is noticeable that dominant cycles of the era (such as the thriller, western and horror genres) seem dogged by moral ambiguity.<sup>6</sup>

That the horror genre looms large in the first edition is not simply because of its obvious shock-producing potential but also because it was one of the most

popular genres of the decade, and, as Robin Wood<sup>7</sup> in particular has argued, represents a form of 'American nightmare' in which the dominant fears and tensions of the decade were laid bare, albeit in frequently sub-textual forms. Thus, the corruption of the civic body and the degeneration of communal bonds are explored via three Romero films: *The Crazies* (1973), *Martin* (1977) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). Moral ambiguity, the evil of the everyday and an absence of authority are the subject of the chapter on *The Last House on the Left*. And the chapter on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, following Wood, uses the film to explore the collapse of established definitions of good and evil, normality and monstrosity.

However, all this is by now familiar territory thanks to Wood and the numerous scholars of cult and exploitation cinema who have, in different ways, built upon the foundations which he laid in the 1970s. Thus, we decided not to re-visit it here.

In addition to considering the diminished shock value that many of the contributions from 2002 now generate, both editors also reflected on the *sectional* nature of the original volume, which was primarily concerned with American cinema, both in its mainstream and independent iterations. The few non-American films considered are the Italian *L'anticristo/The Antichrist* (Alberto De Martino, 1974); the British *Dracula A.D. 1972* (Alan Gibson, 1972), *Death Line/Raw Meat* (Gary Sherman, 1972) and *Theatre of Blood* (Douglas Hickox, 1973); the Wang Yu vehicles *The Chinese Boxer/The Hammer of God* (Hong Kong, 1970), *One-Armed Boxer* (Taiwan, Hong Kong, 1972) and *The Man from Hong Kong/The Dragon Flies* (Australia, Hong Kong, co-directed with Brian Trenchard-Smith, 1975); and the UK-Hong Kong co-production *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (Roy Ward Baker, 1974).

In this new edition, the transnational net has been cast much wider. Aga Skrodza-Bates's chapter on Walerian Borowczyk encompasses works by a Polish director made in France and Italy; Laura Treglia explores Japanese 'pinky violence' films; and three chapters examine the still rather neglected area of 'Canuxploitation'. However, given their global dominance in the 1970s, American films still inevitably loom large, although we have attempted to move further into the margins. In industrial terms this involves a turn to TV in Jennifer Wallis's study of rape-revenge tele-films, and also to the more independent end of the film production sector in James Newton's chapter on

the women in prison movie and Bill Osgerby's study of Manson Family movies (which also features a TV production). And in terms of subject matter, Darren Kerr examines hard core pornography's move from the margins (and back again), whilst Neil Jackson analyses a form of hard core that could never be anything but marginal and shocking.

We did, however, decide to stick with the title of the original edition, and it is important in particular to try to explain why we retained the word 'shocking'. We wanted the new collection to focus on films from a variety of countries, and from the marginal to the mainstream, which, by tackling various 'difficult' subjects, have proved to be controversial in one way or another. Although some of the films have become cult objects, others have not, so *Cult Cinema of the Seventies* was out. Likewise, although some belong to the realm of 'cultural detritus' labelled 'paracinema' by Jeffrey Sconce,<sup>8</sup> others are mainstream, such as *Death Wish* (Michael Winner, 1974), *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971) and the tele-films mentioned above. So *Paracinema of the Seventies* wouldn't work either.

Consequently, as most of these films have proved shocking at some point or have retained their power to shock, we decided to retain the original title. In so doing, we have also expanded upon the division of core themes that distinguished the 2002 original, but have amended them to fit the revised focus of the contents of the current volume. The headings under which we now review the 1970s as a shocking decade of cinema can be identified as: 'International Visions of the Extreme', 'From the Vigilante to the Violated', 'State Sponsored Shocks', 'Family-sploitation and Threats to the Family', and 'Porno Chic, Porno Shock'.

Importantly, we also need to make it clear that via this expanded focus on cinematic shock, we see nothing necessarily 'progressive' or even subversive in unsettling or distasteful content. From approaches to the cinema inflected by Surrealism, for example Ado Kyrrou's *Le surréalisme au cinéma*,<sup>9</sup> to works emerging from the US counterculture and underground, such as Amos Vogel's *Film as a Subversive Art*,<sup>10</sup> through to certain aspects of cult criticism, there is a certain tendency to identify films which manage to *épater les bourgeois* with progressive or even radical potential. As Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton point out: 'Cult cinema's modes of reception are informed by debates around how they break boundaries of morality and challenge prohibitions in culture, how they dispute common sense conceptions of what is normal and acceptable, and

how in doing so they confront taboo.<sup>11</sup> However, the shocks delivered by some of the films discussed in this book are of a very different kind – shocks to liberal sentiment courtesy of the reactionary values of *Death Wish* and *Dirty Harry*, and to certain strands of feminism in the women in prison movies discussed by Neil Jackson and in the hard core roughies by Darren Kerr (although it should be added that the latter contain scenes that would shock almost anyone). We will return to this subject when we discuss their individual chapters below.

### *Shocking Cinema of the 70s: the chapters*

Opening the section ‘International Visions of the Extreme’ is Aga Skrodzka-Bates’s chapter on Walerian Borowczyk, which considers how shocked many critics were that the director had ‘abandoned his background in prestige art, only to take up entertainment films featuring explicit sexual content’. It is also worth adding that such films, namely *Contes immoraux/Immoral Tales* (1974), *La bête/The Beast* (1975), *Interno di un convento/Behind Convent Walls* (1978) and *Les héroïnes du mal/Immoral Women* (1979), were shocking enough to run into considerable censorship difficulties in numerous countries. For example, in the UK both *Immoral Tales* and *The Beast* were banned outright by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), while additionally *Behind Convent Walls* and *Immoral Women* were cut. Skrodzka-Bates also identifies another critical ploy used to deal with the shocking content of Borowczyk’s films, namely to argue that his form of erotica is a ‘classy’ one that does so much more than titillate. Thus, she notes that:

It has frequently been claimed that there is always more to it, and that the ‘more’ has an authentic artistic, even philosophical, value. Unsurprisingly, Borowczyk’s early reputation as an award-winning experimental film-maker lends his sexploitation fare the kind of credibility that prompts certain critics to group him with Pier Paolo Pasolini, Luis Buñuel and Nagisa Ôshima.

However, whilst not denying his qualities as ‘an experimental animator, a surrealist artist, a philosopher of sexuality, a cultural iconoclast and a technical innovator’, Skrodzka-Bates also wants to claim him as a financially successful

exploitation film-maker, and one with affinities with Russ Meyer, Jess Franco and Ken Russell. Her chapter explores the reasons why the sexploitation framework is frequently pushed out of Borowczyk criticism, and brings it back in. In doing so she situates the films firmly in the 1970s, when western Europe

was experiencing a widespread cultural and political liberalisation, the rise of consumer capitalism, a series of youth rebellions against the status quo, the growth of gay and women's rights movements, and, most importantly, the arrival of the sexual revolution. As such, the films both speak of and react to the nexus of transformations (political, economic, and cultural) that shaped Borowczyk's new French milieu. They also speak of the commodified desire that the 1970s mediated and put on display to an unprecedented degree.

While directors such as Walerian Borowczyk shocked the sensibilities that imbued European 'quality' cinema during the 1970s, Laura Treglia's chapter on 'pinkie violence' (*pinkī baiorensu*) films provides another international rendition of the extreme. Specifically, the inclusion of a number of references to Japanese 1970s films in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003) exposed a global audience to the (then) virtually unknown world of Japanese exploitation cinema of the period, which is now referred to as 'pinkie violence'. These films featured action and eroticism as their main selling points, and, Treglia argues, are best examined as a diverse set of thematic cycles that play with a multitude of generic conventions, in particular those genres involving erotica, gangsters, swordplay, horror, detective stories, comedy and melodrama. She focuses in particular on the second film in the *Joshū Sasori/Female Prisoner Scorpion* series (1972–3), *Dai 41 zakkyo-bo/Jailhouse 41* (Itō Shun'ya, 1972), taking it as

an example of Japanese grindhouse cinema of the early 1970s that prominently features figurations of violent, rebelling femininities in ways that give them an empowering energy and at the same time contain their gender anomalies. The films achieve this by manipulating, parodying and reproducing action film conventions as well as archetypes of female non-conforming characters.

Treglia locates the qualities of the pinkie violence films that unsettled contemporary Japanese *mores* as consisting in the way that their female protagonists transgressed state-sanctioned, official ideologies of gender

propriety. These construct domestic and nurturing roles as 'proper' to women's identities and have long been supported in Japan by various institutional policies and corporate business practices, but they were also 'relayed through mainstream cinema articulations of a virtuous, industrious and enduring femininity, acting in deference to social norms and patriarchal authority'. However, nothing could be further from this image of the ideal Japanese woman than the violent, non-conforming, anarchic protagonists of the pinky violence films. As Treglia makes clear, though, these female protagonists are represented in a decidedly ambiguous manner. On the one hand, they have definite agency:

These unruly young women – street hoodlums, bikers, pickpockets, swordswomen and gamblers – live by their wits and fight back against (male) oppressors, who are typically embodied by evil gangsters, representatives of state authority and coercive power (policemen, wardens, teachers), and figures generally endowed with higher social, political and economic capital.

But, on the other hand, they are 'mostly dropouts, they do not pursue education, do not look forward to marrying or securing a job, and live away from their homes and families, wanting only to indulge in leisure activities and a carefree life'. Thus, from a conventional point of view the lifestyle of the pinky violence girls is socially unproductive, and they

represent the epitome of irresponsibility and self-interest, and are thus marked in the various series as in some way delinquent. Film titles, for example, usually include the words 'bad,' 'delinquent,' 'poisonous' and 'terrifying' (*furyō*, *zubekō*, *dokufu*, *kyōfu*); in this way, figurations of female non-conformity, independence and violent agency are always-already marked as outlaw, gone-bad, criminal and pathological. Such clear demarcation is one of the devices adopted to disavow the non-normative feminine subjects constructed within the films, while at the same time they are championed by the narrative.

Such contradictions and ambiguities are typical of exploitation cinema in whatever national culture it is found, as is confirmed by James Newton in the final contribution to this section of the volume.

Newton's chapter focusses on a group of women in prison (WiP) movies made in the early 1970s, in order to explore the subversive and transgressive qualities claimed by a number of theorists for the cycle. In doing so, he refers

back to an early piece by Pam Cook on Stephanie Rothman and exploitation films in which she argued that ‘bad acting, crude stereotypes and schematic narrative’ synonymous with exploitation cinema exposed the ‘ideological structures embedded in the form itself’.<sup>12</sup> This resulted in contradictions and ‘shifts in meaning which disturb the patriarchal myths of women on which the exploitation film itself rests’.<sup>13</sup> Newton also quotes Henry Jenkins on Rothman’s women in prison film *Terminal Island* (1973) which, Jenkins claims, ‘negotiates between . . . two competing discourses’ that can illuminate ‘the ideological fault-lines within popular cinema’.<sup>14</sup>

So far, so familiar. But Newton then goes on to raise a series of new questions that are pertinent to this book as a whole, which is why it is worth discussing his chapter in some detail. Not least: ‘What is the purpose of revisiting shocking movies from the 1970s when, over the following, decades they have been superseded by work which is far more violent, more shocking, and more directly engaged in presenting marginal spaces, ideas, or identities?’ And this is true not only of the cinema, since mainstream TV series such as *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010– ) and *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–19 ) feature content that would most certainly have been censored, particularly in the UK, had it appeared in feature films in the 1970s. Violent women are now quite commonplace across cinematic genres such as horror, crime and action films, and the WiP genre made its way onto TV as early as 1979 with the Australian series *Prisoner: Cell Block H* (Grundy Television Productions/Network Ten) which ran until 1986. More recent WiP series include *Wentworth* (FremantleMedia Australia, 2013– ) and *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix, 2013–19). The once-disreputable WiP film is now celebrated as radical even in a newspaper as liberal as the *Guardian*, with Noah Berlatsky arguing that *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015) borrows a good deal from the WiP movie but is less bold in its treatment of women of colour and is guilty of ‘straightening out WiP’s queerer dynamics’.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, though, Newton points out that ‘the one-time claims for the “feminism” of WiP films have come to be seen by some as contradictory and untenable’. By virtue of the period in which they were made, they, like other exploitation films of the period, often contain content which bristles against contemporary liberal Western values – including images of sexual objectification, humour based on negative stereotypes, and content which

might now be seen by many as 'politically incorrect'. Films of the kind discussed in this chapter would be unlikely to face censorship today, at least in the US and UK, but censure is quite another matter. It is thus unsurprising, then, that:

Scholarship on exploitation cinema which is still concerned to highlight the positive or progressive elements of the cult film at the same time feels the need to explain, put into context, mitigate or disown its negative elements, such as its perceived racism or misogyny.

In fact, this is very much in line with the approach taken by Cook and Jenkins, namely reframing the films and creating a viewing context in which they can be understood in a way that mitigates their disreputable content (in this case by showing how they counterpoint mainstream Hollywood representations). But, Newton argues:

Such an approach suggests that the WiP film is suitable only when viewed through the prism of intellectual enquiry or a feminist quest for transgressive female role models . . . The critic takes on the role of guardian or teacher, 'educating' the 'untutored' viewer on how to understand, interpret and enjoy such films, but also on when to stop taking pleasure in them and to start critiquing any problematic representations.

It is Newton's contention that to focus simply on the 'feminism' of the WiP cycle is to ignore the films' principal selling points, namely depictions of sex and violence, with the two mixed up together in ways which may be distinctly uncomfortable to certain contemporary sensibilities. In his view, such films can, and should, be considered as simultaneously transgressive *and* stuck in stereotypical and regressive representations – what Cook refers to as 'patriarchal myths' and 'ideological structures'. The films can still be seen as subversive, but 'identifying their subversive qualities involves going beyond a surface interpretation and relies on an acceptance of their cruder side'.

As noted earlier, films that shock can disturb both conservative and liberal sensibilities. This contradictory set of reactions to unsettling content is taken up by the second strand of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s*: 'From the Vigilante to the Violated'.

The seventies gave rise to a prolific cycle of films, beginning with *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish*, that thoroughly disturbed liberal sensibilities. There have been attempts to recuperate the former, but very few efforts have been

made in the case of the latter, save the chapter contained in the first edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s*. This no doubt has a great deal to do with the different authorial reputations of Don Siegel and Michael Winner, but it surely has to be admitted that *Death Wish* is now generally deemed as irrecoverable, which is why we decided to devote a chapter to it here. However, there is another reason for our focus on vigilantes in this strand of the collection, and that is because, to a greater extent than any other US films of the seventies, their spirit appears to imbue the ideology of many of Donald Trump's supporters (indeed of Trump himself) and we are interested in the parallels between the two. It simply cannot be a coincidence that *Death Wish* was remade in 2018. But it should also be noted that, in the case of the UK, it is not exactly difficult to locate the echoes of *Death Wish* in *Harry Brown* (Daniel Barber, 2009) and in the representation of young members of the 'underclass' in the films that Johnny Walker characterizes as 'hoodie horrors'.<sup>16</sup>

William Gombash's chapter examines how *Death Wish* relates to the subject of law and order in America in the 1970s, noting how at the time of its release, the film

powerfully resonated with a disgruntled white middle class that feared crime and felt that the traditional means of protection and justice – the police and the courts – had become for some the problem and not the solution as far as crime in America was concerned.

His chapter seeks to provide answers to the question:

What were the social and political variables that allowed *Death Wish* to touch a section of the public that had become so disillusioned with the system of law and order that they cheered a vigilante hero fighting the battle that they wished they could wage themselves?

That *Death Wish* shocked liberal sensibilities is clear from Vincent Canby's review in the *New York Times*, 4 August 1974, headed '*Death Wish* Exploits Fear Irresponsibly'. This stated:

It's a tackily made melodrama but it so cannily orchestrates the audience's responses that it can appeal to law-and-order fanatics, sadists, muggers, club women, fathers, older sisters, masochists, policemen, politicians, and, it seems, a number of film critics. Impartially. Its message, simply put, is: KILL. TRY IT. YOU'LL LIKE IT'.

And Canby's review shows that the cheers mentioned by Gombash were by no means simply metaphorical ones:

Its powers to arouse – through demonstrations of action – are not unlike those of a pornographic movie . . . If you allow your wits to take flight, it's difficult not to respond with the kind of lunatic cheers that rocked the Loew's Astor Plaza when I was there the other evening. At one point a man behind me shouted with delight: 'That'll teach the mothers!'

But *Death Wish* also shocked other sensibilities. Although it was originally released to cinemas uncut with an R and an X certificate in the US and UK respectively, when it was submitted to the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) on video in 1987, the Board's director, James Ferman, indicated that he was not prepared to pass the film with the rape scene intact. However, as it was impossible to cut the scene effectively, and as the narrative would be damaged by removing it altogether, the video would be refused a certificate. Thus the distributor withdrew their submission and the video joined that select list of films that the Board hadn't actually banned but remained unavailable on video for years – other notable examples being *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973) and *Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1971). It was resubmitted in 1999, after Ferman's retirement, and passed with twenty-nine seconds of cuts at 18 (the successor to the X). It was finally passed uncut in 2006. The examiner's comment on the 1987 video submission is interesting in that it reveals that standards of what is considered shocking, at least by some, by no means always change over time in the direction of greater liberalization:

What is clear on re-viewing is that it's way beyond the current standards of sexual violence to women that we're currently using at the Board, even in the adult category. I don't think there's any doubt that we've tightened up on sexual assault and violence to women in the last ten years.<sup>17</sup>

Further proof of the fluid and changeable nature of the shocking is offered by the fate of *Death Wish II* (1982), also directed by Winner. When the cinema film was submitted to both the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the BBFC, its rape scenes were heavily cut in order to achieve an R and an X respectively. Various videos of the film were submitted to the BBFC from 1986 onwards, and those which used the original BBFC cinema version

were passed at 18 without further cuts. In 2006, the R-rated version was submitted, and lost a further twenty-seven seconds, but from 2012 videos using the R-rated version were passed without further cuts. This does mean, however, that all the rated versions of both the film and the video circulating today in the US and UK are still heavily cut.

In his chapter on Rough Justice, Julian Petley explains the context of right-wing reaction against the liberal values of the 1960s in a number of 1970s films about both cops and civilians taking the law into their own hands. But whilst noting the elements in *Dirty Harry* which very clearly critique the workings of 'due process liberalism' in the field of law enforcement, he also argues that not every lone cop in subsequent 1970s crime films is necessarily a vigilante nor thwarted in his duties solely by due process liberals – the more common causes are actually apathy and corruption in both the police force and at City Hall level. Indeed, there is even a sense in which Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) himself in *Dirty Harry* is not a vigilante, in that, unlike Paul Kersey (Charles Bronson) in *Death Wish* or John Eastland (Robert Ginty) in *The Exterminator* (James Glickenhaus, 1980), he is not involved in an ongoing *campaign* of vigilante 'justice' but is obsessively pursuing one particular criminal, albeit by increasingly illegal means. Indeed, the point is made, admittedly not entirely convincingly, by pitting Callahan against a group of actual vigilante cops in *Magnum Force* (Ted Post, 1973). However, in so far as these films featuring rough justice tend to endorse the cathartic effect of violence and 'unofficial' retribution as an alternative to legally sanctioned methods, they can be seen as symptomatic of, if not necessarily endorsing, the Nixonite ideological climate of the 1970s. This, in ways which are now becoming ever clearer, can be seen as prefiguring the values of the Tea Party and Donald Trump, as well as of reactionary populist regimes elsewhere.

The final entry to this section shifts the focus from the marginal figure of the vigilante to the violated survivor through Jennifer Wallis's contribution. This chapter closely examines four TV movies from the 1970s dealing with the rape-revenge theme in order to consider how contemporary discussions of violation and its punishment were played out on the small screen. As Wallis notes, rape-revenge movies such as *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1978) or *Ms.45* (Abel Ferrara, 1981) have been widely covered by those interested in cult and exploitation fare, and many interpretations of these films emphasize

their feminist potential, with women carrying out the punishment of their rapists independently and outside the official legal channels. However, as Wallis points out, although this is frequently forgotten in these debates, the 1970s TV movie provided an outlet for films that dealt with 'difficult' subjects, such as homosexuality, alcoholism and rape, which might have been box office poison at the cinema. It was also geared towards a predominantly female audience, reflected in evening scheduling that fitted in well with housewives' free time. Wallis observes that the basic plot of many TV movies

tended to revolve around the disruption of comfortable suburban domestic life and confronted audiences at home with fictive lives that were very similar to their own. The target audience for the made-for-TV movie were women in their twenties to fifties who were relatively engaged with contemporary social and political issues. It was not surprising, then, that so many TV movies relied on a woman-in-peril motif to capture the attentions and emotions of their audience.

And from here it was but a short step to narratives dealing specifically with rape, particularly as the 1970s coincided with both a renewed concern about crime in the US, and with second-wave feminism.

As Wallis points out:

Tackling rape was high on the political agenda with the establishment of institutions such as the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Rape, growing efforts to debunk rape myths and to highlight the pervasiveness of victim-blaming within the legal system, and the increased reporting of individual rape cases in the press.

However, the prejudices of jurors and judges continued to stand in the way of widespread reform, and it was barriers such as these that constituted the major theme of those made-for-TV movies with a rape-revenge narrative. Many of these were based on specific highly publicized cases, and the use of a personal story to explore wider social or legal problems clearly resonated with second-wave feminism's motto that 'the personal is political'. But whilst admitting that TV movies were an important platform for female directors and actresses who might have been less able to find work elsewhere, and that they offered the possibility of feminist-inflected scripts tackling issues that were being discussed at the time, such as sexual assault, street harassment and rape law, Wallis argues

that ‘their social, political or personal impact was often limited, as any explicitly feminist messages were constrained or rendered less forceful’ and that they were ‘especially careful to contain rape and other women’s issues within the generally conservative discourse typical of the format, emphasizing women’s roles as mothers and wives and the dangers attendant upon independence’. For these reasons she concludes that she finds the TV movies’

messages about rape and the responses to it much less empowering and much more morally suspect than those articulated by films such as *Ms. 45*. The rape-revenge narrative of the made-for-TV movie was frequently an impersonal one, less concerned with the suffering of the individual victim than with rape as an act prompting broader societal change, ‘revenged’ via legal channels and rarely by the victim herself.

The third key strand of the volume is entitled ‘State Sponsored Shocks’ and considers the controversies that surrounded the films that emerged from Canada’s government-backed film schemes during the 1970s. Some of these films, too, involved vigilantes and victims of assault (although these violations came often from both human and inhuman aggressors). Indeed, one of the more shocking horror debuts of the 1970s was David Cronenberg’s *Shivers* (1975), which revealed the inhabitants of a plush condominium as vulnerable to violation from a strain of venereal parasites that were infecting the building. Cronenberg’s film was one of the first of a number of controversial films to emerge from such an unexpected quarter of the film world as Canada. Xavier Mendik’s chapter analyses the social and economic structures that facilitated this decade-long development, linking the shocking impact of a new wave of erotic and horror productions to Canada’s tax shelter subsidy scheme that underpinned their creation.

When the government launched the Canadian Film Development Corporation in 1968, and then cemented its commitment to film production through the Capital Cost Allowance Act in 1974, it was intended to herald a ‘golden age’ of national cinema funded by state subsidy and private investment. However, the ribald and visceral nature of the films that emerged from the scheme provoked condemnation, parliamentary discussion and even requests for its film-makers to be deported. *Shivers* was, in fact, one of the earliest targets of protest after it was violently condemned by Robert Fulford (writing as

Marshall Delaney) in an article in the magazine *Saturday Night*, September 1975, headed 'You Should Know How Bad This Film Is. After All, You Paid For It', in which he called it 'the most repulsive movie I've ever seen' and 'an atrocity, a disgrace to everyone connected with it – including the taxpayer'.

Mendik begins by outlining some of the controversies in which these tax shelter schemes became embroiled, and then goes on to explore these with specific reference to the Montreal-based company Cinépix Films. Created in 1964 by John Dunning and André Link, Cinépix became closely associated with these subsidies, and the scandals surrounding them, as they used them to fund over seventy feature films between 1969 and 1984. Through these releases, Cinépix also launched the international careers of not only Cronenberg but also Don Carmody and William Fruet, and the latter's recollections of working with the company are presented as a separate chapter that follows Mendik's study.

However, despite its prolific output, Cinépix has largely been written out of the leading academic accounts of Canadian national film. Here, critics have frequently rejected the types of populist productions that Cinépix created in favour of those titles that confirm existing conceptions of Canadian national cinema as either documentary realist or experimental in orientation. In order more fully to situate Cinépix productions within their wider social and political contexts, Mendik's chapter analyses the company's startling Québécois sex comedies as reflective of social and gender transitions occurring as part of the 'Quiet Revolution' of the late 1960s. It concludes by considering the medical, military and home invasion thrillers that Cinépix created as being directly traceable to 1970s fears about the activities of terrorist cells such as the Québec Liberation Front (FLQ).

In a further elaboration of the volume's 'State Sponsored Shocks' strand, Robin Griffiths continues the exploration of the aspects of Canadian cinema that dismayed many of the country's inhabitants. Here, Griffiths examines the so-called 'Canuxploitation' productions of Dunning and Link, and specifically, those works that

presented a vision of 1970s Canada that was anathema to the nation-building, egalitarian utopianism of the era encapsulated by the 'Just Society' rhetoric of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. They were films that, at the time, were seen to constitute a collectively shameful period in the country's production history.

However, as the author notes, researchers such as Paul Corupe have observed that the Dunning/Link era was in fact a crucial period during which ‘Canada first revealed itself to be an exceptional breeding ground for innovative, challenging and surprisingly *Canadian* horror films.’<sup>18</sup> Leading on from this observation, Griffiths himself argues that works such as *Shivers*, William Fruet’s rural revenge thriller *Death Weekend/House by the Lake* (1976) and the Dunning-inspired siege drama *Blackout* (Eddy Matalon, 1978)

emerged as crucial points of reference in characterising a nation, and a cinema, struggling to cope with the pervasive effects of social division, sexism and bigotry at a time of immense cultural and political upheaval. These proffered an interesting insight into archetypical depictions of postcolonial ‘Canuck’ masculinity that were common to a number of related English-Canadian films of the tax shelter era.

For Griffiths, these films function as “cognitive maps” that delineate the anxieties, paranoias and fantasies of Canadian society at a time of immense socio-political change as a result of the transition to Trudeau-era neoliberalism’ and ‘collectively constitute an invaluable repository of Canadian culture, cinema and identity at a time of immense transformation, the implications of which thus extend well beyond the confines of the texts themselves.’

The author also argues that ‘the overly intense obsession with hegemonic masculinity in crisis that was so characteristic of these films (despite being resolutely heterosexist in intent), in retrospect lends itself quite readily to the subversive re-imaginings of the contemporary queer screen theorist’. His chapter thus critically ‘re-views’ these key Canuxploitation texts ‘in order to explore the transgressive potential that they still hold’. Drawing on Thomas Waugh,<sup>19</sup> he notes that Canadian cinema’s marginal status both at home and abroad, its apparent lack of a significant commercial production history and, accordingly, its lack of uniquely English-Canadian forms of cinematic cultural representation, position it as ‘already outside the prescriptive imaginary norms of the industrial mainstream’ and thus as continually receptive to what Waugh terms the ‘romantic possibilities of transgression’. He locates a ‘symptomatic queerness that identifiably circulates around those shifting and anxious forms of masculinity that emerge in Canadian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s’, and concurs with Waugh that:

It is those local and more regional forms of Canadian cinema (and, in particular, low-budget genre film-making that was deliberately designed to exploit the fears and desires of its audiences) that have engaged more queerly with the complexities of identity than have the big budget imports of the North American mainstream. The Canuxploitation canon's propensity for constructing narratives that expound the more transgressive realms of the national body has thus functioned as a far more productive means for shaping the social imaginary.

The fourth strand of the new edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* is entitled 'Family-sploitation and Threats to the Family', and considers real-life and fictional 1970s figures that threatened conventional familial structures and the very fabric of the social order during the decade.

Arguably, one of the most shocking figures to emerge from the late 1960s was Charles Manson, whose 'Family' murdered eight people on 9–10 August 1969, one of whom was Roman Polanski's wife, Sharon Tate, who was eight-and-a half months' pregnant at the time. Inevitably, films and television programmes about the Family began to proliferate immediately after this horrendous crime, but, as Bill Osgerby shows, they encompassed a wide range of genres and approaches. He argues that understanding

the proliferation of 'Family' films during the 1970s demands attention to both the historical context and the economic circumstances in which they were produced. In historical terms, Manson and his acolytes enthralled the media because their character and crimes captured the mood of the times. They seemed to personify the downfall of the counterculture, capturing the moment the sun set on the Summer of Love and the sixties hippy scene turned sour and seedy. More than this, though, the Manson cult was the object of media fascination because it served as a symbolic focus for a broader climate of unease. Configured by the media as America's ultimate bogeyman, Manson was projected as the embodiment of evils that seemed to threaten the fabric of the nation as the US faced convulsive social and cultural transformations ... The war in Vietnam was escalating, political assassinations were rocking America and movements for progressive change faced growing repression and violence.

It is no surprise, then, that what Osgerby calls a 'sense of dread' pervades *Helter Skelter*, a gripping and serious-minded TV docudrama based on the Manson

case. Directed by Tom Gries and originally screened on the CBS network over two nights in 1976, it is based on the 1974 bestseller of the same name by Vincent Bugliosi, the District Attorney who prosecuted the Family. Of course, Manson and his murderous gang are portrayed highly unsympathetically, and quite justifiably so, but, as Osgerby observes, the film is ‘rooted in the fairly conservative codes and conventions of mainstream Hollywood’ and ‘reproduces the period’s reactionary “law and order” discourse through its simplistic depiction of the Family as a group of deranged Others menacing the decency and rectitude of “straight” society’.

Osgerby then goes on to show how very different film-making traditions informed another documentary: *Manson* (Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick, 1973). This is a patchwork of interviews with figures from the Manson case – including Bugliosi, Manson himself, and Family members recorded after Manson’s arrest – but it also contains footage of the group taken between late 1969 and 1972 at the Spahn Ranch and their Death Valley hideout. Osgerby argues that these sequences result in a view of the Family that is nuanced and complex, and that this looser, more open-ended portrait is ultimately more unsettling than that provided by *Helter Skelter*. But he also notes that *Manson*’s publicity campaign was decidedly more salacious than *Helter Skelter*’s, with posters promising audiences: ‘YOU WILL ACTUALLY SEE each member of the Manson family and HEAR their horrifying philosophy of sex, perversion, murder and suicide.’ He thus concludes that: ‘With this combination of disconcerting chills and lurid titillation, *Manson* is squarely located in the traditions of exploitation cinema.’

The rest of Osgerby’s chapter is devoted to the various ways in which the Family feature, both directly and indirectly, in 1970s exploitation cinema. The gruesome nature of their crimes made them ideal subject-matter for independent film-makers keen to take advantage of more relaxed censorship standards in order to push back the boundaries of taste. He also makes the point that many of them, like Al Adamson, who directed the biker movie *Satan’s Sadists* (1969),

had an ambivalent relationship with the media furore surrounding the Family. Superficially, many of the Manson movies echoed the general disgust at the killers’ appalling crimes. But, at the same time, they also revelled in the spectacle of the Manson murders and the circus of outrage that surrounded

them . . . Like classic exploitation cinema, the 1970s Manson movies savoured tweaking the tail of conservative sensibilities by delighting in all that was shocking, liminal and taboo.

The author then demonstrates how the Manson murders provided fresh inspiration for film-makers who traded in topical sensationalism in a wide variety of genres: in particular biker, mondo and horror movies. Like other writers on exploitation movies in this book, he is particularly interested in the ambivalence of such films. Thus, on the one hand, the bikers in *Satan's Sadists*, led by Manson stand-in Anchor (a deranged Russ Tamblyn), are painted as the irredeemably malevolent underside of hippiedom and appear to reproduce the stock stereotypes propagated in the right-wing backlash against the counterculture, as mentioned above. But, on the other, they partake in what Osgerby calls the rich carnivalesque seam that also ran through 'Family-sploitation'. As he puts it:

While the films may not have been 'radical' in a conventional political sense, they nonetheless effectively satirised and undercut the shrill anxieties proliferating in the media by appropriating the demonic stereotypes and magnifying them to proportions that were incredible and simply outlandish. Moreover, the films' sheer enthusiasm for the shocking and the controversial flouted conventional tastes. Their brazen pageant of the lurid and the taboo spurned orthodox sensibilities and represented an unruly presence at a time when the 'law and order' bandwagon of 'Nixonland' . . . was attempting to foreclose dissent, pre-empt dialogue and preclude contradiction.

Osgerby also notes the influence of the Manson killings on what he calls murder *vérité* films such as *The Last House on the Left*. But it was the release of *Snuff* (Michael Findlay, 1976) that added a new element of controversy to the Manson movie mythology. The term 'snuff film' had actually originated in Ed Sanders' book *The Family* (1972), in which he had reported hearsay that the Family were responsible for hitherto unknown murders which had been filmed, and the incriminating reels buried in the desert. The release of *Snuff* seemed, at least to the credulous, grim proof that the rumours were true and that 'real' murder movies did, indeed, exist.

Another shocking family figure to emerge in the 1970s, albeit in fiction of one kind or another, was the murderous child. In point of fact, such a figure

had first featured in a Hollywood movie in 1956, namely Mervyn Leroy's *The Bad Seed*, but it was *The Exorcist* which was the real progenitor of the 'evil child' movie cycle in the 1970s, and by no means only in Hollywood. This has already given rise to a very considerable literature, which is usefully referenced by Susanne Kord in her chapter on this phenomenon, in which she examines the question of whether narratives featuring children murdering adults can be interpreted as a playing out the child's unconscious and symbolic rejection of his or her own future adulthood, an attack on the concept of adulthood itself: this is the so-called 'Peter Pan syndrome'.

Kord examines this question through the low-budget horror movies *Peopletoy/Devil Times Five* (Sean MacGregor and David Sheldon, 1974), *Kiss of the Tarantula* (Chris Munger, 1976) and *The Child* (Robert Voskanian, 1977), and the more upmarket and hard-to-define *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* (Nicholas Gessner, 1976). Three of these films cast the child's act of killing adults in the metaphor of child's play, and Kord offers two possible interpretations of these killing games:

The first is to read them as constituting 'assimilation' in Piaget's sense, namely subordination of the environment to the self, and therefore as self-constituting and self-asserting acts. The second is to understand them as symbolic expressions of the Peter Pan Syndrome, that is, a vision of childhood as an end rather than a means, or even a wholesale rejection of adulthood as the child's future.

In her view, Piaget's definition of play as the child adjusting its surroundings to its own benefit is applicable to all of these films, but is most clearly enacted in *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane*. Here, Jodie Foster, in her first top billing role in a non-children's movie, plays a quite remarkably assured child who will go to any lengths, including murder, to safeguard the solitary life that she has established for herself in her deceased parents' house. And since the other films focus on either the child's refusal to grow up, or to do so in the manner dictated by adults, Kord argues that the Peter Pan syndrome holds for all of them.

However, she comes up with a third possible reading, one which is perhaps less obvious because much more disturbing. She notes that David Elkind in *The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally*<sup>20</sup> offers the simplest answer

to the question: 'Why do children play?', namely that it's fun and comes naturally. She then considers the scandalous consequences of applying Elkind's insight to 1970s movies in which the murder of adults is actually visualized as child's play. Why do children murder adults? Because it comes naturally. Because it's fun. As she points out, *Peopletoy*s is certainly capable of such a reading, its narrative revolving around five children who escape from a bus taking them to a mental institution and terrorize the inhabitants of a holiday lodge. Indeed, the reading is encouraged by the film's very title.

As Kord argues, certain murderous child movies of the 1970s throw adults a bone of reassurance by assigning a child's murder of an adult (or adults) a logic that works in the adult world, as in the case of *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane*. This is particularly so where the adult in question is a paedophile. However, she concludes, other films

are busily chipping away at such grown-up reasoning. The wound to the adult self-image that these films inflict is threefold: the first cut is the sneaking suspicion that a child's development may be influenced less by adult modelling than by autonomous experience gained through games. There follows the hammer blow of realisation: children don't need adults to develop, they need only to play. And the final twist of the knife: not only are adults no help at all, they are, in many cases, an actual hindrance to the child's development.

If we accept these three premises of certain murderous child films, then we uncover their neat logic. Their objective is

the elimination of adverse (and that means adult) interference with the child's world, and the device through which this is achieved is, cogently enough, the most fundamental means of child development: child's play. In this way, we can read certain 1970s shocker films not only literally – as interesting insights into the games children apparently enjoy the most – but also figuratively and symbolically: as documents deriding the conclusions of much child developmental psychology, which, in a colossal inflation of adult self-importance, demotes the entire world of children to boot camp for adulthood.

Closing the new edition of *Shocking Cinema of the 70s* is the strand 'Porno Chic, Porno Shock', which features two chapters which analyse the

impact of explicit sexual representations across 1970s cinema and society. Indeed, one of the most striking, and to some, shocking, features of 1970s American cinema was hard core pornography's move from the margins to the mainstream. This is discussed in Darren Kerr's chapter, which offers an account that details the value of recognizing the wider cultural sensibility that paved porn's path into the mainstream during the period. But for those less familiar with the topic it might be useful here to sketch in the legal developments which made this move possible – and those that put an end to it. In particular, it shows how the relaxation of legal restraints on material found shocking by some is not a one-way process of liberalization and is quite capable of being reversed.

The most obvious example of hard core's trajectory from margins to mainstream is *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano, 1972), which, although unrated by the MPAA, grossed \$1 million (\$6.1 million today) in its first seven weeks of release, and went on to make a then-record \$3 million (\$18.3 million today) in its first six months. Other, more professionally produced, films soon followed, including *Behind the Green Door* (Artie and Jim Mitchell, 1972) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Gerard Damiano, 1973), and in the *New York Times*, 21 January 1973, in an article headed “‘Hard-core’ Grows Fashionable – and Very Profitable’, Ralph Blumenthal coined the soon-to-be-ubiquitous term ‘porno chic’.

Such a development would have been utterly impossible in the UK, of course, thanks to its strict obscenity laws and film censorship. And, in fact, in the States too it was pretty short-lived, thanks to a change in the law in 1973 resulting from the famous *Miller v. California* case, as we shall see.

In 1957, *Roth v. United States* redefined the Constitutional test for determining what material could be constituted as obscene and thus unprotected by the First Amendment. Up until then, legal authorities had applied the same ‘deprave and corrupt’ test as used in the UK, but the new definition laid down by Justice William Brennan argued that a work could be found obscene only if ‘to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material as a whole appeals to prurient interest’. In his view, ‘all ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance – unorthodox ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion – have the full protection’ of the Court.<sup>21</sup> But, in Brennan's

view, obscenity fell outside the realm of ideas and was not nor was ever intended to be ‘within the area of constitutionally protected speech or press.’<sup>22</sup> The definition of obscenity was still pretty vague (as indeed is the ‘deprave and corrupt’ test) but it did represent a significant move towards establishing national obscenity criteria.

This was taken a step further in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* in 1964, in which Brennan refined his earlier definition of obscenity by arguing that a work cannot be proscribed unless it is utterly without redeeming social importance and goes ‘substantially beyond customary limits of candor in description or representation.’<sup>23</sup> But, more significantly, he also pointed out that the “contemporary community standards” by which obscenity is to be determined are not those of the particular local community from which the case arises, but those of the Nation as a whole.<sup>24</sup> This did a very great deal to protect cinema owners from local bans and film seizures, although of course it infuriated those concerned to protect states’ rights, including certain members of the Supreme Court.

In 1966, the Court agreed to hear an appeal against a ban on the sale of John Cleland’s book *Fanny Hill* (1748–9) by the state of Massachusetts. This is known by the short title of *Memoirs v. Massachusetts*. The case is important for building on the *Roth* and *Jacobellis* standards, Brennan arguing for the majority opinion that all three elements mentioned in the previous tests ‘must coalesce’. As Jon Lewis explains:

For a book to or film to be found obscene, Brennan wrote, the work *taken as a whole* must appeal to a prurient interest in sex, the material must be ‘patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards’, and the material must be *utterly* without ‘redeeming social value.’<sup>25</sup>

By making it difficult for local bans on films to be enforced whilst simultaneously facing increasing difficulties and disagreements in trying to define obscenity in any hard and fast way, the Supreme Court clearly played a role in helping to pave porn’s path from the margins to the mainstream. But it would soon be moving in the opposite direction.

On 20 January 1969, Richard Nixon was inaugurated as the thirty-seventh President of the United States, and, in the present context, a key move was his rapid realignment of the Supreme Court. The resignation of Chief Justice Earl

Warren enabled Nixon to replace him with the US District Court of Appeals Judge Warren E. Burger, a hard-line law-and-order Republican. This marked the start of a significant shift to the Right at the Court which, by the end of 1971, contained four Nixon appointees. (Exactly the same process took place in the Trump years.)

The effects of this shift were particularly evident in the key *Miller v. California* case in 1973. In convicting Marvin Miller, a seller of erotic books, of obscenity, the California courts had used the California criminal obscenity statute, which was similar to, but nonetheless stricter than, that elaborated by the Supreme Court in *Memoirs*. This was the subject of Miller's appeal to the Supreme Court, which was heard in January and November 1972. In effect, the Court upheld the lower courts' original verdicts by a majority of five-to-four (a very familiar ratio in the Nixon era). Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Burger established a new, three-part test for juries in obscenity cases:

Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.<sup>26</sup>

The 'utterly without redeeming social value' test articulated in *Memoirs* was rejected as a constitutional standard, and juries were permitted to judge issues of prurient appeal and patent offensiveness by the standards that prevailed in their own communities.

Decisions in four other Supreme Court obscenity cases were announced on the same day, 21 June 1973. In respect of films, the most important was *Paris Adult Theater 1 v. Slaton*, which ruled that adults-only admission policies at hard core cinemas were not enough to protect their owners or managers from local prosecutions. *Variety*, 27 June, announced: 'The impact of the new rulings will have to be assessed in the months ahead, but the market for pornography should be effectively reduced almost at once.'<sup>27</sup> And so indeed it was, with *Deep Throat* rapidly falling prey to local bans across the country. From now on, the ability to view hard core films in cinemas would very much depend on the attitudes of local authorities, and very few were prepared to permit such screenings. As Lewis concludes:

With the exception of a few venues in a few major cities, the public, theatrical exhibition of hard core was pretty much eliminated nationwide by the end of 1973. Hard-core features have since made a comeback on home video, but between 1973 and 1983 or so, between the Supreme Court's retrenchment and the emergence of home video, the studios have had the theatrical market to themselves. An they have taken full advantage of the opportunity.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than focus solely on the screen industries and their products, Kerr offers an account that details the value of recognizing the wider cultural sensibility that paved porn's path into the mainstream during a period steeped in a culture of provocation, not just in countercultural politics but also in the wider landscape of cultural production and activity. He argues that the move from margins to mainstream was not just the result of a series of pragmatic, economic, legislative and industrial influences but was an act of production in itself – constructed, produced and performed. Pornography and sexually explicit materials of the time were not just describing or dramatizing sex but were *producing* sex and doing so in a time often understood as a golden age – something that involves as much cultural forgetting as it does cultural remembering. The result, Kerr claims, is that the move into the mainstream was epiphenomenal – in other words it was a secondary effect caused by wider shifts in cultural feeling, perceiving and understanding.

For the final entry to the volume, Neil Jackson's chapter focuses on two pornographic films which would undoubtedly have shocked many of those who flocked to the kind of films described as 'porno chic'. Indeed, they would still be considered shocking by many people today. These are *Femmes de Sade* (Alex De Renzy, 1976) and *Water Power* (Shaun Costello, 1977), which fall into the category of 'hard core roughies'. 'Roughies' developed out of the 'nudie cutie' in the first half of the 1960s and are aptly described by the *Grindhouse Cinema Database* as 'a more aggressively lurid subgenre of classic Sexploitation cinema. These films injected violence and sadism into the standard, rather innocent, softcore mix. They featured stories dealing with S&M, kidnappings and sexual abuse.'<sup>29</sup> Seemingly inevitably, most of the violence was directed by men at women. As Eddie Muller and Daniel Faris put it: 'In a roughie, lust led to violence: women were abused, men erupted in jealous rages. The action is angry, brutal, and simpleminded. Storylines followed the old "morality play" formula – warning audiences of the dangers of depraved behaviour while

depicting it in detail<sup>30</sup>. Early examples include *Scum of the Earth* (Herschell Gordon Lewis, 1963), *Olga's Girls* (Joseph P. Mawra, 1964) and *The Defilers* (Lee Frost and David F. Friedman, 1965).

Hard core roughies, however, took things a great deal further, and Jackson describes them as films whose relentless focus upon sexual practices generally regarded as aberrant and abhorrent at the time marks them out as 'an indigestible strand of an already despised cultural form that rendered them resistant to "porno-chic" appropriation during their theatrical circulation in the 1970s'. It is thus unsurprising that despite their generic roots in the softcore sexploitation film and, to an extent, the crime film and even the horror film, the hard core roughies have remained segregated from their relatives in both the mainstream and exploitation sectors. Jackson notes that Linda Ruth Williams has argued that 'pornography is the genre that dare not speak its name'<sup>31</sup> and has commented on its absence from most scholarly overviews of the cinematic field. However, he observes that:

Even a cursory glance at some of the more accomplished hardcore films of the 'golden age' – such as *The Devil in Miss Jones* (Gerard Damiano, 1973), *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (Henry Paris, 1976), *Through the Looking Glass* (Jonas Middleton, 1976), *The Story of Joanna* (Gerard Damiano, 1977) and *Sex World* (Anthony Spinelli, 1978) – reveals conventions of melodrama, romantic comedy, horror, science fiction and psycho-drama. All of these elements are inflected very specifically by the demands of hardcore, suggesting that porn films function not just as isolated generic outcasts but as shadows of and adjuncts to their mainstream genre counterparts.

And as far as the hard core roughie was concerned, burgeoning awareness in the 1960s and 1970s of the serial sex criminal was instrumental in defining its parameters. These films thus stood in close historical proximity to horror films foregrounding dystopian breakdown and sexually dysfunctional male monsters, such as *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) and *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer, 1968), the last two of which were based on real-life cases, albeit to different extents.

Thus, as with any development in cinematic genres, hybridization is fundamental to a deeper understanding of the hard core roughie. Jackson here draws on Linda Williams' observations on the relationship between pornography, melodrama and horror, in which she identifies them all as 'body

genres' whose primary function is to affect bodily and emotional (as opposed to intellectual) responses in the spectator. The roughies often mingle these body genres, thereby reinforcing Williams' argument that 'pornography today is more often deemed excessive for its violence than for its sex, while horror films are excessive in their displacement of sex onto violence.'<sup>32</sup> Jackson argues that:

In this sense, both *Femmes de Sade* and *Water Power* (and many other roughies too) confound generic Categorization, questioning the point at which pornographic convention either departs from or fuses with its horrific content. Nevertheless, although sexual violence may have been present as a narrative feature of many hardcore feature films, it was relatively uncommon for it to be the *defining* element.

However, it most certainly is in the case of the two films under examination here, which is enough to expel them beyond the critical pale. Although *Femmes de Sade* is replete with traces of a countercultural zeal and defiance, Jackson argues that 'neither it nor *Water Power* make enough concessions to a sustained, identifiable project that would make for easy appropriation by even the most tolerant and liberal academic discourse'. Admittedly each film does tackle the exercise of male power and subjectivity that became so central to radical feminist critiques of pornography and its broader popular cultural manifestations, and each does so in different ways, pursuing distinct and divergent paths through their use of porno shock-horror tactics. However, they have to be understood from the outset, Jackson states, as 'wilful incitements to revulsion, shock and bemusement', and his discussion of them 'constitutes neither defence or justification'. But although the discussion does focus primarily on the films' strategies of representing sexual violence, Jackson argues that they contain elements that allow critical discourse to develop beyond the mere articulation of transgressive content. In his view, these elements, taken together,

can help enhance our understanding of graphic, often alarming, depictions of sexual violence within the stylistic norms of cinematic pornography, which might in turn be sensibly accommodated in ongoing debates about realist horror films produced within both the exploitation and mainstream sectors.

Jackson's point about using these decidedly *maudit* films to develop critical discourse and to engage in ongoing debates about certain kinds of contemporary

horror films echoes some of our own intentions in compiling this collection. We wanted not simply to cast a critical light on a series of controversial films which had been variously maligned, misinterpreted or just plain ignored, but also to assess how their production values, narrative features and critical receptions can be linked to the wider historical and social forces that were dominant during this decade. Furthermore, we wanted to explore how these films resonate in our own historical moment – replete as it is with shocks of all kinds. Many of these – and in particular ecological catastrophe and societal breakdown – are clearly prefigured in films from numerous different societies in the seventies, and we would contend that it is the films from the margins of the cinema industries in these societies that, even now, still retain the greatest power to shock.

Julian Petley and Xavier Mendik

May 2021

## Notes

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