Extreme Art Film: Text, Paratext and DVD Culture

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The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Portsmouth.

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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

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Abstract

Extreme art cinema, has, in recent film scholarship, become an important area of study. Many of the existing practices are motivated by a Franco-centric lens, which ultimately defines transgressive art cinema as a new phenomenon. The thesis argues that a study of extreme art cinema needs to consider filmic production both within and beyond France. It also argues that it requires an historical analysis, and I contest the notion that extreme art cinema is a recent mode of Film production. The study considers extreme art cinema as inhabiting a space between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms, noting the slippage between the two often polarised industries. The study has a focus on the paratext, with an analysis of DVD extras including ‘making ofs’ and documentary featurettes, interviews with directors, and cover sleeves. This will be used to examine audience engagement with the artefacts, and the films’ position within the film market. Through a detailed assessment of the visual symbols used throughout the films’ narrative images, the thesis observes the manner in which they engage with the taste structures and pictorial templates of art and exploitation cinema. Through this methodological direction, the thesis is able to assess how the films are sold to an audience, how this relates to the historical progression of extreme art cinema, and the way the entire practice is informed by an ongoing tradition of taste fluidity.
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Dedication

For Charlie.
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Introduction

Transgressive portrayals of sex and violence have become increasingly visible within contemporary film. Images that would have formerly been the province of marginal cinemas are now proving successful with mainstream audiences. For example, the corporality which defines the Saw franchise (Wan, 2004; Bousman, 2005, 2006, 2007; Hackl, 2008; Greuter, 2009, 2010) is characterised by a mode of extremity which would have previously held limited appeal. Significantly, a similar aesthetic of brutality is becoming evident within certain sectors of the art cinema tradition, as a growing number of modern art films, including Funny Games (Haneke, 1997a), Romance (Breillat, 1999), Irreversible (Noé, 2002), and Antichrist (von Trier, 2009a), are pushing the limitations of acceptability by exhibiting images of extreme violence and explicit unsimulated sex. These narratives are composed of a hybridised cinematic template, which borrows from both art and exploitation traditions to create experimental and shocking narratives which challenge the audience and questions their consumption of transgressive imagery. In the principal critical dialogues, these extreme art films have been localised to France, and read as a symptom of contemporary society’s economic pressures. However, the use of extreme modes of address within art cinema, as this introduction will begin to examine, is one rooted in a rich, pan-European tradition of rejection.

This introduction will outline the primary methodological approaches used within this thesis’s investigation of extreme art cinema. Thereafter, the introduction will put forth the most important classifications that define this thesis, before outlining the project’s key case studies and arguments.
The Historical Approach

This study’s investigation of extreme art cinema looks to use a historical framework so to draw a relationship between a series of similar narratives from different eras. Crucially, within the majority of existing scholarly dialogues, narratives which express both transgressive and artistic tendencies have been read as a new phenomenon, isolated from the broader lineage of art cinema. This historical segregation occurs in various yet overlapping ways, of which the most visible is the application of critically constructed labels.

Most evident within the practice of historical quarantining are the labels sanctioned by James Quandt and Hampus Hagman. Quandt and Hagman, in their respective and influential articles (Horeck & Kendall, 2011, pp.2-3), appropriate the most common term applied to extreme art cinema, “the French New Extremity” (Quandt, 2004, p.127; Hagman, 2007, p.37). The qualifier ‘New’ is crucial is separating this series of contemporary production from the vast histories of art cinema. Notably, other authors use similar signifiers in their interactions with the corpus. Lisa Downing talks about the “emergence of a recent trend in French filmmaking [. . .] that blurs the boundaries between art film and porno flick” (Downing, 2004, p.265). Elsewhere, Guy Austin encases these extreme art texts within the banner of “new brutalism” (2008, p.114), as Martine Beugnet notes “some of the recent French film production seemingly brings art cinema to new heights of horror or graphic description” (2007, p.16). Additionally, Tina Kendall and Tanya Horeck, in their seminal The New Extremism in Cinema: from France to Europe (2011), foreground notions of modernism through the qualifier ‘New Extremism’. Although the word ‘new’ relates more to the intrinsic need for extremism to be novel (Horeck & Kendall, 2011, p.6) – a statement useful in the configuration of the term and its
relationship to cinema - the edited collection reflects the focus on modern texts, and therein correlates neatly with the tendency to neglect the historical background of cinematic extremity within the art sphere.

While the above affirmations importantly respond to a recent trend in French cinema, whereby production of narratives which hybridise art and exploitation mores has grown, enjoying an increased visibility and progressive extremism, it allows for a problematic reading. For both Nick James and Quandt, earlier forms of art film transgression are granted an intellectual capital which the contemporary examples are deemed to lack: “pushing the boundaries of taste in art used to be about more than moral transgression of post Victorian mores – it was often satirical in an amusing way as well.” (James, 2003, p.20), while, “the authentic, liberating outrage – political, social, sexual – that fuelled such apocalyptic visions as Salo and Week End now seems impossible, replaced by an aggressiveness that is really a grandiose form of passivity” (Quandt, 2004, p.132). Within this approach, the contemporary forms of extreme art cinema are denied the universal art reading protocol and ousted from any tradition therein, and thus the narratives various formal, aesthetic and thematic complexities are underplayed as the wider implications of the narratives are supressed.

Yet this active segregation of contemporary extreme art cinema, inadvertently supported by the consistent propagation of the labels discussed earlier, results in the films becoming grouped together under loaded descriptors, a practice which prescribes them a series of fixed connotations, expectations and reading protocols. It is this thesis’s wish to interrogate this process, and position current examples of extreme art transgression as part of an extended art film history. Tim Palmer touches upon this notion of history with his discussion of Un Chien Andalou (Buñuel, 1929)
(Palmer, 2006, p.23), and elsewhere Martine Beugnet more explicitly suggests the new extreme films are not novel, claiming “there is a long, established practice of mixing ‘high’ with ‘low’ forms of popular expression and, in particular, of bringing elements of cinema’s genres of ‘excess’ into French art film” (2007, p.34). Using these assertions as a foundation, this thesis can more overtly present extreme art cinema within a rich history of art film transgression, whereby the human bodily, and its sexualisation of violent deconstruction, has acted as a key site of demarcation. As Steve Neale observes, art cinema has always been concerned with representations of the human form that differed from those that prevail within Hollywood (1981, p.31). David Bordwell furthers this idea, stating “the aesthetics and commence of the art cinema often depend upon an eroticism that violates the production code of pre-1950 Hollywood” (2002, p.96). Due to differing censorial practices, foreign art films were able to show images of sexuality forbidden within the mainstream infrastructure, subsequently creating a visual language that broke the hegemony of Hollywood. Neale proposes this is crucial to both the emergence and consolidation of the art film product (1981, p.30), while Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover claim art cinema relied on a dualistic demographic; both thoughtful cinematic patrons and hungry voyeurs (2010, p.8).

Consequently, prior to this surge in French production, art cinema maintained a transgressive reputation, which allowed it to promote itself as an uncensored outlet which could reveal in what commercial cinema deemed unfit for general consumption (Galt & Schoonover, 2010, p.15). It is this historical arch which has been often understated by the scholarship surrounding contemporary extreme art cinema. In response, this thesis will use this history as a contextual framework, and approach the contemporary narratives as part of a grander convention. Consequently,
the sexual extremity of *Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (Pasolini, 1975a), *The Virgin Spring* (Bergman, 1960) and *Belle de Jour* (Buñuel, 1967) will be seen as predecessors for narratives such as *Romance* and *Nymphomaniac* (von Trier, 2013). Equally the bodily destruction apparent in *Weekend* (Godard, 1967a) will be seen as a precursor to the violence that defines *Irreversible* and *Trouble Every Day* (Denis, 2001a). Additionally, in order to appropriately construct an extensive historical survey, the thesis will recognise the impact European exploitation has upon the progression of cinematic extremity, and will expose the permeable boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ filmic culture.

This historical approach will be contemplated in more detail within the first four chapters of this thesis in the hope that it will draw out and highlight the historical nature of extreme art cinema in a more overt manner than has been made previously available. Crucially, through applying a more expansive historical lens, this thesis does not seek to discount the important shifts in extreme cinema or the recent swell in production, but rather place these within a definable, long-standing and essential mode of artistic address which collapses cultural barriers through the centralisation of the human body. In this sense, this project’s evaluation of extreme art cinema operates independently from specific areas of historical consideration, and is consequently able to draw linkages between a series of comparable narratives from different periods and taste structures.

**The Pan-European Approach**

Beugnet’s recognition of the historical nature of extreme art subversion is central to this studies examination of the canon. However, the author recognises this as a
French tradition (2007, p.34), which although significant, is geographically restrictive. Sectors of the established scholarship also reflect this Franco-centralism, which positions France as the epicentre of extreme art production and innovation. This approach can be evidenced using the same methodology as employed above, as an exploration of the critically applied labels highlights the repetition of a limited geographical lens. The clearest example of this penchant is the application of the aforementioned term ‘New French Extremity’, yet elsewhere Tim Palmer’s label “cinema du corps” (2011, p.57), French for ‘cinema of the body’, again locates cinematic transgression within French culture, while Austin states the country is the instigator of the brutal aesthetic (2008, p.92). Once more, cinematic extremity becomes addressed through a rationed lens, stunting the ability to explore extreme art cinema as a geographically mobile tradition.

Crucially, when scholars recognise comparable productions outside of French production sites, they still rely on a Franco-centric axis. For example Palmer claims “the methodologies of this new French cinema have also informed a number of projects made by filmmakers of different nationalities” (2010, p.65). However, Palmer’s claim presents an inconsistency, as he notes Lars von Trier’s *The Idiots* (von Trier, 1998) as an a French-inspired narrative (2011, p.65). Yet, within his earlier list of leading examples of French extreme cinema, only one film pre-dates *The Idiots*, Francois Ozon’s short *See the Sea* (Ozon, 1997) (Palmer, 2011, p.57). Kendall and Horeck assume a similar stance by entitling their collection *The New Extremism: From France to Europe* (2012). This instantly foregrounds French superiority, a concept furthered within the book’s introduction. While the editors give equal weighting to the likes of Lars von Trier, Michael Haneke and Lukas Moodysson, and the overall construction of the collection foregrounds a the
European nature of extreme art cinema, the prevailing argument centralises the idea that cinematic extremity moves from France to the rest of Europe (Kendall & Horeck, 2011, p.10).

Despite the validity to parts of these assumptions, notably the amount of seminal French texts, they understate the importance of non-French production in both a historical and contemporary context, and the manner the narratives circulate as concurrent productions. Thus, examples such as The Virgin Spring from Sweden, Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom from Italy, the films of Spanish auteur Luis Buñuel and Peeping Tom (Powell, 1960) from England stand as principal instances of non-French extreme art production. More recently, Funny Games, the Spanish Tesis (Amenábar, 1996), The Idiots, the Belgian Man Bites Dog (Belvaux, Bonzel & Poelvoorde, 1992), A Hole in My Heart (Moodysson, 2004), 9 Songs (Winterbottom, 2004), the Greek Dogtooth (Lanthimos, 2009) and Antichrist, both run independently from, and in some cases pre-date, French examples such as, Romance, Basie Moi (Despentes & Trinh Thi, 2000a) Irreversible, Trouble Every Day, and Twentynine Palms (Dumont, 2003). Therefore, it is far more useful to suggest that extreme cinematic transgression is a pan-European mode of address, maintained through a series of adjacently produced narratives. This suggests that alongside the aforementioned historical re-framing, a re-examination of the geographic context extreme art cinema is placed within must be undertaken in order to measure the scale of production and mobility of the aesthetic.

Approaching extreme art cinema as a pan-European tradition is also vital to recognising extreme art films’ hybridity. As will be reviewed in more detail throughout this thesis, extreme art film is defined by its combination of formal and aesthetic artistry and transgressive violence and sex. Consequently, it is vital to
address key areas of exploitation production across Europe, with the films of Dario Argento, Ruggero Deodato, and Lucio Fulci (Italy), Jean Rollin (France) and Jess Franco (Spain) acting as fundamental historical agents in the creation and consolidation of cinematic extremity. Importantly, European exploitation cinema itself is defined by its pan-European nature, a concept neatly illustrated by Immoral Tales: Sex and Horror Cinema in Europe 1956-1984 (Tohill & Tombs, 1994), and therefore fits this methodological paradigm comfortably.

Nevertheless, the cinema of these exploitation auteurs has largely been marginalised within the histories of European cinema. Although the work of Joan Hawkins (2000), Mark Betz (2003), Ernst Mathijs (2004), Xavier Mendik (2004) and others has begun to overturn this scholarly blindness through a reassessment of the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, the practice of suppressing exploitation cinemas importance to national film histories is commonplace. Mathijs and Mendik usefully speak of the ‘high white tradition’, a conceptual field which allows the canonisation of national cinema to cater exclusively to ‘highbrow’ tastes (2004, p.3). There is evidence within contemporary scholarship which supports the pair’s assertion. In Gian Piero Brunetta’s The History of Italian Cinema: a Guide to Italian Film from its Origins to the Twenty-First Century (2003), Federico Fellini, an established auteur preserved within a ‘highbrow’ taste economy, is mentioned on forty-eight pages, as well as having his seminal La Dolce Vita (Fellini, 1960) used as the book’s cover art. In contrast, Argento is mentioned on only four pages, whereas Fulci is mentioned just once. Significantly, Brunetta’s book is not a history of Italian art film, but rather a survey of Italian film, and therefore the lack of coverage relating to directors with such vast filmographies is evidence of the fierce taste bias which shapes the formation of European film canons.
Indeed, this predisposition is apparent across European film academia. Within *The Companion to Spanish Cinema* (Labanyi & Pavlovic, 2012), Jess Franco is mentioned on only twelve pages, while Pedro Almodóvar is mentioned on sixty-one. This could be read as a symptom of Franco’s nomadic movements across Europe; however Luis Buñuel, a director who is as much part of French and Mexican film identity as he is Spanish, is mentioned on seventy pages. Furthermore, within *100 Years of Spanish Cinema* (Pavlovic, 2009), Franco is not mentioned at all, whilst Almodóvar and Buñuel are well covered (twenty-seven and forty pages respectively). This refusal to deal with Franco in a national context becomes increasingly prevalent when we take into account that the director is credited with having directed around two-hundred films, and for that reason is a central part of any national film identity. However, it is clear that - due to the content of Franco’s narratives - which in the most part used exploitation templates such as the women-in-prison film or vampire narratives to frame highly sexual yet simplistic plots, was deemed unsuitable by the dominant scholarship. The critical bias against exploitation directors extends to France; in Susan Hayward’s *French National Cinema* (1993), Georges Franju, director of *Eyes Without a Face* (Franju, 1960), a fundamental filmic hybrid which fuses political allegory and horror, is mentioned on only two pages, as Rollin entirely untouched. In contrast, the pillars of French art cinema, François Truffaut, Jean Luc Godard and Jean Renoir are well represented (twelve, seventeen and twenty-nine pages respectively). Again, these texts are not explicitly dealing with art cinema or ‘high’ cultural filmic forms, and rather claim to map general nationalised production sites, subsequently exposing a critical reluctance to discuss exploitation as part of European film culture.
In response to this discourse, the work of Argento, Fulci, Deodato, Franco and Rollin will be incorporated into this study’s assessment of European extreme art cinema, both recognising the importance of the works as a precursor to transgressive cinema and reappraising them within the scholarly rubrics of European film academia. In so doing, the work will stress the subversive and authorial nature of particular sections of the exploitation canon, noting the similarities between ‘high’ and ‘low’ and their shared modes of address. Importantly, in doing this, the thesis does not seek to claim that all exploitation features are part of the tradition surveyed in this work. Certainly, particular exploitation narratives of this era exist outside of this framework, due to their lack of artistic experimentation and indulgence in notions of pleasure and excess. Thus, it is only those films considered here, which through their application of traditional artistic mores, which can be seen within this work’s canon. Moreover, whilst wishing to challenge certain existing Franco-centric discourses, this thesis does not seek to discount the importance of national cinema, nor imply that art and exploitation are interchangeable cinematic industries. Furthermore, it does not wish to deny the extreme cinema production which occurs on a trans-global basis (a line of investigation explored more thoroughly within the Conclusion). Rather it looks to interrogate a tradition grounded within a particular academic custom in order to recognise the transnational and transcultural identity of cinematic transgression.

**The Paratextual Approach**

As suggested, extreme art cinema is defined by a combination of art and exploitation filmic traditions, which influences both the films’ aesthetic and thematic composition and the ways they are presented within the consumer sphere. This cross-
fertilisation has become pivotal within the prevailing dialogues which surround the continuum, yet has left certain important questions regarding the manner in which the films are marketed severely underexplored. In response to this, the following section will establish paratextual studies as a framework in which these oversights can be re-evaluated.

In order to determine the critical gaps a paratextual configuration seeks to re-examine, it is necessary to first consider how the hybrid extreme art texts have been rendered within the current critical discourse. In order to undertake this coherently, it is useful to look to the work of Palmer, who summarises the scholarly tradition efficiently, stating “to some, this group [of extreme art texts] [. . .] embody filmmaking at the cutting edge: incisive, unflinching, uncompromising. To others, such cinema is as indefensible as it is grotesque, pushing screen depictions of physically to unwelcome limits” (2006, p.22). This polarised stance has given rise to a popular critical trend which sees scholars draw strong associations between the films’ use of extremity and the economic imperatives of the current market sphere.

Quandt’s work on the subject pioneers this specific approach; one in which the narratives are classified as transgressive gimmicks produced for economic gain. Quandt states:

The drastic tactics of these directors could be an attempt to meet (and perchance defeat) Hollywood and Asian filmmaking on their own *Kill Bill* terms or to secure distributors and audiences in a market disinclined toward foreign films; and in fact many of these works have been bought in North America, while far worthier French films have gone wanting (2004, p.132).

Hagman echoes this reading, claiming “recent instances of French art cinema can be understood as strategies for seeking out alternative routes of circulation and
exploring new channels of distribution within the global capitalist system” (2007, p.32). Palmer adds to this discussion, declaring that the use of extremity offers the prospect of a raised artistic profile and increased visibility (2006, p.23), reducing the use of cinematic transgression to an economic necessity rather than artistic decision. This reading fails to contemplate not only the complexities of the narratives, but the historical tradition of cinematic transgression noted earlier within this introduction.

Yet, more significantly, the current scholarship continually discusses, or seeks to comment upon, the economic validity of the films as items of commerce without gauging how these aspects are presented to a consumer demographic. Addressed in greater detail in Chapter One, paratextual theory seeks to draw connections between the film text and its role within the cultural discourse by examining its externally operating paraphernalia and commercial identity. Ultimately, a paratextual approach affirms that viewing decisions are based around the consumption of a films’ paratextual entities (Gray, 2010, p.3), suggesting that these items preserve an influence over its cultural comprehension. If paratextual artefacts are analysed, conclusions can be drawn regarding the way these items, and therefore the films themselves, manage, project and promote their own notoriety. Through an examination of the images and signs used on DVD jackets and the additional information stored upon the discs, this thesis will examine whether the commercial identity of the films’ seek to convey their transgressive nature by instigating a sense of curiosity and anticipation for extremity; or ensconce them within the rubrics of art cinema by promoting validated ciphers of legitimacy. Through an evaluation of certain semiotic signifiers, such as auteur branding, national specificity, evidence of critical legitimisation, images of nudity, representations of violence and an employment of generic templates, the thesis will be able to assert which cultural
codes direct the understanding of the film, and in doing so will survey the validity of these scholarly claims.

To survey this, this thesis will predominantly focus on the DVD (Chapter Four’s analysis of *Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom* will use the Blu ray release as a case study due to the additional impact this has on the remediation of the text) – a notion discussed further in Chapter One - as it combines several paratextual features within a single product (Gray, 2010, p.91). Within the framework of this study, the DVD, selected due to its role as the preeminent format these films are released upon, will be approached as an independently functioning bearer of meaning capable of altering the perception of the advertised text.

**Cultural Capital, Sub-cultural Capital and Points of Crossover**

The exploration of paratextual identity discussed above is interdependent on the recognition of taste slippage. In order to comprehend the significance of the symbols used throughout the commercial identities of extreme art film (and the narratives themselves), one must both be aware of the individual sites of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and the permeability of these barriers. At the centre of this is cultural capital and the role performs within both taste economies. Hence, the following section will look to map how cultural capital is accumulated and utilised within both ‘high’ and ‘low’ audiences, underscoring the convergent tendencies of the two cultural communities.

In order to understand cultural capital; this section will examine the prevailing theory present within Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of*
Taste (1984). Bourdieu states that “cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices [...] and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level [...] and secondarily to social origin” (1984, p.1). While within modern culture this placement within a classist structure seems archaic, it reflects many scholars’ positioning of art film. As Jill Forbes and Sarah Street state “art films [...] deliberately sought out the fraction that was more middle-class, better educated and more receptive to narrative experimentation” (2000, p.38), consequently repeating the classification of Bourdieu and insinuating that the consumption of art cinema, due to the demographic it targets, is intrinsically linked to ‘high’ cultural capital.

This relationship to cinema becomes clearer the further we probe Bourdieu’s concepts:

Consumption is [...] a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code [...] a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possess the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded (Bourdieu, 1984, p.2).

Due to art film’s experimentation and complexity, it lends itself to this model of decoding. If the viewer is able to move beyond the primary readings and obtain the meaning hidden within the intricate narrative or formal structures, they will achieve a heightened level of capital while illustrating their superiority. Further relevance to art cinema can be found in Bourdieu’s idea of the ‘popular aesthetic’. Bourdieu notes that the ‘popular aesthetic’, in regards to traditional art and literature, rejects formal experimentation, and hence is unable to provide sufficient cultural capital due to the needlessness of an advanced reading protocol (1984, pp.4-5). Consequently, a binary between the mainstream and art modes of address is created. He summarises this by claiming:
The denial of lower, course, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, [. . .] implies an affirmation of superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasure forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu, 1984, p.7).

Therefore, it is not only through an understanding of the complexities of ‘high’ art cinema that the viewer can both accumulate and affirm their cultural capital, but through an appreciation of said challenges. Throughout this thesis, the paratextual presentation of symbols that relate to a ‘high’ cultural understanding will be examined in order to explore the ways extreme art products communicate with audiences and represent notions of cinematic infamy.

The notion of sub-cultural capital can be developed from Bourdieu’s theories in order to understand the significance of taste slippage in the comprehension of extreme art paratexts. Sarah Thornton, a forerunner in developing ideas of sub-cultural theory, suggests sub-cultural capital is less bound by education and class (1995, pp.12-13); proposing that knowledge regarding fashion, popular music or niche film genres, or one’s collection of films or music albums can demonstrate, increase and affirm one’s personal capital. As such, it is of little surprise that sub-cultural capital has defined the study of film fandom. As John Fiske notes “fan cultural capital, like the official, lies in the appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events, yet the fan’s objects of fandom are, by definition, excluded from the official cultural capital” (2008, p.452). It is here that the link between sub-cultural capital and exploitation cinema can be made, as exploitation films are often denounced by ‘legitimate’ culture due to their centralisation of sex and violence, and thus inhabit a marginalised space outside of the mainstream and ‘highbrow’ culture. Whereas the capital associated with these ‘lowbrow’ artefacts fail to validate the
beholder in the same cultural spaces as that of traditional capital, it serves the same purpose, as it allows the individual to elevate themselves within their dedicated sub-community.

Jeffery Sconce’s work concerning paracinematic communities, a demographic he states is dedicated to the championing of marginal film cultures via the application of a complex reading protocol (Sconce, 1995, p.372), helps to further comprehend this synthesis. Like ‘highbrow’ appreciation, which is entrenched within educational practices and exclusive knowledge, the conceptual fields used within the paracinematic discourse are couched within the rejection of the ‘popular aesthetic’. Through recognising the intricacy of this reading protocol and the similarities it shares with the approaches used by ‘high’ cultural audiences, which will be addressed at various points throughout this work, we can draw together both ‘high’ cultural capital and sub-cultural currency to expose the fluidity present within their discourses. Thus, the two processes of accrual, utilisation and affirmation operate in similar ways within both taste economies.

To finalise this notion of slippage, and highlight the fundamental role it plays in shaping audiences understanding of cinematic products, it is beneficial to refer to Mark Betz’s article entitled High and Low and In Between (2013). Betz’s article claims that the customary construction of the taste continuum, which places art at one pole, exploitation at the other, and the popular in the middle, does not sufficiently account for the various similarities between the production sites (2013, p.507). In response, Betz moves to introduce a triangular arrangement, in which one aspect (or taste economy) can be situated at the apex of the triangle while still being connected to the others (for example, a film can be predominantly an art feature, but contain both exploitive and populist aspects) (2013, p.507). This triangulation model
presents a more fluent explanation of the hybridity present in extreme art film, and supports the various instances of taste convergence mapped throughout this work. As such, this thesis will seek to adopt this triangular taste structure, and note that many of the paratextual items evaluated during this investigation embody a co-supportive balance of ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural signifiers.

In conclusion, it is clear that certain parts of the existing scholarship casts extreme art narratives predominantly as contemporary French productions that display a hybrid combination of art and exploitation filmic motifs in order to gain exposure within a limited market space. This thesis, through the approaches outlined above, will challenge parts of this definition, and seek to make both the geographically and historically fluid nature of the canon more pronounced. Simultaneously, the study will look to investigate the claims regarding the financial aspects of the film’s construction by exploring how the texts are characterised as objects of commerce, and through which cultural signifiers they are represented, sold and read.

**Defining the Canon: Art Cinema, Exploitation and its Collision Point**

In the above section, three reoccurring cinematic modes come to the fore: art cinema, exploitation film and extreme art film. It is the intention of this thesis to approach the first two concepts, that of art and exploitation cinema, through a generic framework. This will facilitate a more comprehensive definition of extreme art cinema which can expose instances of taste slippage more coherently.
Art Film

Clearly, there is no objective definition of art cinema. In response to this, and is this section will illustrate; this thesis will apply the definition which is most widely circulated and accepted in critical, academic and market environs. Importantly, certain scholars (Galt & Schoonover, 2010) have begun to challenge the effectiveness of the term art cinema in describing a corpus of filmic production. This cross-examination of the term stems from accusations that it, through its role as a widely applied label, simplifies a range of films which vastly differ in regards to style, thematic concerns, geographical location, and era (Galt & Schoonover, 2010, p.6). Significantly, a comparable process of academic re-examination appears within the critical discussion regarding genre and its application to contemporary film cultures. Andrew Tudor, in his seminal article Genre (1977) noted that the processes which exemplify genre theory are flawed due to its reliance on a pre-circulating knowledge of filmic patterns. Janet Staiger (2007), has echoed these opinions, and claimed that the theory is inconsistent due to the retrospective view that genres have been stable categories (2007, p.187). Consequently, framing art cinema as a genre seems problematic.

However, as the following section will illustrate, an application of a genre methodology is unavoidable in a study that uses paratextual theory as one of its primary methodologies. Genre, and its modes of classification, motivate the categorisation systems present within the within the commercial sphere. As Rick Altman asserts, its processes of sorting are central to the economy of cinema (1999, p.14), a notion Barry Langford reiterates (2005, pp.1-2). This can be illustrated practically through a brief evaluation of the cataloguing system present on amazon.co.uk. Within the ‘Film and TV’ section of the website, a list details various
‘Departments’ which divide the stock into manageable sections (DVD & Blu Ray, 2014). These subdivisions both reflect traditional genre definitions, such as the ‘Western’, ‘Science Fiction’ and ‘Horror’, and newer partitions such as ‘Gay, Lesbian & Transgender’, ‘Teen & Young Adult’ and ‘Children & Family’ (DVD & Blu Ray, 2014). Despite the fact that these latter sub-divisions seem vague, and perhaps recall the criticisms of both Tudor and Staiger, they still rely on the consumer retaining a pre-established set of expectations, demonstrating the clear influence genre has upon the commercial sector and contemporary cinema.

Indeed, art cinema has become a commercially utilised classifier. Forbes and Street state “it certainly is the case that ‘art cinema’ became a useful marketing device capacious enough and flexible enough to accommodate the differential promotion of films according to the audience targeted” (2000, p.40). Galt and Schoonover agree, noting the term now operates as a marketing label; a mark of a certain type of product which carries a particular set of connotations and expectations (2010, p.13).

To return briefly to the previous examination of amazon.co.uk, art cinema is categorised into two sectors: ‘World Cinema’ and ‘Indie & Arthouse’, indicating the generic configuration of the mode. Thus, within a study that focuses on paratextual presentations, recognition of genre and its role within the market sector is obligatory, even within the consideration of notoriously hard to define cinematic modes such as art film, and by extension exploitation cinema.

In order to avoid becoming overly reliant on industrial determinants, it is necessary to review traditional genre theory. Genre, in its clearest form, relies on the identification of patterns within a series of filmic texts. These patterns, according to the work of Langford, become iconic of that genre, and act as key ingredients to the
specific visual experience (2005, p.13). The western provides a useful case study when exploring iconographical templates of generic representation, as the image of a cowboy, with a ten gallon hat, gun, boots and horse, when placed within the specific temporal and geographical location is instantly capable of connoting a set of possibilities. Inherently related to the transmission of these iconographical signifiers is generic verisimilitude (Langford, 2004, pp.14-15; Neale, 2007, p.161). Both Langford and Neale note that generic verisimilitude acts as an apparatus which enables the audience to understand and justify the images seen within the cinematic frame. For example, within the science fiction genre, the appearance of futuristic technology is acceptable due to a pre-established agreement between spectator and film. However, if similar images appeared in the western, it would oppose the pattern of the genre and disrupt the viewing process.

These prevailing frameworks will facilitate the following assessment of art cinema, which, in line with the key aims of this thesis, will define the mode in order to stress its longstanding association with both formal and bodily extremity. Notably, others have observed the generic qualities of art cinema. Andrew Tudor claimed that the well-educated and middle class demographic which consumed art films helped to classify them under the paradigms of genre, while directors such as Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini created the style which would influence later entries into the body of work (1977, pp.21-22). Tudor’s ideas neatly recall the industrialisation of the art film seen within the present economy, and therein provide a foundation for this study’s extension of the approach. A crucial part of applying a genre reading to art cinema is recognising the impact of ‘Americanisation’ (Forbes & Street, 2000, p.36), as the threat of homogenisation via American cinematic modes provided the catalyst for certain cinematic solutions (Ezra, 2004, p.9). One such reaction
materialised within art cinema’s dismissal of mainstream templates of visual and narrative address. As David Bordwell notes, Hollywood rests upon particular assumptions surrounding narrative structure, cinematic style, and spectatorial activity; a mode of storytelling art cinema defines itself explicitly against (2002, p.95). Subsequently this section will focus on the two dominant ways art films reject the mainstream codes of cinema: visual experimentation and transgressive portrayals of the body.

The visual experimentation prevalent within art cinema is both iconographical and dependent on generic verisimilitude, and is defined by its difference from mainstream filmic production. This is highlighted within Neale’s useful and widely used definition of art cinema present within his seminal article *Art Cinema as Institution* (1984), wherein he claims the filmic mode is marked by a stress on visual style, a suppression of action, and a focus on character rather than plot (Neale, 1984, p.13). Galt and Schoonover further Neale’s claim, stating that art films present an overt engagement with aesthetic style, unrestrained formalism, and a mode of narration which is far looser than seen within the mainstream (2010, p.6). These approaches to filmmaking, defined by the manner they challenge the spectator, are present throughout the art film sphere, and come to characterise its identity within both the commercial and critical discourse (audience and academic). Due to their ability to disrupt the causal viewing experience, the various experimentations have to be couched within a tailored and learnt comprehension of the art films’ cinematic language. This therefore neatly rests within the concept of generic verisimilitude (and cultural capital), as pre-circulating understandings help to comprehend the numerous visual modes and navigate the demanding narrative structures.
Thus, within the majority of art films, although varying in accordance to changing geographical and temporal conditions, experimental approaches to visual style, non-conventional narrative structures, non-traditional character identification models and images that draw attention to the apparatus of filmmaking are commonplace. In addition to this, both Bordwell and Shohini Chaudhuri note the manner in which art cinemas centralises realism (Bordwell, 2002, p.95; Chaudhuri, 2005, p.14). While cinematic realism seems to oppose the deliberate visualisation of filmic form which defines the modes of experimentation addressed above, the containment of both within the broader composition of the cinematic mode relates to Galt and Schoonover’s claim that art cinema is defined by its impurity (2010, p.6). Furthering the rejectionist stance of art cinema, motifs such as non-professional actors, location shooting and natural lighting again become iconographical images synonymous with the art film continuum, opposing the ‘blockbuster’ aesthetic present within the majority of mainstream features (whilst often being a result of budgetary constraints this application of realism is still crucial to noting generic art tropes across a variety of narratives).

These modes of experimentation and realism fuse with the centralisation of the body through the increasingly common utilisation of hard-core sex. As Daniel Hickin states, images of erect penises, oral and vaginal penetration, cunnilingus and male ejaculation are now featuring within a European cinema destined for widespread (in relation to the distribution structures of art cinema) distribution and exhibition (2011, p.119). As a cinematic tool, hard-core sex dismantles the boundaries of fiction and reality, as the actors become implicit within both the performance and actualisation of intercourse. Before its co-option via the art discourse, genuine, full penetrative sex was strictly the province of pornography. Due to its lack of traditional cinematic
models and its deliberate restrictiveness, the pornographic industry exists on the outside of ‘legitimate’ cinema, meaning its re-framing within art film narratives signifies its only application within the traditional parameters of ‘legitimate’ cinema. Consequently the hard-core sequences present within Romance, Anatomy of Hell (Breillat, 2004a), Baise Moi, The Piano Teacher (Haneke, 2001a), Antichrist and Nymphomaniac become iconographical moments of originality within parts of the art film canon, and thus serve a chief generic purpose.

Essentially, the hard-core penetration in art cinema becomes framed by aesthetic dexterity and psychological complexity which aims to engage the intellect rather than, as is the case with most hard-core sexual representations, the body (Krzywinska, 2006, p.227). This reading of hard-core was addressed in Hickin’s extensive survey of the BBFC’s censorial attitudes toward extreme art film, wherein he claimed that the sexual content of Romance was adjudged to be contextually justified rather than pornographic (Hickin, 2011, p.119). Hickin’s works suggests that a pre-existing understanding of the primary aims of art narratives, one born from the prevailing registers which underpin art cinema and its intellectual validity, is retained by sectors of the audience so images of transgression can be appropriately contextualised. Indeed, this same approach defines the employment and reading of extreme violence in art cinema. Narratives such as Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom, Irreversible and Dans ma Peau (De Van, 2002) show sequences of brutality and corporal deconstruction, which through their entrenchment within the previously mapped visual language of experimentation and realism, carry a level of cultural sophistication not afforded generic acts of extremity. Furthermore, as alluded to earlier, this iconographical fusion between transgression and experimentation exposes the inherent extremity of art cinema. The rejectionist stance and refusal to
indulge in the cinematic normalities of the mainstream suggests that extreme art cinema, a sub division of the wider art film continuum (and one that will be delineated in more detail later), is a natural extension of the core traits and motifs of art cinema.

Therefore, while the index of films is vast, the continued presence of experimental forms and non-mainstream representations of the body aids a genre reading of art cinema. Even though this definition may seem problematically simplistic, it does relate to new movements within genre theory, which seek to prove their hybridity and vagueness (Staiger, 2007). Moreover, the discoveries of Hicken propose that art cinema is approached as a genre as spectators can apply a specific reading protocol due a pre-determined knowledge of the narratives cinematic qualities. Thus, although art cinema will perhaps never exist as a traditional genre in the same manner as the musical or western, its industrial segregation and reliance on repeatable visual registers reveals that it does conform to the determinants of modern genre theory.

Exploitation Film

Unlike art cinema, exploitation film has not been industrially pigeon-holed in such an exacting manner, however Netflix.co.uk does see categories such as ‘Cult Horror’ house many of the most seminal and recognisable entries. Nonetheless, cinematic patterns of reoccurring iconographies can be noted across the exploitation industry. In order to sustain a methodological parity, this section will again analyse two key determinants: the production circumstances which dominate exploitation cinema, and, so to simultaneously commence the discussion of taste fluidity, depictions of the body. Significantly, these aspects are interwoven as depictions of the body are
shaped by certain production limitations, while the centralisation of the human form
defines parts of the production process.

Beginning with the former, it is useful to refer to Stephen Thrower’s sizable account
of exploitation cinema; Nightmare USA: The Untold Story of the Exploitation
Independents (2007). Although Thrower’s work deals with American exploitation
cinema, the key findings of the study can be readily applied to the parallel European
industry due to the similarities across geographic borders. Thrower accurately
summarises the production circumstance of exploitation cinema, stating they “are
independently made non-studio films produced either: a) to exploit the financial
possibilities of a popular genre; b) to respond quickly to current interest in a
contemporary topic; or c) to milk an existing market success” (2007, p.12). Thus, the
industry is defined by its proximity to the economic imperatives of commercial
filmmaking, wherein the quality of the feature is secondary to production
circumstance (speed and cost). This industrial trait defines the narratives, the applied
marketing strategies, exhibition spaces and reception cultures, as the lack of
normative production structures limits both the scope and desirability of the artefact,
while drawing comparisons to the contemporary conceptualisation of extreme art
cinema.

These market factors have given rise to an iconographical visual language which
draws together narratives from a vast array of generic templates. Exploitation films
are littered with abnormalities unseen throughout legitimate cinema, as instances
such as bad dubbing, inferior special effects, poor acting and stilted scripts define the
features, and are part of their sub-cultural pleasure. Consequently, these cinematic
shortcomings comprise a generic model, as their continued presence establishes a
patterned and widespread visual language. Here, it is useful to refer to the work of
Sconce, who notes that through a failure to conform to dominant codes of cinematic representation, exploitation cinema exists as a counter-aesthetic (1995, p.385). The counter-aesthetic, born out of an inability to match the normalised cinematic register employed throughout the mainstream industry, must be couched within a pre-circulating generic verisimilitude, wherein the inadequacies of the texts are accepted (and celebrated) due to an enduring understanding of the generic codes of the industry. The repetition of this visual mode subsequently creates a unique narrative model which acts as an overarching generic platform and defines the majority of exploitation releases. Crucial in drawing out the hybridity of extreme art cinema and the porous nature of art and exploitation categories, this counter-aesthetic becomes a type of rejection akin to that prevalent within the art discourse, whereby the various mistakes make apparent the apparatus of the cinematic form, opposing the cinematic invisibility that dominates mainstream cinema while revelling in its challenging and confronting mode address.

Alongside this cinematic deficiency is the constant presence of the transgressed body. Due to the lack of budgets, and therein universal marketing strategies; the exploitation industry attracts audiences through the promise of forbidden imagery. Within this dialogue between text and viewer, the body acts as canvas which is actively sexualised and violently deconstructed (Thrower, 2007, p.28) for the purpose of scopophilic pleasure. Importantly, the commercial structure of the industry makes it competitive, meaning only the most infamous films appealed to audiences, forcing portrayals of the human form to become increasingly extreme, shocking, and bizarre (Thrower, 2007 p.11). Consequently, exploitation cinema became, and remains, synonymous with images of corporality.
Decisively, the transgressed body exemplified exploitation cinema regardless of individual generic tradition. For example, the zombie narratives of Lucio Fulci featured the same visual register and bodily treatment as his giallo films, while Jess Franco sexualised the human form to similar extents in his vampire films and women-in-prison texts. Accordingly it is useful to, akin to the conclusion drawn earlier within the reflexion of art cinema; to approach the entire canon within the rubrics of genre theory. While again this can be seen as problematic, it is worth revisiting the notion that the comprehension of exploitation cinema is motivated by the acceptance of its own failings. Subsequently, one must approach a variety of narratives with a similar, pre-learnt reading protocol, which in itself is as complex and entrenched in cultural capital as the ‘highbrow’ approaches used in the consideration of art cinema, and can only be applied when one draws comparisons between a series of narratives. Thus, exploitation cinema is related to the processes which characterise genre as its images are implicitly defined by a need for an established formula of comprehension, while being co-dependant on a level of learnt capital in the same manner as art cinema. Again, within this claim it is important to note that this work does not wish to assert that all exploitation films are part of the extreme art canon. Rather, through broadening the lens in which we consider extreme art production, this work seeks to draw attention to those filmmakers that, whilst operating within the ‘low’ cultural filmic sector, present films that combine extremity and artistry in a comparable manner to certain art texts.
Evidently, art film and exploitation cinema can be placed within genre strictures due to the repetition of certain iconographical motifs which are positioned within a hegemonic and agreed framework by critics and audiences. These reoccurring attributes, which formulate the visual language of each production site, are principal to conceptualising extreme art film, and the primary determinants that motivate its categorisation within this thesis. As was clear, art and exploitation cinema and their barriers are permeable and flexible, and a level of cross-over is prevalent. Essentially, extreme art cinema, within the parameters of this study, is characterised by this cross-over between art and exploitation iconographies, which is a longstanding tradition whereby ‘high’ culture trades on the same images, tropes, and themes that characterise ‘low’ culture (Hawkins, 2000, p.3).

Yet, it is fundamental to justify the terms of reference and place them within a broader context. The term ‘art’ relates to the tropes mapped above, connoting the experimental filmic forms and challenging modes of address which defined this thesis’s application of both art and exploitation cinema. It is however the use of the qualifier ‘extreme’ which needs a more detailed exploration due to the various meanings it can project and preserve. In the current cultural climate, the term carries associations with terrorism, and thus harbours an inherent stigma. Nonetheless, it remains the expression most commonly used within the categorisation of transgressive art cinema, and has, as examined throughout this introduction, been employed by the majority of scholarly commenters. Nonetheless the scope of the term ‘extreme’ remains vast, as it can refer to both the transgressive acts present within the extreme art film canon and the generic spates of violence and sex that typify more traditional genre models, and hence requires a further delineation.
Centrally, this study’s application of the word ‘extreme’ is motivated by its recognition as part of an art film lexicon, whereby it is strictly enclosed by principal notions of realism, experimentation and allegory. In recognising extremity within the broader concerns of art film, one can suggest that the manner it engages with the audience differs from those apparent in more generic applications of transgression. Here, it is useful to return to assessments of the extreme art canon as a whole, due to the focus it places on the spectator’s experience. As Horeck and Kendall state “the films of the new extremism bring the notion of response to the fore, interrogating, challenging and often destroying the notion of a passive or disinterested spectator” (2011, p.2). Horeck’s and Kendall’s work here neatly draws the extreme art continuum closer to the wider art discourse by centralising the manner in which both ‘extreme’ and ‘art’ are based around a challenge in the form of address. It is this demanding and difficult cinematic experience, also highlighted within the definition of exploitation cinema and its own counter-aesthetic, which enables this thesis to differentiate between art film extreme and what will be termed generic excess.

Within this context of providing a challenging viewing experience, extreme art depictions of sex and violence follow a biological factuality, whereby the sexual act collapses the barriers of reality and fiction by showing real, unsimulated acts of intercourse and sequences of violence refute an over indulgence in bloodletting and gore (unless factually appropriate). The pseudo-reality of these images, which relates to the abounding realism of art cinema, challenges the audience, as the events deliberately remove the fantastical frame of cinematic representation. As Asbjørn Grønstad claims, these narratives assault their own audience and negate scopophilic pleasure, compelling the audience to look away rather than watch (2011, p.194). As a result the extremity present within extreme art cinema seeks to enact a feeling of
unpleasure through the disposal of obviously fictional embellishments which would allow the audience the ability to position the acts witnessed in the safe space of illusion. As will be seen throughout this thesis, this approach to the representation of extremity typifies the sequences of transgression present in the work of, among others, Gaspar Noé, Michael Haneke, Catherine Breillat, Lars von Trier and Pier Paolo Pasolini.

In contrast, whilst dealing with a similar set of visual registers, excess, in regards to its application within this work, is demarcated via its proximity to pleasure, wherein the generic coding affords the audience enjoyment through depictions that can be read as naughty, camp, kitsch, comedic, absurd, and pleasurable. For example, incidences of violence which depict over-the-top bloodshed, or are placed within a narrative context in which they could be celebrated (for example an act of revenge or comedic turns of violence), or scenes of intercourse that are framed as realisations of fantasy and desire, are excessive acts as opposed to extreme acts. These portrayals of sex and violence do not antagonise the audience, but conform to the expectations of the generic tradition, and consequently provide cinematic fulfilment.

Within this definition, it becomes clear that there is room for slippage. A cinematic act can be both extreme and excessive, and a level of subjectivity unavoidably impacts the comprehension of certain transgressive acts. In recognising the permeability of extremity and excess, it is useful to consider the manner audiences engage with films, artefacts and events that they know will challenge and provoke them. Here, Carl Plantinga’s work on cinematic disgust proves valuable (2006), as he exposes the manner in which certain filmic tropes simultaneously repel and attract the viewer, creating a push and pull between curiosity and repulsion (2006, p.87). This internal contradiction neatly exposes the blurred barriers between
fascination/repulsion, excitement/confrontation – barriers that also motivate the definition of cinematic extremity and generic excess provided here. Therefore, some audiences, depending on their own cultural background, may be attracted to extremity, whereas others may be repelled by excess. Nonetheless, the motivating factor within this thesis’s definition of cinematic extremity is recognising it as a deliberate promotion of unpleasures. Thus, if we accept that cinematic extremity endeavours to upset and confront the audience, while cinematic excess is seen as a more pleasurable exercise deployed with the intent to satisfy audiences’ urges, than a useful distinction can be drawn.

It is the above fluidity that is pivotal within the evaluation of exploitation cinema’s use of transgression. A mode of production closely related to genre, it could be suggested that the transgressions found within the narratives are excessive as opposed to extreme. However, as has been stated elsewhere within this introduction, it is this thesis’s wish to recognise certain exploitation narratives, manly those of European descent which came to share geo-cultural spaces with art films during the 1960s and 1970s (a history examined in Chapter One), as part of a broader art film history of transgression, extremity, and mainstream rejection. As will be claimed at various stages within this work, transgressive art films and particular exploitation narratives partake in a dualistic history whereby the barriers of the categories are continually permeated and become increasingly elastic. It is therefore possible to claim that despite the fact that the violence and sexual acts present within exploitation cinema can be read as excessive, they belong to the same pan-European tradition of mainstream rejection as art cinema, due to the prevailing counter-aesthetic which dominates the features. Hence, narratives such as *Saw* and *Hostel* (Roth, 2005), which conform to the modes of address which define mainstream
production (invisible edits, cause and effect driven narratives, a refined final product) feature scenes of excess as the audiences consumes the acts in an unobstructed state and can place them in a standardised cinematic register. Therefore, excess relates to acts of violence and sex which appear in narratives which conform to the normalities of cinema.

Accordingly, it is the movement and communication between extremity and excess which characterises the extreme art canon and its treatment of the body. Hence, the sexualised body within *Salo, Or the 120 days of Sodom*, *Romance* and *A Hole in My Heart* and the violently deconstructed body of *Weekend*, *Funny Games*, *Irreversible* and *Antichrist* draw from both art and exploitation visual modes, as excess becomes reframed as extremity within the iconographical register of art cinema due to the renunciation audience pleasure. For example, the reversed narrative of *Irreversible*, the episodic structure of *Anatomy of Hell*, and the sporadic nature of *Weekend* reflects traditional art cinema’s rejection of the cause and effect narrative logic and denies the audiences the narrative contexts to justify acts of violence and sex. Moreover, the vast visual experimentation of *Enter the Void* (Noé, 2009), the Brechtian approach in *Funny Games* and the handheld aesthetic of both *The Idiots* and *A Hole in my Heart* act as iconographical instances of visual experimentation akin to those prevalent within the defining strictures of art cinema, and again refuse to contextualise extreme acts within a narrative which would allow for pleasurable identification. Herein, the sexual and violent excesses are reinterpreted within narratives which require serious decoding and deciphering.

This is not to claim that the violence within extreme art cinema does not carry the hyperbolic spectacle it does when framed within other spaces. For instance, the drawn out rape of Alex within *Irreversible* and the hard-core sex that defines the
cinema of Catherine Breillat rely on the desire to alarm and stun the audience. However, the shock is not one of awe and excitement, but one of disgust and discomfort as each act is embedded within the aesthetics of realism and experimentation. The rape of Alex is shot in a single take and refuses to objectify the body while centralising the violence of the act. Meanwhile the sex in Breillat’s cinema is devoid of fantasy and romantic furnishings, and inverts the male gaze rather than endorsing it. Consequently, the hyperbole becomes reframed within the challenging rhetoric of art cinema (and parts of exploitation cinema), and consequently denies escapism by complicating identification.

Essentially therefore, acts of reframed transgression combine with the moments of visual experimentation to create the hybrid cinematic mode. Whereas this combination between artistic experimentation and transgression, as suggested, rests at the core of art cinema, and to an extent certain sectors of exploitation film, the intersections become more pronounced within the narratives of the extreme art canon. This indicates that the similarities between art and exploitation – in regards to experimental forms (either deliberate mainstream debasement or accidental mistakes) and transgressive approaches to the portrayal of the body – make extreme art film part of the natural progression of non-mainstream cinema’s thematic concerns and modes of address. Within this, extreme art film comes to further redefine the barriers of both categories through its hybridisation of cinematic modes and amplification of certain rejectionist traits.
Chapter Outline

Overall, this study, by adopting a pan-European historical lens, will look to create a more expansive extreme art canon, while assessing how it is presented to the consumer discourse and works to redefine the boarders between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. In order to meet these research aims it is essential to employ a structure which highlights the key issues.

Chapter One looks to build upon the paratextual approach outlined within this section, and provide further justification for its selection as a primary methodology. Accordingly, the chapter surveys the growth of the DVD industry and illustrates how it can be addressed as a platform in which a broader understanding of contemporary cinema can be comprehended. Secondarily, the chapter will build upon the generic definitions of art and exploitation cinema given here, exploring the traditional marketing practices present within the two filmic modes while illustrating how the hybridity present within the extreme art continuum extends to the modes of address present within the paratextual discourse.

Thereafter, the thesis adopts a chronological structure which looks to apply the historical approach stressed throughout this introduction. Chapter Two will study a snapshot of landmark moments and directors from both art and exploitation cinema during a period of 1960 -1985. The chapter will examine art directors who are often underexplored within discussions of extreme art cinema, and argue, through textual analysis, for their inclusion within the canon. The main directors and areas observed within this chapter will be Luis Buñuel, whose surrealist influences will be investigated; Ingmar Bergman, whose utilisation of sexuality will be considered; Roman Polanski and Michael Powell and the role they play within the creation and
consolation of an early extreme art aesthetic; and finally how Victor Erice’s *Spirit of the Beehive* (Erice, 1973) can be viewed as a film which slips between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of cinematic address. Ultimately, this chapter will claim that these narratives are examples of the longstanding rejectionist stance of art cinema, and need to be recognised as part of the wider extreme art debate.

In order to interrogate the taste bias which dominates the canonisation of European cinema, Chapter Two will also draw attention to the exploitation tradition which influences depictions of cinematic extremity. To clearly present this exploration as a re-examination of European film scholarship, this section will take a national approach rather than the authorial framework utilised for the categorisation of art cinema. This methodological shift will allow for the marginal narratives to be re-inserted into their national cinemas rather than further segregating them within an auteur framework. The section will predominantly review the exploitation traditions apparent within Italy, detailing the work of Lucio Fulci, Mario Bava and Dario Argento; and France, wherein explorations of the work of Georges Franju and Jean Rollin will take place. In addition to this, and in keeping with the pan-European approach that motivates this study, the chapter will examine the presence of exploitation cinema in Spain, Germany and Britain, before looking at the waves of influence American exploitation has on the images that dominate European extremity. Crucially, Chapter Two acts as a context to the forthcoming case studies, while drawing together the fundamental approaches outlined within this introduction.

The first paratextual case study is Chapter Three: *Weekend* and *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980a). For this initial case study, two narratives that epitomise their respective production sites were selected in order to highlight the slippage prevalent
within both the text and the contemporary commercial products. In selecting seminal narratives which carry an existing level of understanding within both critical and spectatorial discourses, the chapter looks to present them as synecdoche for the wider extreme canon. Therein, the chapter will start with an evaluation of Jean Luc Godard and his cinematic status, before exploring Weekend’s relationship to extreme art cinema using the taxonomy outlined within this introduction. In order to expose the slippage that defines extreme art cinema, the chapter will then seek to undertake the same assessment of Ruggero Deodato and his feature Cannibal Holocaust. Through this comparative structure, the thesis will outline the way extreme art cinema is informed by both ‘high’ and ‘low’ discourses. After inserting these narratives within the wider extreme art canon, the chapter will seek to explore whether the similarities present within their filmic representations, especially those surrounding sex and violence, are reflected within the paratextual items that shape their commercial identities.

Chapter Four: Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom and Ilsa The Wicked Warden (Franco, 1977a) follows a similar structure. Pier Paolo Pasolini and Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom will be positioned as a fundamental part of the extreme art continuum. In a comparable manner, Jess Franco and his filmography will be placed as a primary instance of the European exploitation tradition and therefore an essential part of consolidating an extreme cinema aesthetic template. However, unlike the previous chapter, these case studies have not been chosen due to their existing status, but because of the comparisons present within their thematic registers. Therein, the chapter will determine whether the similar use of fascism and sexuality present in the narratives is reflected within the paratextual artefacts available. Through both these chapters the thesis can begin to calculate how
extremity translates from the narrative to the commercial image of each release, and whether notions of infamy, controversy and notoriety overpower traditional markers of artistic worth.

Thereafter, Chapter Five begins an assessment of contemporary examples of extreme art cinema. The chapter will further identify films that fit within the parameters outlined within this introduction, and examine more closely the pan-European approach presented here. Within this, the chapter will map several important industrial shifts that influence the appearance and consumption of extreme art cinema within the contemporary age. Firstly, the chapter will note the manner in which geographical and commercial changes saw a decrease in extreme art production during the 1980s, before mapping the much covered re-emergence in France during the late 1990s and 2000s. Thereafter, the chapter will explore several simultaneous examples of extreme art production, such as the Dogma 95 movement, and singular works such as *Man Bites Dog*, *Tesis*, *A Hole in my Heart* and *Dogtooth*. This structure seeks to establish the transnational nature of extreme art film, and highlight the manner it transcends national barriers.

Chapter Five will then consider the role of exploitation cinema in the 1980s and 1990s. The chapter will review the manner in which the cinematic modes of address which defined marginal industries in the earlier decades were absorbed into the mainstream cinematic product, and consider the effect this had on the conceptualisation, marketing and presentation of both exploitation cinema and filmic extremity. This line of investigation will illustrate the decline in both European and American exploitation cinemas, and the progressive domination of ‘high concept’ horror filmmaking. Moving on from this, the chapter will then contemporise the
exploration of horror cinema, exploring the re-emergence of extreme genre imagery in marginal filmic cultures across Europe. Within this structure, the chapter again aims to construct a suitable context to house the following case studies, while highlighting the importance of both ‘high’ and ‘low’ taste economies within the conceptualisation of extreme art film.

Following this contextual chapter, and as a result of the various changes it surveys, the second set of case studies applies a different methodology. With Chapter Five concluding that the contemporary filmic climate is one anchored within an increasingly visible extreme cinema - both artistic and generic - the comparative structure which motivates Chapter Three and Chapter Four is no longer as applicable. Rather, Chapter Six: Michael Haneke and Chapter Seven: Lars von Trier will concentrate on investigating how paratextual entities filter authorship through a lens of extremity. This shift in focus will enable the contemporary case studies to consider and interrogate a different set of questions, such as the effect extremity has upon auteur branding and the way different companies remediated the same film, whilst more suitably reflecting the filmic climate the narratives were produced within. This change in methodology, it is hoped, will enable the thesis to more comprehensively survey the role extremity holds in this era of substantial growth and production.

Hence, Chapter Six: Michael Haneke will follow a slightly different structure to account for the changes in methodology. Primarily, the chapter will put forth the claim that Haneke should be judged as a transnational extreme art auteur, an association underplayed within the majority of existing critical discourses. In order to facilitate this, the chapter will look to explore his work within the iconographical
models outlined within this introduction, seeking to draw relationships between his films and those of extreme art directors more traditionally connected with the canon. Within this, the chapter will challenge the process of isolation related to the application of auteur theory, wherein a director is envisioned as an individual who operates away from determinants such as national cinema and movements. Instead, the notion of auteurism will complement the focus on extremity, and further facilitate the conceptualisation of a pan-European, historically established tradition.

Thereafter, the chapter will conduct a paratextual investigation of Haneke, and explore how he is placed within the semiotics of extreme cinema through commercial signifiers. Essentially, this chapter looks to explore how a modern auteur, ensconced within the ‘high’ culture, has his employment of cinematic extremity appropriated within the market sphere. Therein, the chapter will endeavour to investigate whether the marketing models applied to the work of Haneke reflect traditional art signifiers or present an image which defies common opinions held within the critical discourses. Accordingly, the chapter not only presents a case for Haneke’s recognition as a transnational extreme art filmmaker, but looks at the conflict between critical and commercial forms of canonisation in a manner not possible in the previous case studies.

Chapter Seven: Lars von Trier, follows the same structure, again adopting an authorial approach. The chapter will explore the work of another director often underexplored within the discourses of extreme art cinema yet one who consistently displays the taxonomy of the canon. In reference to the critical conventions that dominate the exploration of this continuum, the chapter will seek to explore how von Trier looks to add a transgressive, extra-textual cultural capital to his films through
his performances at Cannes, while investigating his dualistic position within film academia. Moving on from this, the chapter will instigate a detailed paratextual study of Antichrist. The chapter will analyse two mediations of the film and its presentation on television in order to map the instability and elasticity of extreme cinema’s commercial desirability. Within this in-depth investigation, Antichrist, much like Weekend and Cannibal Holocaust earlier, will be positioned as a synecdoche for extreme art film.

The thesis will conclude with a consideration of both the state of extreme cinematic transgression within the current filmic climate and the future of DVDs as the preeminent paratextual form. The conclusion will examine the shift of extreme cinema into the mainstream consciousness, and investigate how paratextual images can be seen to instigate this aesthetic migration. Thereafter, the conclusion addresses how commercially viable extremity is within modern film distribution, while discussing the relevancy paratextual theory holds within the contemporary cultural space. Herein, the conclusion will look to the future of both the aesthetic and the key methodological frameworks used throughout this study.
Chapter One

A Historical Context of Art and Exploitation Film Marketing: Crossover,
Slippage and Fluidity

This chapter looks to map the notions of crossover, slippage and fluidity present within art and exploitation cinema’s paratexts. Herein this chapter will explore three key areas: the new movements in film scholarship of which this work is an extension; the separate histories and ongoing traditions of art and exploitation marketing; and moments of crossover between these prevailing strategies. Essentially, the chapter will establish a framework for the study, performing as a contextual reference for the specific case studies that follow.
New Movements in Film Scholarship

The Digital Age and the Dominance of DVD

Currently, audiences interact with cinema within a media saturated culture, changed by an ongoing and ever advancing digital revolution. This revolution, which Paul McDonald locates as starting in the late 1990s, saw the growth of the internet, the establishment of cable television and the expansion of the home entertainment sector with the arrival of DVD (2007, p.1). As claimed in the Introduction, the DVD, which is part of this broader group of information technologies (Faire, Jancovich & Stubbings, 2003, p.228) operates as the focus of this study, and has, in recent film scholarship, become an important area of exploration.

At the fore-front of this new scholarly investigation rests the work of McDonald and Barbara Klinger, who have both studied the manner in which the digitalisation of information has altered the way spectators interact with cinema. Essentially, both scholars concur that the home entertainment sector, and its substantial growth in the last decades, is central to understanding modern cinematic consumption. As McDonald notes, “in Western Europe [. . .] DVD reached over 50 per cent penetration of television households by the end of 2004, six years after the official European release” (2007, p.59). In a more recent study, Jonathon Gray confirmed, in a study published in 2010, that this initial growth has not subsided: “in the first half of 2008, DVD sales and rentals in the United States produced $10.77 billion” (2010, p.88). Klinger echoes this impression of mass expansion, surveying the scale of the home entertainment sector within the modern age (2006, pp.20-24) while charting how the progression of the DVD market, or as Klinger terms it the sell through
market, not only overtook VHS, but also cinema (Klinger, 2006, p.59). At this stage, it is important to note that these publications are becoming outdated due to the fast changing nature of home entertainment, and as a result they reflect the period they are written within. This pitfall is unavoidable when writing about technological advancements, and is one that will be reflected upon within this study’s conclusion through the exploration of the newest home entrainment technology: streaming platforms.

Nonetheless, the work of Gray, Klinger and McDonald still provide a useful context to the examination of the DVD and its period of domination over the market sphere. Within its rise to prominence, filmic consumption switched from renting, which was popular in the age of the VHS, to ownership (McDonald, 2007, p.69). This concentration on ownership is linked to the technological superiority of the DVD product. As Charles Tashiro states in his self-reflective account of video collecting:

> It is precisely because discs are permanent that they have the allure of the static, self-contained art work [. . .] Since the eventual destruction of a videotape is inevitable, it can be treated badly from the first. Discs offer the seductiveness of immortality (1996-1997, p.12).

As such, DVDs are able to perform repeat viewings with small risk of erosion, therein acting as a premier product within the home environ. Additionally, the DVD allows the viewer more control, in regards to both interactive menus and supplementary extras, as it retains a higher capacity to store information (McDonald, 2007, p.1). While the DVD extra is often marketed as a complementary addition to the core feature film, McDonald suggests that these superfluities have become fundamental to the value of DVD as a commodity, providing a point of difference between the film consumed within the private space of the home and the one experienced within the cinema (2007, p.65). Furthermore, as Klinger notes, whereas
the special features started as an aspect that would only appeal to the cinephile or film academic, it has now become an expected feature of the DVD product, and therein attracts the casual consumer (2006, p.61). Consequently, within the approaches outlined for this study, the DVD special feature, a fundamental paratext, must be evaluated where appropriate to fully understand the impact these items have upon the cultural image of extreme art cinema.

Referenced heavily within scholarship considering the consumption and collecting of cultural objects, Walter Benjamin’s *Unpacking My Library* (1999) (Originally published *Die Literarische Welt*, in *Geasmmelte Schriften*, 1931) surveys the relationship between the collector and his possessions (Benjamin, 1999, p.486), stressing the personal and private nature of accumulation. Claiming that ownership is the most intimate relationship one can have over objects (Benjamin, 1999, p.492), Benjamin’s highly lyrical assessment of the collectors’ connection to their artefacts is vital to understanding the collecting and consumption of DVDs. This concept is proven within Charles Tashiro’s *The Contradictions of Video Collecting* (1996-1997), in which the author updates Benjamin’s reflection of his book collection to become a reflection of one’s VHS and laserdisc library. Again, akin to Benjamin, Tashiro foregrounds the secular and personal nature of amassing a library, claiming that while collecting may seem random and irrational, it is informed by the taste of the collector (1996-1997, p.13).

However, while study of the committed devotee and personal fandom are important, and extend the discussion of cultural taste explored in the Introduction, both Benjamin and Tashiro neglect the idea of the casual collector. Due to the mass production of DVDs, the secular, elitist amasser has been surpassed by the recognition of the average consumer who can compile a modest private collection
(McDonald, 2007, p.70). Within the current climate, collectors of differing levels of commitment are catered for by the media industries and distributors (Klinger, 2006, p.61). Consequently, when exploring the paratextual presentation of the DVD within this thesis, a consideration of how certain symbols are used to communicate with the educated cinephile and casual consumer must be reviewed so to appropriately analyse its role as a bearer of a widespread cultural significance.

Furthermore, in regards to the work of Tashiro, as Benjamin’s writing pre-dates the culture of mass production and consumption that are normative in the current climate, this thesis wishes, again using the new scholarship regarding DVD consumption, to investigate and challenge one of the fundamental assertions. Tashiro locates the collector as an independent individual isolated from the industry; “thus the logic of collecting is built on the shifting sands of personal desire, and then justified through a rationalizing structure. The structure may remain invisible to the outsider” (1996-1997, p.13). However, this ignores the manner in which certain industrial practices actively shape desire and consumption patterns. As Klinger notes, while collecting can be both private and counter-establishment, it is reliant on a pattern of acquisition informed by values and systems of categorisation managed by the industry (2006, pp.65-66). As an example of this process, Klinger notes the production and marketing of DVD special editions:

Any film is potentially a collectible. But certain films are also explicitly designated as such through a host of labels, including special collector’s editions, widescreen editions, director’s cuts, restored or remastered classics, anniversary editions, and gold, silver, or platinum editions (2007, p.60).
Therein, consumption desires are manipulated and directed through certain channels by exterior entities, forcing us to recognise the collector, both casual and devoted, as an interdependent part of a two way process of communication.

The Paratext and the Direction of Consumption

It is this industrial influence, and the impact paratextual images have upon the consumer, that motivates the methodology of this study. The idea of the paratext originates in the work of Gerard Genette, who, although working within the discipline of English literature, proves fundamental to this thesis’s application of the term. Genette defines the paratext as any item attached to the novel which is not the main textual body. As he states, a text is rarely presented in an unadorned, unreinforced and unaccompanied state, with the surrounding items, including the author's name, the title, the preface, epitexts and illustrations, allowing the book to become an artefact that can be handled within the cultural space (Genette, 1997, p.1). Genette further defines the paratext, stating:

A paratextual element can communicate a piece of sheer information - the name of the author, for example, or the date of publication. It can make known an intention, or an interpretation by the author and/or the publisher [. . .] and also of the genre indications on some covers or title pages [. . .] It can convey a genuine decision [. . .] Or a paratextual element can give a word of advice or, indeed, even issue a command (1997, pp.10-11).

Within this definition, Genette usefully begins to deal with the way paratextual items give consumers clues on the type of artefact they are encountering, while proposing their ability to shape and influence consumer understanding.
When the study of paratexts is moved from the spaces of literature and into a consideration of film, it is useful to define it as an investigation into the linkage between, to adopt Christian Metz’s terms, the outer machine and the inner machine (1977, p.8), wherein cinema perpetuates its existence by creating a spontaneous desire to consume within the audience (Metz, 1977, p.7). The work of Jonathon Gray (2010), mentioned briefly within the Introduction, builds upon and adapts the ideas of Genette, and begins to examine the way consumption is directed, informed and controlled by certain cinematic practices. Gray’s findings can be located within the current climate of growth outlined at the start of this chapter, and provides a neat extension to the work of Klinger and McDonald. He states that:

Media growth and saturation can only be measured in small part by the number of films or television shows [. . .] as each and every media text is accompanied by textual proliferation at the level of hype, synergy, promos, and peripherals (Gray, 2010, p.1).

Gray notes that these entities act as ‘book covers’ – small segments of information in which audiences create their first impressions of a particular film (2010, p.4). This relates to the earlier assessment of collecting habits as Gray claims that the audience consumes a film they have already been decoding for some time (2010, p.3), as paratextual information circulates outside of the text. These items, such as interviews, reviews and posters, which are defined as epitexts by Genette (1997, p.344) enable the industry to guide consumption before the release of the completed text, exposing the pitfalls of approaching consumers as purely independent figures.

As suggested by Genette, paratexts retain a certain level of command in regards to shaping audience expectations and the way they identify with particular cinematic texts. Genette notes that the paratext, in its subordinate role, is an area of transaction
between artefact and reader, which serves to aid a better reception of the text itself (1997, p.2). Gray furthers this notion, claiming that:

Given their extended presence, any filmic or televisual text and its cultural impact, value, and meaning cannot be adequately analysed without taking into account the film or program’s many proliferations. Each proliferation, after all, holds the potential to change the meaning of the text, even if only slightly (2010, p.2).

Beyond influencing the consumer, paratexts have the potential to affect the market and academic domains of particular films, transforming the space in which the film is located and its understanding within the cultural domain. This idea of paratextual influence is central to the methodologies present within this thesis, as the forthcoming case studies will explore the manner in which certain images, textual passages and symbols actively encourage placement within particular taste economies, potentially altering filmic personas to suit differing commercial desires.

John Ellis’s concept of narrative image proves vital when asserting that the DVD is an object that can manifest a self-circulating meaning outside of the film text. Although the term, originating in Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video (Ellis, 1992) pre-dates the boom era of technological advancement and media saturation outlined by Klinger, McDonald and Gray, it still retains a relevance in relation to the contemporary climate. Ellis states that a film’s narrative image is a process of characterisation consisting of direct publicity and the public’s knowledge of the film’s ingredients, and is fundamental to a film’s commercial success (1992, pp.30-31). Hence, the narrative image offers a publicly agreed definition of a particular film (Ellis, 1992, p.30) created through a series of semiotic signifiers such as taglines, images, titles, star histories, and filmic memories. Clearly, the majority of DVDs contain the key ingredients which compose a narrative image, and promote them to the potential consumer. The construction of the narrative image, and the
paratextual object in a broader sense, is dependent on a balance between familiarity and difference. For example, DVD covers or posters must have both a recognisable reference point within the audiences’ understanding of cinema, yet simultaneously generate a curiosity which stimulates consumption (Ellis, 1992, p.30).

To comprehend this balance between novel and traditional images, it is fruitful to refer to Jacques Derrida’s theory of trace. Derrida’s writings on trace theory are located within *Of Grammatology* (1976), which, in its English language version, has a large translator’s preface written by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak summarises the theory as such; “Derrida’s trace is the mark of the absence of a presence” (1976, p.xvii), a memory which through a cultural recollection, becomes a sign of past meaning or significance (Spivak, 1976, p.xvii). As such, all signs leave a trace, which harbour a pre-coded historical relevance which informs their reproduction as signifiers for other texts within the present. When read through a framework of Ellis’s narrative image, this trace memory develops within the mind of the audience, as each cinematic ingredient is bestowed with a new relevance based on previous incarnations and associations. Thus, the construction of images, taglines, star identities and branding upon a paratext can only acquire a meaning through the audience’s memory of its former application. As an example of this, the semiotic signifiers of the horror genre used on posters, which Gray states are limited to an icon of the murder or an image of disturbed innocence (2010, p.53) work to produce meaning through their previous usage within the genre. The icon of murder, for example Freddy Kruger’s bladed glove in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984), utilises the trace memory of Norman Bates’ kitchen knife in order to locate the film within the ‘slasher’ sub-category of the wider horror discourse, which has its own structures of value and templates of comprehension.
Marketing: Taste Slippage and Industrial Fluidity Represented through Paratextual Entities

The Marketing of Art Film

In order to read the signs present on the paratextual items, it is fundamental to map the traditional paratextual constructions of art and exploitation film, before moving on to survey historical instances of crossover, slippage and hybridity. Beginning with art cinema, it is essential to note that it has continually lacked the financial power of the mainstream film industry. This economic disparity is essential when analysing the predominant marketing mores, as national television advertising simultaneously became the most successful way of advertising films in the 1970s (Friedman, 2006, p.283) and the most expensive (Drake, 2008, p.70). As a consequence televised trailers for art films are rare on nationally syndicated channels.

As expected the demographic for art cinema is noticeably smaller than that of the mainstream, with audiences embedded within ‘high’ taste cultures (education and class) understood to be the fundamental spectatorship (Marich, 2005, p.258). Due to this marginal demographic, art films usually open on an exclusive basis within the festival circuit, with the hope that positive reviews in the media or audience word of mouth will encourage a wider release (Marich, 2009, p.277). This is a stark contrast from the national saturation release strategy that mainstream cinema has employed from the 1970s, which has grown from a film being released on 500 screens to 4000 in the last four decades (Freidman, 2006, pp.283-284). Consequently, due to vast financial differences and a marginal spectatorship, differing paratextual semiotics motivate art cinema’s marketing directives. In order to create a workable breakdown
of these areas of differentiation, four key traits that have come to define the manner in which art films’ are paratextually presented within the public sphere will be considered: the auteur as brand, national identity, critical legitimisation, and the festival circuit.

**The Author as a Brand**

The figure of the auteur is central to the cultural comprehension of art cinema. David Bordwell notes that art narratives are motivated by authorial expressivity (2002, p.95), wherein “lacking identifiable stars and familiar genres, the art cinema uses a concept of authorship” (Bordwell, 2002, p.97). Steve Neale confirms this notion, stating “the name of the author can function as a 'brand name', a means of labelling and selling a film and of orienting expectation and channelling meaning and pleasure” (1981, p.36). Elsewhere Robert Marich echoes this, claiming; “art house is a segment where directors are almost like brand names that transfer across all their films and attract loyal audiences” (2009, p.277). Hence, auteurism, a concept which has academic and cinephilic origins, and therefore harbours a ‘high’ cultural trace, becomes adopted via marketing directives and morphed into a commercial apparatus. As such, it can be concluded that auteur cinema represents more than just an aesthetic concept, and is more thoroughly intertwined with the industrial, economic, and cultural interests of the European film system (Maule, 2008, p.31).

Genette further comments on this, stating “the name then is no longer a straightforward statement of identity ("The author's name is So-and-So"); it is, instead, the way to put an identity, or rather a ‘personality’ [onto the text]” (1997, p.40). Consequently, the art film director - within the marketing sphere - acts as a
loaded signifier. This process of branding recalls Derrida’s notion of trace, as the
director’s name can harbour a series of different memories, which symbolise various
connotative meanings through its placement within the narrative image.
Consequently, a certain director, through an explicit branding of their name, could
carry a genre trace, thematic trace, aesthetic trace, and a national trace; presenting
several marketable features instantly, while carrying the capability to legitimise a
text due to the concept’s academic and cinephilic origins. As such, throughout the
forthcoming case studies, the presence of this type of branding, and its impact on the
comprehension of certain narratives, will be studied in detail.

*The National as a Brand*

In a similar manner to the auteur, national identity retains a trace memory that carries
a commercial connotation. As Rosalind Galt summarises:

> Many European films circulate in a global art film market, in which
> European-ness asserts specific (although not constant) levels of both
cultural and economic capital [. . .] where French, British and Italian
> mean quite different things to audiences than do, say, Czech, Swedish
> and Portuguese (2006, p.6).

As such, while levels of capital differ across territories according to a hierarchy
embedded within European distribution and consumption practices, each country has
a level of acquired prestige, or an identity based on past success and historical trace.
Consequently, European countries can become linked to a certain type of production,
generic convention or directorial legacy, which in turn shapes economic desirability.
This is perhaps most evident within the recognition of cinematic waves and
movements, which become associated with the country of origin and its filmic
culture, and impact the reception cultures of later national productions.
Within this framework, the national becomes a brand akin to that of the auteur. As Thomas Elsaesser comments “for a country’s film culture, national provenance is important in much the same way as the label stitched on my sweater or trainers: I show my brand loyalty and advertise my taste” (2005, p.38). Within his statement, Elsaesser recognises the two way process of capital that is essential to the consumption of art cinema. Thus, the national brand identity, constructed though historic processes of consumption, distribution and production, actively manipulate the way audiences engage with certain national products. Therefore, within the forthcoming case studies, the presence of national identity will be examined in order to calculate how its acquired capital attracts the audience and codes the film under an recognised cultural identity.

*Critical Legitimisation*

Critical praise, as Marich notes, is usually the main thrust of the industry’s marketing message (2009, p.280), and without it wider release of the film may not be achieved (Marich, 2005, p.259). Consequently, art films’ will adorn their paratextual entities with quotations and passages which promote the film as an artefact of cultural worth. Importantly, the citations used often arise from sources that retain their own ‘high’ cultural trace, and thus graft additional capital to the film. This notion of critical endorsement is prevalent within DVD image making, and can be seen in the Artificial Eye release of Andre Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, 1979), in which a quote from the *Monthly Film Bulletin* states “never less than epic…the most impressive of Tarkovsky’s films” (Tarkovsky, 1979). In this instance, the cultural capital of the *Monthly Film Bulletin* works to legitimise *Stalker* and position it within
Tarkovsky’s wider catalogue, whilst validating the film as an essential piece of auteur filmmaking.

Through the isolation and repetition of critical validation, art cinema has become an essential component of the wider ‘high’ cultural discourse. Therefore, in an extension of the generic discussion outlined in the Introduction, the label of art cinema has evolved into a marketable brand, where it is capable authenticating a series of narratives. Accordingly, the term acts as both a generic signifier and a self-functioning, continually perpetuating brand entrenched within notions of cultural value and worth. This will, akin to the other conventions surveyed here, will be assessed in detail throughout this study.

The Festival Circuit

Film festivals perform a central role within the commercial presentation of art cinema. Beginning as an exhibition site through which art film could counteract the hegemony of mainstream distribution structures, international festivals have become, through the accumulation of the various awards available (Neale, 1981, p.35) and the existing brand status of the festival itself, a site which grafts a ‘highbrow’ status to the exhibited films (de Valck, 2005, p.106). However, in addition to the independently functioning status of the festival circuit, is the increasing commercialisation of the circuit. As Rosanna Maule states, festivals now act as a meeting point for international sales agents and film distributors (2008, p.168). Within this environment, the collection of awards and critical coverage can be directly translated into commercial success through the procurement of distribution deals. Moreover, Lucy Mazdon’s survey of the French television’s coverage of
Cannes film festival highlights a secondary role the exhibition site plays within the paratextual identity of art cinema. Mazdon notes that between 1995 and 1999, 800 programmes or extracts devoted to the Cannes film festival where shown on French programming (2006, p.28). While Mazdon argues that the artistic integrity of the films’ are undermined due to the programme’s focus on glamour and celebrity, it can be claimed that the level of exposure allows art cinema to enjoy the previously unattainable TV coverage.

Significantly, aspects such as heightened coverage, awards and critical legitimisation stay with the film on entrance to the public sphere as these festival experiences are centrally placed within many art films’ marketing aesthetic. As an example of this we can look to the Tartan Video release of *Persona* (Bergman, 1966). Part of the Bergman Collection, which in itself trades off the currency of the auteur, the release’s cover art centralises the film’s success at festivals. Listing three wins at the 1968 National Society of Film Critics awards, including best director and best film, the sleeve uses the film’s historical validity to enhance its contemporary desirability.

These four areas – authorial branding, national labelling, critical legitimisation and the significance of the festival circuit - will be drawn upon, explored further and applied to the forthcoming case studies as templates through which the appropriation of art marketing mores upon extreme art paratexts can be studied. Throughout this thesis their relevance will be reviewed in regards to their proximity of exploitation marketing modes, allowing for the process of slippage and crossover to be appropriately mapped.
Exploitation Marketing

Akin to art cinema, exploitation films’ have never retained the financial power to compete with mainstream cinema. As claimed in the Introduction, the industry exists on the margins of legitimate cinema and thereby must target a niche demographic in order to gain commercial success. Therefore, as with to the marketing processes of art cinema, the exploitation industry has constructed a series of strategies which enable it to find space in the market and a portion of the available audience. As with the brief overview of art cinema above, this section will concisely consider the four main areas of market differentiation which can serve as a foundation for the forthcoming paratextual investigations.

Essentially, within the present context, exploitation consumption is linked to the digital revolution mapped earlier. As stated in the seminal Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste (Jancovich, Reboll, Stringer & Willis, 2003):

[home entertainment] technologies have made cult movie fandom much less dependent on place, and have allowed the distribution and diffusion of cult materials across space. This has made possible the creation of large niche audiences that may be spatially diffuse but can constitute a powerful market force (Jancovich, Reboll, Stringer & Willis, 2003, p. 4)

As such, the proliferation of home viewing formats has made collecting marginal cinema a far easier endeavour and important part of the broader industry. Therefore, a consideration of how this consumption pattern is shaped via paratextual image making is central to understanding the overall position of extreme cinema within the digital age.
**Ballyhoo and Hyperbole**

Beginning in a chronological manner, this overview will start with a contemplation of ballyhoo marketing tactics. Ballyhoo marketing, pioneered by the touring freak shows and circuses that were popular in American in the 1930s, easily lent itself to the marketing of exploitation film (Kattelman, 2011, p.63) due to its reliance on the manifestation of hype and curiosity. Beth Kattelman provides a neat summary:

> Throughout the ages, pitchmen have known that some good, effective ballyhoo could help them sell almost anything. Phrases such as those listed above [we dare you to see this!, you won’t believe your eyes!, you’ve never seen anything like this!] have long been a part of sales campaigns promising to deliver an original, unique, bizarre and/or terrifying product to expectant audiences (2011, p.61).

This type of hyperbolic advertisement involved the talking up of a films’ content in order to make it visible amongst its peers and desirable to the audience. As Kattelman states, this process of elaboration, sometimes half-truths and occasionally complete lies, become an art within itself (2011, p.63), wherein the best ‘talkers’, regardless of the quality of the film, would make the most profit for their feature.

Kattelman claims that William Castle, a leading exploitation filmmaker, is best remembered for his promotional work which turned below average films into box office sensations (2011, p.64). This is supported by David Sanjek (2003) and Murray Leeder (2011), who write in detail about the importance of hyperbolic marketing within Castle’s cinematic experience. Even when exploitation film shifted into a more violent form of transgression, ballyhoo marketing tactics still typified the paratextual identity of the features. *The Last House on the Left* (Craven, 1972) used a traditionally ballyhoo tagline; “To avoid fainting, keep repeating: It’s only a movie, it’s only a movie, it’s only a movie”; and as such was able to present itself as an test
of endurance, daring the audience to consume a feature which could harm their health.

These notions of ballyhoo and hyperbole relates to Lisa Kernan’s work on trailers (2004). Within *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (Kernan, 2004) Kernan discusses how the trailer, a central paratextual form which has a large bearing on the cultural rendering of a filmic product, uses two definitive modes of address: the vaudeville and the circus (2004, pp.18-23). While the vaudeville mode promotes the film as a range of different pleasures, and relies on generalisations in order to make the feature as attractive as possible to an array of people (Kernan, 2004, pp.19-20), the circus mode relies on the ‘see/hear/feel’ rhetoric common within circus barking (Kernan, 2004, p.21). The circus mode, as Kernan notes, “usually [signals] out the film’s attractions as the phenomenon or event that will draw audiences to the theatre” (2004, p.18), actively invoking a relationship to the cinema of attraction while using the trailer to promote the film as a sensory assault and filmic spectacle (Kernan, 2004, pp.20-23). Thus, the circus trailer will commonly promote a single feature over an outline of the entire narrative, emphasising a visual oddity or unusual sight (Kerman, 2004, p.21). Significantly, while this thesis does not deal explicitly with trailers, many of Kernan’s key findings surrounding the circus mode of promotion relate to the paratextual construction of exploitation film. As will be determined throughout this study, the DVD jackets of many of the seminal narratives promote a single hyperbolic aspect, while encouraging the consumer to believe it is a unique spectacle worth consuming.

In the most part, both these terms and ideas, when used in relation to the marketing traditions of exploitation cinema, have been employed to describe a historical
customs. As in Kettelman’s work, it most often relates to the early incarnations of violent exploitation cinema, while Kernan’s work utilises classical Hollywood as its fundamental case study. In response to this, this thesis seeks to contemporise the terms and place them within the pre-established pan-European framework. Significantly, through modernising the concepts, one can facilitate an understanding of current exploitation marketing practices whilst recognising them as part of a broader historical arc. For example, the DVD release of *Cannibal Ferox* (Lenzi, 1981) displays three classic ballyhoo tactics: “the most violent film ever made” (Lenzi, 1981), “watch this movie and you won’t sleep for a week!” (Lenzi, 1981) and “if the representation of violent and repulsive subject matter upsets you please do not view this film” (Lenzi, 1981), presenting the film as a cinematic phenomenon unseen elsewhere. Due to its sustained use, instances of circus promotional tactics and ballyhoo will be cross-examined in relation to the aforementioned art strategies when undertaking the forthcoming paratextual investigation of extreme art cinema.

*The Currency of Disgust*

Inherently linked to the notions of ballyhoo is the currency of disgust, a concept which seeks to assess the value of violence and sex within the market discourse. The currency of disgust, a way to read paratextual presentations, refers to the application of an aesthetic template which opposes the defining images that typify both mainstream and art film marketing directives. Thus, rather than the images of stars that characterise mainstream cinema or the authorial branding, national specificity and critical validation associated with art film; exploitation film adopts an alternative visual register relating to the visualisation and isolation of transgressive and taboo imagery. Herein, images of sex and violence serve as the focus point, encouraging a
sense of marginality and disgust through a replication of extreme imagery. For example, Dario Argento’s *Suspiria* (Argento, 1977) and *Tenebrae* (Argento, 1982), both released by Anchor Bay, portray a combination of sex and violence which discloses the films’ most transgressive and extreme attributes to the potential consumer.

This marketing directive is based around a self-instigated process of marginalisation, as the centralisation of transgression actively repels certain demographics. However, this exclusivity is key to the success of the approach, as the controversial images trade off a counter-culture which works to mark the films as different to the homogenised norm. Yet, within the dictum of the currency of disgust, it is not just images that promote transgression. Certain discourses of language, either located in taglines or blurbs, help to support the visual signifiers and create a narrative image intertwined with discourses of hyperbole. For example, lists of words, which de-contextualise the violence and present moments of extremity in a short, digestible format, help promote the films’ major selling points quickly and efficiently. This is evident within the Shameless Screen Entertainment release of Giulio Berruti’s *Killer Nun* (Berruti. 1979), which not only features the tagline “at last the slut is uncut” (Berruti. 1979), but also proclaims “if you ever watched *La Dolce Vita* wishing that Swedish sex sire *Antia Ekberg* would get out of the Trevi fountain, turn junkie, torture some pensions and stalk innocent young nuns for kinky sex in a convent then *Killer Nun* is the film for you!” (Emphasis in original) (Berruti, 1979). Consequently, the DVD employs a linguistic form of disgust, which exists alongside images of violence and nudity to create a marginal yet paracinematically desirable product.
Market Trends

The term exploitation, while maintaining certain negativity (Thrower, 2007, p.12), relates both to the transgressive imagery present and the manner the industry responds to the market. As considered in the Introduction, exploitation films aim to capitalise on filmic trends and fashions, and seek to replicate the success of commercially proven trends and genres. Within this, impression of trace are evident, as an exploitation narrative will draw on the memory of the audience in order to successfully code a new film under an established visual template. Herein the releases adopt a surrogate narrative image, which has verified its commercial appeal elsewhere before becoming adopted by a secondary product. These co-opted brands often arise from the mainstream, but also within the infrastructure of exploitation cinema and art narratives.

Lucio Fulci’s Zombie Flesh Eaters (Fulci, 1979) is as a marked example of this process, and one which exists outside of this work’s extreme art film canon. Released in Italy as Zombi 2, the film was produced quickly in order to capitalise on the success of Romero’s Dawn of the Dead (Romero, 1978), which was entitled Zombi within the Italian market. Through using a title which suggested it was the sequel to Romero’s American narrative, Zombie Flesh Eaters adopted a pre-circulating brand identity with an established marketability. Whilst it was clear that Zombie Flesh Eaters was not a sequel to Romero’s narrative, due to both chronological and symbolic inconsistencies, the film still proved a success due to the use of an pre-circulating and commercially established marketing template.

This concept, in which a later film adopts an publicly recognised and pre-proven narrative image in order to capitalise on its predecessor’s successes, is also evident within the visual make-up of certain paratexts within the contemporary market.
discourse. Found footage horror narrative *Paranormal Activity* (Peli, 2007a), proved hugely successful on its initial release. The DVD artwork (Peli, 2007b) features a film still of a couple in bed, pointing towards an open door. The image, taken from a home video camera, features static lines and the time in the bottom corner, and is flanked by two large black borders. *Paranormal Entity* (Van Dyke, 2009), a similar ghost based found footage film, echoes this layout, featuring a static image bordered by black panels. The latter film clearly attempts to associate itself with the success of *Paranormal Activity* and its brand image, and use its paratextual persona, including its title, to access a pre-existing demographic and graft several established meanings to its cultural representation. This notion of adopting patterns and templates which carry a pre-loaded series of meanings will be examined throughout this thesis, and is crucial to understanding modern exploitation marketing strategies.

**Paracinematic Legitimisation**

Whilst slippage between the visual tropes used by art and exploitation has been mapped within the Introduction, journalistic approaches to the industries often locate them at opposing ends of a straight cultural continuum. Consequently, examples whereby exploitation narratives have found critical legitimisation commonly arise from paracinematic discourses rather than the ‘high’ culture spaces associated with art cinema. This relationship to the paracinematic community, and their rejectionist value structures, results in a practice of critical inversion, wherein processes of homogenised disapproval can act as a type of validation. Within this process, the widespread critical condemnation of exploitation cinema works to confirm the
oppositional credentials of the narrative, and has become pivotal to both the marketing and consumption habits of the industry.

The clearest example of this is the ‘video nasty’ scandal of the 1980s which resulted in the 1984 Video Recordings Act. Julian Petley, a leading scholar within the field of British censorial attitudes, states the advertising, which traded off the currency of disgust, led to both the moral panic that resulted in their censorship, and their overall success (1984, p.68). The films involved within the scandal, such as Driller Killer (Ferrara, 1979), Cannibal Holocaust and SS Experiment Camp (Garrone, 1976), while placed within a negative environ by the press, received masses of free coverage (Egan, 2007, p.59). Therein the audiences become informed of their existence and transgressive appeal, ultimately becoming promoted through collective condemnation. An example of this is discussed by Kate Egan, who claims Cannibal Holocaust’s distributor manufactured a fake complaint about the film’s violence in order to exaggerate its transgressive nature (2007, p.69), and therefore used the mainstream moral panic as a hyperbolic promotional vehicle.

However, not only did the critical condemnation result in free coverage, but also came to inform certain consumption practices. Through the 1984 Video Recordings Act, the director of public prosecutions banned a series of films, which Egan claims came to act as a shopping guide for a dedicated fan community based around the collecting of video nasties (2007, p.158). Finally, within the modern age, this historical era of censorship has been incorporated into the official motif of the rating or warning symbol, which enables distributors to maximise the key selling points the film possess (Egan, 2007, p65).
This notion of critical condemnation informing a point of market differentiation for the exploitation industry has now led to the popularisation of an anti-mainstream promotional approach, in which films’ will uphold their rejectionist stance and marginal appeal. Outlined neatly within *Cult Cinema* (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011), Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton note that the term cult has now become a meta-concept (2011, p.32), which is finding increasing application in marketing (2011, p.30). Importantly, continued condemnation can lead to a cult status, which, without the opposition of the mainstream press, would be far less desirable (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011, p.47). Therefore, the negative judgements of transgressive filmic products, akin to the currency of disgust, can authenticate particular films to a consumer who wishes to actively defy traditional conventions.

Hence, akin to art cinema, exploitation film has been presented to audiences in ways which oppose the mainstream and strictly define the product within certain frames of representation. Just like the comparable areas outlined in the art cinema section, these four directives – ballyhoo, the currency of disgust, the exploitation of the market and paracinematic legitimisation - will be referred to within the assessment of the case studies. Again, their proximity to art film marketing conventions, and the effect this has upon the meaning of the artefact, will be explored in detail. In order to provide foundations for these explorations, this chapter will now examine historical instances in which these traditions have combined to make a hybrid paratextual form.
Crossover and Fluidity: Merging Marketing

Whilst thematic and aesthetic similarities have already been highlighted within the Introduction, this section will consider paratextual slippage; instances in which the marketing practices of art and exploitation cinema become interchangeable and malleable. In doing so, the segment will outline a history which this thesis intents to contemporise. The era that the section focuses upon is roughly dated between the 1950s and 1980s, a period further mapped in Chapter Two.

Geographical Crossover

This section’s discussion of market hybridity is co-dependent on the assessment of capital and artistic transgression that took place in the Introduction. Therein, similarities between paracinematic communities and ‘highbrow’ art audiences were established, drawing attention to the sophistication of certain exploitation demographics and the extremity of particular art films. As a consequence, art and exploitation were noted as having a communal audience which indulged in comparable practices of identification, critique and valorisation. Indeed, this view proposes the chance of a shared exhibition space, whereby the physical barriers between art and exploitation are collapsed in a similar manner to the borders of taste surveyed thus far.

Jack Stevenson’s assertion that art and exploitation can be bannered under the heading ‘specialty cinema’ (2010, p.129) instantly suggests the two sites share a marginality that pushes them to the outskirt of cinematic culture. Joan Hawkins builds upon this mutual nonconformity, usefully underscoring the ways Parisian
dadas and the surrealist would throw food at the screen, talk loudly and destroy the
cinematic space (2000, p.60). This correlates neatly with the findings of Stephen
Thrower, who claims that within the grindhouses of New York, fights would occur,
drugs were scored and appointments for sex were made and carried out (2007, p.20).
Herein, a relationship between ‘high’ and ‘low’ consumption practices can be found,
alluding to a large-scale taste convergence which requires further inquiry.

Within this assessment, the exhibition space itself will be addressed as a paratextual
zone capable of influencing audiences understanding of the film being projected.
Initially, the stereotypical sites of exploitation and art film exhibition must be
considered in order to explore certain instances of fluidity. As already claimed,
grindhouses, which as Stevenson notes were seen as dens of menace, perversions,
and criminality by respectable citizens (2010, p.131), were the major exhibition
avenue for exploitation films, and compared to the behaviour in certain arthouse
venues. However, another space, the drive-in theatre, also characterised exploitation
projection. Drive-ins became very popular within America, and “by 1948 there were
over 800 drive-ins [. . .] rising to over 4,000 by 1958. Numbers remained between
3,300 and 3,500 for the next fifteen years” (Thrower, 2007, p.19). Deliberately
courting the youth market through a promise of privacy, drive-in theatres become so
synonymous with exploitation cinema that narratives would look to place the
fictional action in cars or car lots (Thrower, 2007, p.19).

Their continued exhibition of violent and sexual material meant the space gained a
cultural trace embedded within transgression. Nonetheless, the dual marginalisation
of exploitation and art cinema resulted in a crossover, and art films began to appear
within the drive-in environment. For example, The Virgin Spring was released upon
the drive-in circuit by its distributor Janus Films (Heffernan, 2004, p.119). Within

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this instance Janus Films emphasised the theme of rape in order to stress the narratives most extreme aspect and make it appealing to the non-traditional art film audience. Through an adaptation of hyperbolic advertising mores and a placement within a space defined within the common consciousness as ‘lowbrow’, *The Virgin Spring* adopted a narrative image associated with violence and disgust. Here, a film entrenched within the authorial branding of Ingmar Bergman borrows the cultural trace of exploitation in order to broaden its commercial appeal. This process homogenised certain art films under the pre-circulating understanding of exploitation cinema, transforming their meaning within the filmic sphere due to the paratextual quality retained by exhibition site.

This practice was not uncommon within the 1960-1970s. Kevin Heffernan claims that the distributors of the era retained dualistic release schedules which would contain both art films and exploitation narratives (2004, p.114). Heffernan again refers to Janus Films, who he cites as distributing nudie cutie films to ‘low’ end art cinemas (2004, p.119) before releasing Ingmar Bergman’s *The Magician* (Bergman, 1958) over *Wild Strawberries* (Bergman, 1957) due to the commercial desirability of horror iconography. Thus, it is clear that Janus Films often collapsed the distinctions between art and exploitation in order to reach a larger market. This dual schedule, as will be explored throughout this thesis, is still present within the modern era, explicitly within the market directive of Tartan Video. Tartan Video distributed a series of disparate titles from sub-divisions such as the Bergman Collection, Tartan Asia Extreme and Tartan Grindhouse, homogenising them under a similar branding and distorting the distinctions between them.

Yet, it was not merely distributors harbouring a dual schedule and booking art cinema into exploitation exhibition sites. Exploitation, and more particularly
sexploitation narratives, began to find exhibition channels within art-house cinemas. Stevenson notes that in the early 1970s, many failing art cinemas began to book porn (2010, p.130). Mark Betz echoes this, detailing frequent cross-programming of art and sexploitation within the 1960s and 1970s (2003, p.220). Once more, this can be seen as a symptom of Hollywood dominance, as block booking meant smaller cinematic venues could no longer compete with the mainstream (Thrower, 2007, p.45). Through exploitation cinemas use of the art film space, the trace of the site is grafted to the film and its exhibition, enabling certain ‘lowbrow’ narratives to be projected under the dressings of art cinema. This notion is touched upon by Jeffery Sconce, as he discusses the way paracinematic films are making inroads into the avant-garde, the academy, and the mainstream. Sconce claims that art cinemas are increasingly exhibiting programmes on exploitation films whilst universities have begun teaching courses on ‘lowbrow’ genres such as horror and pornography (1995, p.373). This allows exploitation cinema to take route within ‘legitimate’ culture, not only supporting this projects attempt to reassess certain canonical texts, but further lending ‘lowbrow’ cinema validity as the narratives co-opt the trace of the spaces to subsidise their own capital. This history of mobility between art and exploitation spaces exposes the pitfalls of drawing concrete distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, again reinforcing this thesis discussion of cultural hybridity.

As charted earlier within this chapter, the coming of home video changed consumption patterns. While the main body of this thesis will expand on this in far greater detail through the assessment of the DVD format, it is worth noting here that this is a relatively underexplored area. While the likes of Heffernan, Betz and Stevenson have written at length about art and exploitation convergence within the 1950s, 60s and 70s, little work has examined convergence after the digital...
revolution. Hawkins’ is one of the few scholars to study the collapse of industrial barriers present within the home video arena, stating that the VCR unmoored both ‘low’ culture and ‘high’ art from the public exhibition space (2000, p.34). Hawkins investigates this notion by deconstructing the mail order catalogues present within horror fanzines, claiming the listings challenge the binary oppositions of prestige and trash cinema by failing to differentiate between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural artefacts (2000, pp.3-4). Consequently, art films, akin to the processes mapped by Heffernan, Betz and Stevenson, became homogenised under an exploitation narrative image due to their inclusion within lists of ‘low’ cultural products.

Hawkins moves on from deconstructing mail order catalogues to consider the home video market in a more specific sense. Looking at laserdiscs, and more precisely the Criterion label, the author notes that the company presents a strong authorial brand identity whilst concentrating on supplementary paratexts (2000, pp.41-43). Hawkins moves to assert that the paracinematic video culture at that time was a black market, based around the trading of bootlegs, thus forgoing the quality of the art releases (2000, pp.45-46). Concluding that paracinematic companies and their attached fan communities care not for the technological side of film consumption (Hawkins, 2000, p.47), Hawkins ultimately reinstates the divide she claims to be arguing against. However with the proliferation of DVD, and, as will be explored in greater detail throughout this study, a changing consumption mentality within a paracinematic community, the industrial divide Hawkins maps is becoming increasingly diminished. Therefore, this study will update the concepts of Heffernan, Betz, Stevenson and Hawkins, claiming that the private space is now the predominant site of slippage between art and exploitation, and that the digital revolution has further blurred the barriers between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cinema.
Centralisation of Sex and Violence

Vital to the cross fertilisation of the cinematic space is the paratexts that accompanied the process. As suggested in the above section certain art film distributors aimed to capitalise on transgressive aspects of the films’ narrative, and operated a dual marketing campaign that simultaneously targeted a prestige audience and a paracinematic demographic.

Mark Betz’s article *Art, Exploitation, Underground* (2003) is key to surveying this history as he examines several landmark moments within the convergence of exploitation and art cinema marketing tactics. Firstly, he notes how the marketing of neo-realist texts featured highly sexualised images of women in ragged clothes, and therein became successful imports (Betz, 2003, p.206). The centralisation of what he later terms the “pink vamp” (Betz, 2012, p.499) is important, as these images rarely related to the contents of the film, however came to define paratextual images and therein the public persona of the texts. Betz goes on to note that in the US, this concentration of female sexuality dominated press-books, with pictures of the directors an afterthought (2003, p.209). This is crucial as it illustrates a usurping of the traditional authorial branding in favour of a more exploitive technique focused on the objectification of the female form. This is illustrated with *The Art of Italian Film Posters* (Bagshaw, 2005), a populist pictorial history of Italian film posters. Within it the author notes that “[La Dolce Vita] was attacked by the press and the establishment for is ambivalent religious imagery and decadent sexual content [ . . .] Giorgio Olivetti’s poster perfectly captures the film’s decadence” (Bagshaw, 2002, p.97). The poster harbours a voyeuristic tone which portrays a woman in a strapless
dress being looked at by the male lead. The masculine voyeurism eclipses Fellini’s authorial trace, and codes the film under the visual rhetoric of sexual promiscuity.

While the female image was pivotal within the hyperbolic framework employed by certain art film distributors, an inversion of national heritage also performed a significant role. Betz finds evidence of instances in which the national identity was subverted to connote a transgressive image rather than the artistic legacy outlined earlier within this chapter. Betz states that “films from France from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s often refer explicitly in their ads to their status as national products; thereby stating their potential raciness” (2003, p.212). Hawkins notes a similar trend, claiming “throughout the 1960s, the advertisements for Jean Luc Godard’s films tended to feature scantily clad women, images that were – American distributors felt – in keeping with the impression most Americans had of French cinema” (2000, p.21). Herein, France becomes both a producer of prestigious art cinema and purveyor of sexually explicit material, operating a simultaneous narrative image and paratextual identity. This process exploited the growing cultural perception that European art films propagated extremity, and used the trace of previous transgressions to code contemporary national production as extreme.

Interestingly, this inversion of national trace by art distributors meant exploitation filmmakers were able to use the growing reputation of French art cinema to market their films. The character Lucky Pierre in The Adventures of Lucky Pierre (Lewis, 1961) used the stereotypically French name in order to draw the link between American exploitation and French art film, ultimately heightening the perceived sexual content of the film (Betz, 2003, p.208). Furthermore, the growth of the nudie cutie films can be accredited to the arrival of the transgressive art film narratives in
American as they offered a simplistic vision of Americanised sexuality (Briggs & Meyer, 2005, p.23).

The dual meaning of the national is still present within the current market climate, and defines the marketing approach of *The Ordeal* (Du Welz, 2004a), a Belgian horror film which was released by Tartan Video in 2006. Its DVD jacket, coded strongly within the visual signifiers of the horror genre through the use of red, illustrates a modern reliance on the national as a signifier of transgressive credentials. The last paragraph of the blurb reads “*The Ordeal* (aka *Calvaire*) delivers a terrifying and darkly comic tale of obsession, kidnap, and borderline psychosis that brings to mind films such as *Deliverance, Straw Dogs* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, but that has a continental flavour very much its own” (Du Welz, 2004b). Clearly, the text recalls the trace of seminal American horror narratives; however also places the film within a European framework. By doing so, *The Ordeal* is able to transcend the limiting horror history of its domestic production site and adopt the more fertile trace of European cinema. Indeed, as this section has shown, the typical marketing mores of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture become interchangeable, exposing a rich history of convergence across marketing, cinematic and culture borders.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, several fundamental contextual and theoretical frameworks have been outlined which will come to inform the rest of the study. Through the mass proliferation of DVDs, its role as a bearer of meaning affords it the potential to alter certain market, academic and taste domains. Importantly, as seen within the
earlier sections of this chapter, the existing scholarship, including the work of Gray, Genette and Ellis, provide overviews of mostly mainstream products. As such, these texts provide useful foundations for this study, but suggest more detail and focused analysis must be undertaken in order to investigate the implications of paratextual study and the growth of the DVD medium on marginal filmic environs.

As seen in the later stages of the chapter, paratextual theory and trace combined neatly within the investigations of art and exploitation crossover explored by the likes of Heffernan, Hawkins and Betz. A definitive history of market fluidity can be recognised, as the thematic correlation of art and exploitation became visible within the marketing. However, these existing studies only map instances of slippage and hybridity up until the video boom. With more reliance being placed on the private sphere as a site of filmic projection, this area of consideration must be contemporised to appropriately appreciate the manner in which extreme art cinema is sold, understood and presented to audiences within the current filmic climate. The later stages focused upon the way art film become entrenched within the marketing directives of exploitation cinema, and therein adopted a more extreme cultural persona while certain exploitation narratives adopted the trace of transgressive European art films. However, the opposite process, whereby exploitation cinema comes to embrace the marketing strategies of art cinema, especially authorial branding, will be investigated throughout this work, and will serve as a neat counterpoint to these existing dialogues while further illuminating the flexibly of cultural distinctions in the modern age.
Chapter Two


This chapter will begin by instigating the historical approach addressed in the Introduction, surveying a period of production that stretches from 1960-1985. Essentially, the chapter is a revaluation of both art and exploitation production camps, and seeks, through the assessment of key texts and filmmakers, to draw associations between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cinematic culture. The chapter will begin with an examination of art film directors whose films embody the extreme art taxonomy outlined in the Introduction. This section will interrogate the notion of the isolated auteur by using Betz’s idea of cultural triangulation as a framework to highlight a series of comparison across a sequence of narratives. Within this, the chapter will argue that these filmmakers and their transgressive outputs are part of the extreme art film tradition, which as noted in the Introduction is a historically and geographically mobile filmic convention grounded in an aesthetic of rejection.

Thereafter, the chapter will consider seminal European exploitation narratives of the era. In response to the findings of the Introduction, wherein it was concluded that particular areas of Film scholarship are reluctant to discuss exploitation cinema within the broader dialogues of European film canons, the analysis of exploitation cinema will adopt a geographic framework. This will help to reinsert these ‘lowbrow’ narratives into their national lineage, and draw them closer to the art films that compose part of the canon. Furthermore, this section will seek to employ Betz’s model of cultural triangulation in order to emphasis the rejectionist models that motivate exploitation film of this era, and therefore highlight its proximity to the prevailing mores of art film. This in itself will recall the assessments of
paracinematic community that have been discussed thus far, and their frameworks of
capital and critique.

Hence aim of this chapter is not to provide an extensive history, but one that works
to expose art cinemas’ historical preoccupation with extremity and exploitation
cinemas relationship to the prevailing modes of rejectionist cinema. Here, the
chapter is a snapshot of specific points and moments that define this works
exploration of taste fluidity, offering a trajectory of production which inspires later
entries to the extreme art canon. Whilst some contextual reference points may fall
outside of this period, their influences are predominantly apparent within these
decades. Consequently this chapter provides a context for the forthcoming case
studies of Weekend/Cannibal Holocaust and Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom/Ilsa
the Wicked Warden, and enables them to be situated within a history of taste slippage
and extreme art progression.
Art cinema

The directors identified within this first section have traditionally been located within art cinema discourses, with little attention paid to the convergence present within their work and there place within a geographical mobile, historically expansive cinematic continuum. Consequently, while this chapter operates to provide a historic context, their grouping within this canon portrays an unconventional history of art film that has been marginalised by Film academia. The criterion for including certain directors and landmark texts here is motivated by the two principal factors outlined in the Introduction: bodily and formal extremity. Although at times autonomous, the two notions are often co-dependent, and within the work of several key directors identified below, the formal presentation of the film matches the extremity of the subject.

Whilst structuring the following contextualisation of extreme art cinema it is useful to employ some of the traditional methods of European Film studies. Therefore, the section makes use of the authorial approaches familiar to the analysis of art cinema, yet refuses to endorse the isolation that often accompanies the use of this theory. Thus, within the following categorisation, and within the terms of reference used for this thesis, the appearance of extreme transgression cuts through established barriers of assessment and draws together filmmakers often quarantined by nationality, aesthetic style or authorial selectiveness.
Luis Buñuel

It is logical to start with Luis Buñuel, a director deeply ingrained within the traditional schema of artistic auteurism, yet one who also produces transgressive narratives of extremity, most notably *Un Chien Andalou* and *Belle de Jour*. Despite the fact *Un Chien Andalou* predates the era of consideration, it has a vast influence on the extreme art of both this period and contemporary narratives. The main sequence of transgression sees a female eye slit open by a razor. The scene’s depiction of violence, in which the blade cuts the eye unedited, is a decisive reference point for modern extreme art narratives, as unabridged violence has come to characterise the brutality of the canon, and its relationship to exploitation cinema. However, *Un Chien Andalou* is further noteworthy as it remains the most famous example of surrealist cinema (Thiher, 1977, p.38) and endeavoured to challenge the apparatus of film (Talens, 1993, p.xiii). A detailed exploration of the artistic movement would be far too much to undertake within this chapter, however Peter Harcourt provides a brief explanation which highlights its importance extreme art film:

> As a view of life, surrealism begins with the recognition of the disruptive violence at the centre of man and with his essential isolation within the civilized conventions of polite society [. . .] It thrives upon sharp contrasts and unexpected juxtapositions, upon images that acknowledge the unalterable irrationalities of human life (1967, p.2).

With its concentration on both violence and contrasting images, surrealism is an essential artistic mode within a historically expansive extreme art film continuum. *Un Chien Andalou*, with its constant manipulation of the image (Lastra, 2009, p.16), actively rejects the dominant formal modes of mainstream cinema, which is informed by the moral expectations of dominant civilised society. *Un Chien*
Andalou, in accordance with the quote from Harcourt, aimed to establish a new alternative moral system that critiqued the sexual hypocrisy of church and dominant culture in general. Buñuel himself stated that he perceived surrealism as a revolutionary movement that aimed to establish a new social order (1984, pp.107-109).

The sequence of violence also juxtaposes images in a traditionally surrealist manner. Prior to the scene in which the eye is slit, an image of cloud floating across the moon anticipates the movement of the knife. The contrast here between soft and hard, dream and nightmare, leads Allen Thiher to claim that it reflects the destruction of the viewer, as it disrupts the passivity that has been instilled within them throughout their mainstream cinematic experiences (1977, p.39). This removal of the passive audience recalls the prevailing discourses surrounding extreme art cinema mapped in the Introduction, and reinforces the need to recognise extreme art film as an enduring cinematic tradition. Consequently, due to both the use of unedited violence and a formal composition which seeks to challenge the audience, Un Chien Andalou can be approached as a predecessor for the aesthetic of brutality which characterises extreme art film.

Unlike the destruction of the bodily form present within Un Chien Andalou, Belle de Jour presents a crucial example of sexual transgression within early extreme art film. The narrative focuses upon Séverine Serizy/Belle de Jour (Catherine Deneuve), who, bored with the ‘perfection’ of her bourgeois existence, fantasises about sexual dominance and rape before using prostitution as a means to achieve her desires. The most famous sequence of sexual extremity sees Séverine whipped with a riding crop before being abused by her husband and two coachmen. This sequence, which is revealed as Séverine’s fantasy, neatly converges symbolic templates of ‘high’ and
'low’ culture, as the aesthetic representation of wealth; the horse drawn carriage and idyllic country road, becomes the setting of explicit sexual manipulation. This is continued throughout the film, wherein the spaces of bourgeois prosperity are constantly juxtaposed against the brothel in which Séverine becomes Belle de Jour. Consequently, the narrative provides a key example of the subversive nature of art film of this era, as it challenges bourgeois and middle class conceptualisations of marriage and success through the portrayal of explicit sexual fetish. The contestation the dominant social attitude are fundamental to extreme art narratives, and are a constant thematic concern within films of this historical period.

Ingmar Bergman

Within this chapter’s aim to draw art directors out of their previous categorisations and place them within a wider historical tradition, similar approaches to filmic transgression and slippage can be evidenced within the cinema of Ingmar Bergman. Overlooked by many due to his overpowering status within film culture (Blake, 1975, p.30), Bergman’s inclusion within this extreme art canon looks to contest the established ways of categorising the director, and proposes that he can be approached as an auteur who transverses traditional art categories. Bergman’s cinema challenged the boundaries of artistic representation through his attitudes on sex, a notion that has been hinted at within the article *Breaking the Swedish Sex Barrier: Painful Lustfulness in Ingmar Bergman’s The Silence* (Hedling, 2006). Herein Erik Hedling claims *The Silence* (Bergman, 1963) showed casual sex and masturbation for the first time in Sweden (2006, p.17). From this depiction, the film
went on to change the manner in which the Swedish Certification Board censored films:

The deputy head of the Board [. . .] said that the Board had received a new paragraph in their legal instruction three days before the arrival of *The Silence*. This paragraph underlined that the Board could not make cuts if the film was known to be of significant artistic value or could be expected to gain such a reputation (Hedling, 2006, p.22).

Consequently, the film fits the cultural triangulation model, as it is both artistic and exploitative depending on which attribute is highlighted, and remains an authorially motivated yet highly sexual narrative capable of forcing society to reassess the distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture.

In addition to the casual sex present within *The Silence*, *The Virgin Spring*, discussed in Chapter One, is a landmark narrative within extreme art history. The film, an early example of the rape-revenge narrative, centres on the rape of Karin by three rural goat-herders, who unknowingly seek refuge at her parents’ farmhouse. Whilst spending the night, Karin’s father exacts murderous vengeance against the offenders. The rape itself is depicted in inescapable close up, as the goat-herder’s dirt covered face is contrasted against the angelic whiteness of Karin, whilst during the sequence of retribution, Töre kills a minor alongside the other men. Importantly, these transgressions, which owe a debt to the extremity of exploitation cinema, are tightly framed within a broader discussion of Christianity and Paganism (Steene, 1975, p.217), which effectively permits them to be justified within an artistic context rather than appearing as moments of excess. However, regardless of this allegorical potency, the film, and more specifically the rape sequence, was cut in both the US (Steene, 1975, p.219) and the UK (Wood, 1970). This process of censorship altered the meaning of the film (Blake, 1975, p.29), and draws the threads of exploitation and art closer together. The presence of governmental suppression is embedded
within the history of exploitation cinema, and therefore its presence within the cinema of Bergman, whose status is deeply entrenched within art cinema, reveals the fluidity of the canons. Accordingly, *The Virgin Spring* and *The Silence* harbour an internal taste dichotomy between ‘high’ and ‘low’; an identity which defines the extreme art continuum and allows for a re-evaluation of Bergman.

*Roman Polanski*

Buñuel and Bergman therefore use cinematic extremity in comparable ways, and consequently can be located within a singular cinematic continuum which removes their authorial segregation. Another filmmaker that can be seen to have produced art films within a tradition of bodily extremity and misanthropic attitudes toward the dominant classes is Roman Polanski. The study of Polanski’s cinema has been underpinned by perceptions of biographical representation, and therein has been tightly framed within an authorial discourse. Ewa Mazierska notes “rarely are the films he directs or his performances analysed separately from his biography” (2005, p.28). Mazierska suggests this is a symptom of three moments of Polanski’s life: his survival of the Holocaust; the murder of his pregnant wife Sharon Tate by the Manson Family; and his sexual abuse of a 13 year old girl which led to his self-regulated exile from America (2005, pp.29-30). These real life incidents seem inseparable from the cinematic presence of Polanski, with the consensus being that “for most viewers and critics, there was and still is little doubt that Polanski is not only the master of psychological distortions, but also himself a strange and disturbed individual” (Radovic, 2011, p.7). Whilst these scholarly foci should not be ignored, and produce insightful readings of the director’s work, they do segregate him from
other filmmakers, and therein ignore his importance to the extreme art film continuum.

*Repulsion* (Polanski, 1965) fits most comfortably within the patterns of extreme art film. Tarja Laine describes the film as a masterpiece of psychological horror (2011, p.37) which embodies disgust as an aesthetic symbol (2011, p.43). *Repulsion* features the rape of Carol (Catherine Deneuve), and is symptomatic of Polanski’s extreme narratives; as Mazierska summarises; “violence in Polanski's films is directed towards children and women and often takes the form of sexual abuse” (2005, p.34). Whilst important, this again can be framed within the discussions surrounding Polanski’s deeply personal style of filmmaking due to the prevalence of female abuse in his life. However, sexual abuse has been central to both the cinema of Buñuel and Bergman, and therefore, although embedded within a personal history, partakes in the process of slippage and transferal which defines extreme art film. This, due to the fact that the extremity becomes reframed within the prevailing authorial mode, and thus is a composite of auteur status and transgressive violence, accentuates the importance of a cultural mobile conceptualisation of taste and capital.

Moreover, *Repulsion* contains a misanthropic attitude towards society and the alienation it can cause. As Laine notes “the disgust that Carol feels is not merely disgust towards men, but disgust towards the world in general” (2011, p.40). Within the film, Carol becomes entrapped within her apartment, unable to leave due to her inability to connect to the outside world. Again, this can be read within the concept of Polanski’s cinema acting as a biographical embodiment of his feelings, with the idea of entrapped disgust indicative of his experience of estrangement and
confinement. Again, this theme characterised the extreme cinemas of both Buñuel and Bergman, exposing a relationship between the filmmakers and once more proposing the advantages of inserting Polanski within the more encompassing extreme art film logic.

*Michael Powell and Peeping Tom*

Importantly, Polanski’s cinema presents a hybridity which fuses horror themes and the traditional iconography of art cinema. This duality, as noted previously, is fundamental to extreme art cinema, and appears within Michael Powell’s controversial *Peeping Tom*. The film details the obsessive voyeurism and sequential murders of Mark Lewis (Karlheinz Böhm), a camera technician who films the deaths of his victims as an extension of the ritualistic psychological abuse he received as a child. Termed an art-horror masterpiece by Joan Hawkins (2000, p.25), the British text blends horror and art to create a narrative which refuses to fit conformably into any pre-made category, and subsequently conforms to the triangular taste framework discussed throughout this study. This is due to Powell’s refusal to indulge within the excesses of violence and sex, which, as William Johnson notes, he shows without the exposure of naked bodies, dismemberment or ripped flesh (1980, p.2). As such, the film inverts the expectations of the audience, and denies them the pleasures of the horror genre. Here, the film reflects the fluidity of Buñuel, Bergman and Polanski, as it moves between exploitation and art mores whilst simultaneously strengthening this thesis separation of extremity and excess.

Hence, it is the film’s metaphoric meaning, rather than celebration of exploitation, which is pivotal. Although strong phallic imagery is employed (Johnson, 1980, p.2),
it is more interesting to evaluate the allegorical implication of cinema itself within
the narrative. Graham Fuller notes “Peeping Tom indicates Powell's disillusion with
his world, in which films are mass-produced and mass-marketed for undiscerning
audiences” (2010). Subsequently, the film can be read symbolically as portraying the
division of commercial and non-commercial cinema. To extend this reading, Adam
Lowenstein states “Mark is both the powerful producer of images and the powerless
consumer of them, master and slave of the endless process of filming” (2005, p.63).
As such, Peeping Tom is an exploration of the consumption of violent imagery, a
subject that connects the film to the prevailing canon via its similarities to the work
of Michael Haneke and Catherine Breillat.

However, regardless of this allegorical depth Peeping Tom was considered “trash- a
lurid, deviant work from a director who'd shown flashes of vulgarity before” (Fuller,
2010) on its initial release. Though within the current climate the film has achieved a
“masterpiece status while also becoming a canonical text for academics” (Fuller,
2010) and is now valued as one of the towering achievements of British cinema
(Lowenstein, 2005, p.56), it has rarely been explored in relation to other extreme art
narratives due to its numerous generic signifiers. In this regard, placing the film
within the extreme art film canon mapped here allows it to be re-examined within a
history of comparable slippage available across several national industries,
foregrounding its unavoidable relationship to art cinema and its centralisation of the
symbolic.
Finally, this section will analyses Victor Erice’s *The Spirit of the Beehive*, a film which presents notions of fluidity while further exposing the need for allowing discussion of the national to co-exist with other readings. The story of a young girl’s isolation and subsequent escape into an imaginary world, the film was produced towards the end of Francisco Franco’s reign, in a period that Marsha Kinder describes as “soft dictatorship” (1993, p.5). Erice’s narrative has been described as “Spain’s most famous art movie” (Smith, 2007, p.5) and as the “most beautiful film in the history of Spanish cinema” (West, 2006, p.73), while being one of the few Spanish films of the 1960s and 1970s to achieve international recognition (Elena, 2009, p.101). As such, it firmly resides within the category of art cinema, and due to it depicting little onscreen violence or extremities, its inclusion within the canon may seem problematic. However, the film uses certain traits of ‘lowbrow’ cinema, and partakes in the slippage that has defined the cinema of Buñuel, Bergman, Polanski and Powell.

Firstly, it must be recognised that the political structure of Spain, which “at the beginning of the 1950s was a country culturally and politically divorced from the rest of Europe” (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.63) forced its production circumstances to be vastly different to the other territories considered thus far. Consequently, the story of Ana and her struggles with reality, which have been read by many as a criticism of Franco’s reign (Graham, 2007, p.45), had to be subtle so as not to incur any censorship (Edelman, 1998, p.159). The presence of these restrictions is noteworthy as it explains the lack of extreme art film produced within Spain in this era.
Subsequently, the majority of Spanish filmmakers that wished to depict transgressive imagery had to do so in exile.

However, regardless of these strictures, *The Spirit of the Beehive’s* cultural persona and cinematic make-up can still be addressed in relation to the cultural triangulation model due to its reliance on both ‘high’ and ‘low’ motifs. Within Erice’s film, Ana becomes obsessed with the figure of Frankenstein after watching James Whale’s original film, and uses the monster as a route to escape her own reality. Not only does the choosing of Frankenstein provide a neat reference to Franco within the construct of the name, Whale’s narrative also forms the major coordinates of Erice’s film (Darke, 2010, p.156) as Ana searches for the monster in an abandoned sheep-shed, therein interweaving the seemingly disparate sites of ‘high’ cultural auteur cinema and ‘low’ cultural horror film in order to make a politically radical message. As such, in accordance to Andrew Willis’ suggestions that the horror genre allowed directors “space to explore an array of contemporary issues” (2003, p.77), Erice masks the possibly dangerous symbolism. Subsequently, it becomes clear that the director, akin to the others noted here, created a hybrid of art and exploitation in order to make important social commentaries.

Significantly, the aim of this section was to construct both a context for the forthcoming case studies, and expose a cinematic tradition that influences modern extreme narratives. Herein, the importance of Erice’s film is again prevalent. Paul Julian Smith places the film as a predecessor to modern Spanish horror (2010, p.12). The idea that Erice’s film can be considered as a horror narrative is echoed by Graham who claims the film employs the bait-and-switch techniques common to the horror genre (2007, p.45), as Sarah Thomas states the film is a ghost story (2011).
As such, *The Spirit of the Beehive* has completed a circular process, in which it adopted horror cinema in order to make political comments before retrospectively becoming a precursor for certain developments in genre cinema. Therefore, we can come to approach Erice’s film as a narrative of transcendence. Though within its cultural triangulation one would position its status as an art film at the apex, its centralisation of Whale’s *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931), alongside certain narrative conventions that are common within horror film, show it is supported by the discourses of ‘lowbrow’ cinema, and thus make the narrative a multi-faceted cultural artefact.

This hybridity is crucial to the extreme art continuum, and is both relevant to the narratives mapped in this section and aspects of the forthcoming paratextual investigation. Thus, despite the fact that these directors are entrenched within the established semantics of art cinema, and continue to be a presence within authorially driven scholarship, their application of extremity enables them to be placed within an alternative history. This history, which can be extended beyond these seminal filmmakers, can only be truly recognised through an exploration of the exploitation film, which, as noted throughout this study, has continually merged with art film and its principal modes of address, audience critique and paratextual composition.

**Exploitation Film**

Within the Introduction, it was noted that European cinematic study is dominated by a taste bias which seeks to satisfy ‘highbrow’ classification structures. Significantly, the following assessment of landmark exploitation filmmakers will aim to re-examine directors that have been previously ignored within the scope of ‘legitimate’
European cinema. Vital to this reconsideration is the application of the cultural triangulation model. Through this lens, a film can be predominantly exploitation while simultaneously harbouring the subversive attributes of art cinema; just as the art films addressed thus far have retained a status of legitimacy even as they portray images of sexual and violent extremity.

Within consolidating this idea, Joan Hawkins’ use of the term ‘art-horror’ becomes useful (2000). Hawkins, in her extensive study, notes how ‘lowbrow’ exploitation cinema and certain art films (mainly those addressed here as extreme art cinema) seek to directly engage the spectator’s body and thrill, frighten, gross out, arouse the viewer (2000, p.4). This is extended in Hawkins examination of the avant-garde, wherein she exposes the mutual addresses shared across ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures. She claims the avant-garde focused on the breaking of taboos surrounding the depiction of sex and violence and was motivated by a desire to shock the bourgeoisie (Hawkins, 2000, p.117); aspects essential within the filmic modes of exploitation cinema. Recalling the dialogues that rest at the core of contemporary assessment of modern extreme art texts, the desire to shock the passive viewer across taste cultures enables us to more readily accept the cultural triangulation model due to the shared viewing experience of art and exploitation consumers.

This discussion is thoroughly located in what Jeffery Sconces notes is an increasingly articulate culture based around trash and bad films (1995, p.372). This counter-cultural grouping openly attempts to renounce their cultural pedigree in an attempt to distance themselves from the cultural elite (Sconce, 1995, p.377), yet, as established in the Introduction, share their values of authentication through a concentration on knowledge and (sub)cultural capital, and actively elevate the status
of ‘low’ cinema through their sophisticated rhetoric (Sconce, 1995, p.384). These relationships, which build upon the Introduction’s discussions of hybridity and the marketing crossover surveyed in Chapter One, will motivate the forthcoming investigation of exploitation cinema’s relationship to the extreme art canon.

*Italian Exploitation*

Using a geographic schema in order to more obviously address the ‘high’ cultural bias addressed in the Introduction, it is useful to analyse the work of three Italian directors: Mario Bava, Dario Argento, and Lucio Fulci. These filmmakers were key in shaping the exploitation industry, and, whilst operating in different sub-genres, work within the generic template mapped in the Introduction (Ruggero Deodato is also key to this era, and will be explored in detail in Chapter Three).

Largely ignored due to the misrepresentation of his films (Howarth, 2002, p.9), Mario Bava can be seen to have set the tone for many traditions within both his domestic industry - Troy Howarth views him as the founder of the ‘horror all’italiana’ movement (Howarth, 2002, p.9) - and transatlantic exploitation horror narratives. Bava’s *The Girl who Knew too Much* (Bava, 1963) is largely credited as the first Giallo narrative (Needham, 2002), which subsequently became a generic tradition within this period of Italian exploitation. Giallo is both a flexible filmic category (Needham, 2002), and one that features reoccurring tropes, such as violence and sex, and a pre-fixed set of characters including perverts, protagonists controlled by bouts of violence, and brutal psychopaths (McDonagh, 1991, p.15). Importantly, the reach and influence of Giallo is vast, with Jonathan Crane suggesting it has had a global effect on varieties of cinematic violence (2004, p.151).
Bava’s success, as Howarth notes, was due to the marketability of his films (2002, p.9). Working within the horror genre, Bava and his producers were able to use the exploitation formula to produce low budget films that would ensure financial return. However, just as the art filmmakers of this period were utilising violence and sex, Bava was employing artistic and formal experimentations. Here, Andy Willis’ assessment of Spanish horror helps to articulate the canonisation of Bava, as he notes the manner in which the horror genre afforded Spanish directors freedom to direct more personal projects (2003, p.77). While discussing the strictures of dictatorships and their influence over censorial attitudes, Willis idea of a liberal space neatly reflects the independence given to Bava, as under the cover of the exploitation industry the director was able to create transgressive narratives laced with authorial flourishes. Discussed further in Howarth’s expansive The Haunted World of Mario Bava (2002), Bava’s work became defined by this contradiction between the commercial aspirations of the industry he worked within and his position as a serious artist pushing cinema to its fullest potential (Howarth, 2002, p.9). Accordingly, Bava is an essential figure within the broader conceptualisation of extreme art cinema, as his films illustrate the manner in which a film can be predominantly exploitation and yet retain an artistic integrity.

Dario Argento, the most widely celebrated director working within a European exploitation context, shares the internal hybridity of Bava. Argento mainly worked within a Giallo context, where he expanded on the work of Bava to become what Alan Jones calls the maestro of the sub-genre (2001, p.18). This status arises from Argento’s development of the form, whereby he combined the basic narrative structure of Giallo with supernatural elements and a concentration of cinematic style, with Maitland McDonagh noting “the world of Dario Argento is one of twisted
logic, rhapsodic violence, [and] stylised excess” (1991, p.8). Although McDonagh (1991) and Andrew Cooper (2005, p.63) assert that the director is mainly celebrated within the paracinematic community, there is also critical evidence to suggest that he has achieved a sense of official legitimisation afforded few directors of this era.

Indeed, Chris Gallant’s quote illuminates the way Argento can be seen as an exploitation auteur that surpassed the trappings of the particular production context:

Perhaps more than anything else, what seems to invite analysis is the placement of this body of work on an overlap between European art cinema and a genre labelled ‘Exploitation’. These films disrupt what is so often perceived as an inflexible divide between the artistic and the commercial, high art and low art, forcing a surprisingly easy cohesion between the two (2001, p.7).

Here we can observe an association between Argento and the art filmmakers assessed above, as he engages with the artistry of ‘high’ culture despite utilising the violence and corporeality of the exploitation discourse. The dialogue defined his cinema, and often his narratives become secondary to the visual spectacle (Manders, 2010). Here, experimental imagery, highly saturated colours, jarring sound and no-conformal editing techniques would eclipse the progression of the storyline, a mode of cinematic address most often preserved for art cinema auteurs. This convergence, whereby the sexual and violent extremity typical of the exploitation industry is supported by experimental artistic tendencies which disrupt the audiences’ passivity, is fundamental to positioning Argento within the scope of the extreme art film canon.

Lucio Fulci has also reached the status of a Euro-Horror icon (Thonen, 1998, p.56), however, unlike the aforementioned exploitation auteurs, has failed to obtain sustainable legitimisations. As such, his placement within the extreme art film canon sees a reconsideration of his work. As John Thonen notes, his films engendered the most polar of reactions (1998, p.56), with the critical discourse commonly
condemning the extreme gore he employed within his narratives. Excess characterised his Giallo films *Don’t Torture a Duckling* (Fulci, 1972) and *The New York Ripper* (Fulci, 1982); which were, unlike Argento and Bava, less concerned with visual experimentation and more focused on the exhibition of extreme violence.

Fulci was commercially successful, especially with the overtly gory *Zombie Flesh Eaters*. Despite providing a prime example of the set piece based narrative structure which dominates the thematic and aesthetic template of the industry, the film openly attacks the Catholic Church. This subversive attitude, which, in line with Hawkins’ earlier description of the avant-garde, openly seeks to shock the bourgeoisie, enables a relationship to be drawn between Fulci’s cinema and that of the art discourse. Both art cinema and (parts) of Fulci’s cinematic catalogue share a rejectionist stance which seeks to oppose the mainstream, and challenge the hegemony of the church.

Fulci’s *Gates of Hell* trilogy which included *City of the Living Dead* (Fulci, 1980); *The House by the Cemetery* (Fulci, 1981); and *The Beyond* (Fulci, 1981), are critically regarded as his best work, and were constructed around a fusion of Lovecraftian semiotics and extreme violence. Unlike his Giallo films, the *Gates of Hell* trilogy had more emphasis on visual and metaphorical explorations, as the narratives often rejected cathartic closure. Yet these, akin to many critical discourses surrounding exploitation texts of this era, are often ignored, an aspect evidenced within the following quote: “the plot [of *The Beyond*] is anything but concisely organised. Elements are pulled in from many sources, and strung together in a series of set-pieces, involving various degrees of violence and bodily mutilation” (Grant, 2004, p.35). Although Michael Grant negatively notes the hybrid nature of *The Beyond*, and by extension the entire trilogy, the combination of sources, matched with the predominant counter-aesthetic of subpar film stock, acting, direction and
special effects, allows Fulci to be positioned within the extreme art cinema canon. As Sconce notes, it is the systematic distortion of conventional cinematic style by directors who work within the impoverished production conditions typical of exploitation cinema (1995, p.385) that creates cinematic language that although not as refined as art cinema, is as subversive and challenging as the ‘highbrow’, and disavows the mainstream in similar ways. Therefore, the failings of Fulci, in line with the counter-aesthetic mapped in the Introduction, collapses the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cinema through an adoption of a communal language of challenge and confrontation.

What is fundamental within the assessment of these directors is to note the hybridity of the narratives. Whilst producing excessive cinema within a commercially driven industry, the aforementioned filmmakers were still creating films that featured artistic embellishments and flourishes. Consequently, the fluidity between authorial expressivity and violence present within the aforementioned art directors is apparent within the cinema of Bava, Argento and Fulci. Hence the triangular taste structure noted by Betz again accurately explains the movement between cultural sites seen within extreme cinema, as despite the ‘lowbrow’ appeal of these narratives, the subversive content and artistic flourishes demand the viewer retains a level of learnt capital. Again, within this it is important to note that not all Italian exploitation films of this era can be considered extreme art film, and in fact many exists to simply provide pleasure and titillation. However, the filmmakers considered here are examples of a trend of filmmaking which blurred cultural barriers and therefore must be considered within the broader implications of the extreme art film tradition.
French Exploitation

The French exploitation industry of the era was dominated by the soft-core sexploitation film, which, as Cathal Tohill and Pete Tombs note, had a level of sophistication absent within the horror exploitation industry (1994, p.53). Tombs and Tohill go on to claim that this is a symptom of the French attitude to cinema, as liberal censorship laws and a long history of sexual openness in the French culture led to a more accepting stance on sexually explicit material (1994, p.53). The supremacy of the sexploitation industry resulted in a crossover of personnel, as pornography actresses performed in horror narratives (Kalat, 2002); whist directors worked across pornography and horror industries, resulting in a highly sexualised horror product unseen across the rest of Europe.

Within this, two directors - Georges Franju and Jean Rollin – come to the fore. Akin to the discussion above, both Franju and Rollin will be inserted into the extreme art canon and read as pivotal influences on the aesthetic of brutality which defines this thesis’s use of the term. Adopting a chronological approach, the section will begin by assessing Franju, who Lowenstein notes was heavily influenced by surrealism (2005, p.18). Here a correlation between art and exploitation can be evidenced, whereby a revolutionary mode of address, which characterised the work of Buñuel and the broader aspirations of art cinema and its rejection of mainstream dominance, becomes rehoused within the discourses of exploitations cinema. Additionally, Franju was celebrated by both François Truffaut and Jean Luc Godard in *Cahiers du cinema* (Lowenstein, 2005, pp.32-33), again alluding to the hybridity of art and exploitation industries of this period, further justifying the hypothesis that motivates the extreme art canon: the recognition of authorial expressivity regardless of traditional taste distinctions.
The most important of Franju’s texts within the framework of the extreme art canon is *Eyes without a Face*. The film contains an extremely graphic portrayal of surgical procedures which owes a debt to the Théâtre du Grand Guignol, a type of French theatre which centred on gory set-pieces of violence (Lowenstein, 2005, p.46). However the narrative retains an allegorical depth which Lowenstein summarises neatly, claiming “Franju’s refusal in *Eyes Without a Face* to provide any easy, one-to-one index for his allegories of the Occupation and the Holocaust reflects a commitment to engaging history as a complicated force to be struggled with by the audience, rather than spoon-fed to them” (2005, p.43). However, even with this metaphorical symbolism, the films relationship to horror cinema meant it was positioned outside the French New Wave, which was the dominant domestic movement at the time. As a result, *Eyes without a Face*, unlike some of Franju’s earlier films, was not admired by the *Cahiers* critics (Lowenstien, 2005, p.33), and even within the present climate its political potency is questioned (Bowman, 2002). However, as Lowenstein (2005, p.53), Joan Hawkins (2000, p.65) and Reynold Humphries (2002) note, the film has become retrospectively acknowledged alongside *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) and *Peeping Tom* in addition to being a key influence on Pedro Almodóvar’s *The Skin I Live In* (Almodóvar, 2011). Franju’s position on the margins of both exploitation and art cinema, combined with the film’s fusion of allegorical meaning and extreme violence makes him a fundamental director within the conception of extreme art cinema, encapsulated here by Tohill and Tombs:

*Eyes without a Face* was a widely seen and influential film [. . .] some only exploited its more obvious and easily borrowed elements. But there were others who saw [. . .] renewed possibilities for their own excursions into the murky world of European horror (1994, p.23).
Rollin can be seen as a director influenced by Franju, and using Tombs’ and Tohill’s breakdown, used the horror genre as a template to explore personal projects and ideas (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.143) and infused his films with allegorical depth, resulting in Tim Lucas’ assertion that he is “the finest French genre poet of his generation” (2011, p.14). Despite this acclaim, Rollin's films have been unavailable and largely unseen while critical discussion has been minimal (Cherry, 2002). This is due to his career being unlike that of the Italian directors, who were able to move between genres more freely and thus gain more coverage, and the deeply personal motivations of his work. Rollin’s narratives often had little heed of their commercial prospects (Kalat, 2002), and illustrates how within both art and exploitation industries personal vision and authorial expressivity can thrive.

Despite finding commercial success with the *Grapes of Death* (Rollin, 1978) (Black, 2002), a narrative recognised as the “first French horror movie to use extensive gore effects” (Husle & Lerman, 2002, p.19), his personal approach made his first feature, *The Rape of the Vampire* (Rollin, 1968) a financial failure (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, pp. 135-136). His use of the horror genre as a way to make authorially motivated narratives further defined the audiences reaction to *Fascination* (Rollin, 1979), which while being accepted as the most accessible film of Jean Rollin's sex-vampire cycle, still alienated parts of the audience due to the combination of art and horror (Cherry, 2002). However, this suggests a misinterpretation of the narrative, and the limitations of reading it purely as a horror text. Due to the artistic experimentations that litter the film, it is far more fruitful to address it, and other parts of Rollin’s filmography, within the parameters outlined in this thesis, and recognise it as an art-horror hybrid which belongs to the broader extreme art film canon. In so doing, the narrative’s fusion of artistic flourishes and violence does not estrange the audience,
but furthers the intersection between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture prevalent during this era.

As such, akin to their Italian peers, Franju and Rollin made low budget cinema which aimed to balance a personally motivated authorial vision and the commercial expectations of the genre. It is the presence of personal motives that makes them vital in recognising fluidity between art and exploitation, artistry and violence. In a more general sense, these French and Italian exploitation auteurs are pivotal to exposing a historical tradition of extreme art cinema which challenges the prevailing scholarly approaches mapped in this study’s Introduction.

*Spanish, British and German Exploitation: Political and Censorial Struggles*

Spain, Germany and Britain, due to the dominance of the Italian industry and the freedoms of the France cinematic climate, are not as prominent within these discourses. As mentioned, Spain was a country in transition. Dominated by the regime of Franco, the film industry, in the most part, existed under strict censorship. Even though the industry was doing well through a series of co-productions (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.63), the Spanish audience became aware of the transgressive films available elsewhere within Europe. Cinematic ‘Spanish weeks’, which took place on the country’s border, centred around the exhibition of forbidden French films for a Spanish audience and became hugely popular as they allowed previously sheltered audiences to consume transgressive cinema (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.64).

However, from 1977-1982, Spain became more liberal than many other European countries. During this time the country was the only Western state where potentially
offensive or pornographic products were not automatically condemned to the ghetto of ‘X’ classification, with the ‘S’ rating allowing the exhibition of transgressive images (Kowalsky, 2004, p191). As Antonio Reboll and Andy Willis state, the comedy and horror films that dominated the 1960s and early 1970s became precursors to ‘cine de destape’ (nudity films) that arrived with the end of the dictatorship (2004, p13). However, while freedom existed during this era, the majority of Spanish exploitation was still made in exile (Willis, 2012, p.124). The primary auteur within this framework of Spanish exploitation is Jess Franco, who, through his failure to conform to the standardised norms of cinematic production; subversive portrayal of the church and fascism, and use of violent and sexual extremity, is a crucial extreme art film director. Franco will be considered in far greater detail within Chapter Four when a paratextual exploration *Isla the Wicked Warden* will take place.

Akin to Spain, exploitation cinema within a German context was affected by the political structure of the country, but also the dominance of television (Tohill & Tombs, 1994 p.46). However, a certain type of exploitation cinema prevailed. Although German cinema had a strong heritage of horror cinema in the 1920s, in the late sixties and seventies it become dwarfed by sexual enlightenment narratives to such an extent that many middle class people stopped going to the cinema (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.45). Tohill and Tombs note the prevailing tropes of the series, stating the narratives included a short sequence of sexual titillation intercut with real life interviews (1994, p.44). This sub-branch was nothing new within Germany; however producer Wolf C. Hartwig revived the genre and exploited it to create a series of similar films framed within a loose premise of education (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.44). The sexual enlightenment film dominated German exploitation for
several years before, akin to the rest of Europe, the proliferation and legislation of hard-core pornography made soft-core sexploitation a redundant and less commercial form of transgression.

Finally, British exploitation was not nearly as prolific as it was elsewhere across Europe. Within this era, Hammer Horror dominated horror production, and its mainstream appeal quelled the production of British exploitation due to the populist propagation of transgressive material. Additionally, as noted in David Huxley’s chapter *Depressing, Degrading: The Reception of the European Horror Film in Britain 1957-68* (2012), strict censorship, governed by the BBFC, “rather simplistically [. . .] assumed that as mere horror films these products could not possibly be ‘art’ and therefore could be censored at will” (Huxley, 2012, p.51). As such, exploitation cinema was unable to complete with the mainstreaming of transgression present within Hammer or the strictness of the censors. However, the presence of austere censorship within this era allows us to recognise the importance of exploring a British market context, which has often suppressed the distribution and exhibition of extreme cinema. This will allow the paratextual case studies to simultaneously explore changing censorial attitudes and consumption patterns present within the country.

*American Exploitation: Waves of Influence*

It would be wrong to assume that American and European exploitation occurs in impenetrable cinematic vacuums, and consequently a survey of American exploitation is vital to creating an expansive historical context for European extremity. To comprehend this it is useful to look at Dudley Andrew’s idea of waves
of influence. Andrew states that waves of influence roll through adjacent cultures, which in turn promotes future waves (2006, pp.21-22). Citing the French New Wave as the prime example, Andrew notes how the movement went on to affect various countries’ cinematic output, but first owed much to the cinema of Hollywood (2006, p.22). Consequently, American exploitation can be approached as one such wave, which both drew influence from and motivated European extreme cinema, and thus created a circular motion of stimulus which temporarily collapses national borders are.

Firstly, a brief evaluation of American exploitation cinema allows us to contextualise it as transnational cinema of influence. American exploitation of this era went through a series of transformations, influenced both by changing attitudes toward extremity following the mainstream success of *Psycho* (Worland, 2007, p.87) and societal upheaval. This has been recognised by the work of horror historians Andrew Tudor (1989, pp.48-77), Winston Wheeler Dixon (2010), and Rick Worland (2007, pp.76-117), and is summarised efficiently here by Dixon: “the future of horror was violence, cruelty, and abundant quantities of gore. Nothing less would suffice to shock a generation that had watched the Vietnam War unfold nightly on television” (2010, p.122). It is crucial to note that within this period, most notably the 1970s, exploitation cinema became inseparable from the horror genre. As such, there is a crossover of terms; however they denote the same aesthetic, thematic, production and marketing concerns, and neatly relate to the generic iconographies outlined in the Introduction.

Russ Meyer, best known for his ‘nudie cutie’ narratives, is crucial to the notions of transnational waves. Meyer’s cinema is accredited with introducing nudity to the mainstream (Briggs & Meyer, 2005, p.22), however, his films derived from a
commercial need to create simplistic visions of sexuality following the proliferation of European extreme art narratives within the American market. Here, the circular notion of influence is clear, as Meyer’s work was born out of the popularity of European transgression. Soon, akin to developments within Europe, interest began to wane in ‘nudie cuties’. Accordingly, businessman turned director Herschell Gordon Lewis went on to create violent exploitation cinema that he called ‘gore films’. As Dixon states, Lewis’s style of violent cinema “paved the way for many of the most lucrative franchises of the 1970s through the present era, films in which only violence matters” (2010, p.125). Lewis’ films popularised the corporal extremity of Fulci and Ruggero Deodato (who will be addressed in detail in Chapter Three), and therefore partook in this nomadic influence.

Yet the most prevalent example of this globular influence is found within Wes Craven’s The Last House on the Left. Similar to the status befitting European exploitation filmmakers, Craven has achieved a level of legitimisation, evident by the moniker “Horror film Godfather” (Rome, 2001, p.29). The Last House on the Left is a canonical example of American exploitation and was produced within “years of unprecedented expansion and consolidation” (Tudor, 1989, p.56). Often seen as a cinematic representation of the real life Manson murders (Worland, 2007, p.99), The Last House on the Left focused on extreme violence above all other narrative aspects, just as Lewis had in the previous decade. However Craven’s film was a remake of Bergman’s The Virgin Spring. Craven replaced Bergman’s concerns of the rural with a fear of the urban (Somer, 2009, p.18), and elected to base his debut feature on Bergman’s film as the original depicted the inhumanity of the human race (Bond, 2006, p.16). Although these American directors, for the purposes of this thesis and its aim to address both the perceived Franco-centralism of modern
extreme scholarships and the critical taste bias present within European Film study, exist outside the extreme art canon, their presence is felt due to the manner in which cinematic trends transcend geographic borders. This notion of influential waves continues within the coming decades, as American and European forms of extremity continue to inform and impact cinematic transgression as a whole, and will be addressed in more detail in this study’s Conclusion.

**Conclusion**

In summary, fundamental trends and cinematic formulas can be found during this era of production. As has been suggested throughout this chapter, parts of art and exploitation cinematic culture can be framed within the tradition that defines this thesis’s conceptualisation of extreme art cinema. Particular narratives by the likes of Buñuel, Bergman, Polanski, Powell and Erice can be seen as hybrid narratives which despite being strictly enclosed within the contexts of art cinema, display transgressive tendencies which borrow from and share a relationship to ‘lowbrow’ culture. Consequently, these art narratives are supported and moored within the discourse of exploitation, and therefore revise the barriers between the cultural sites. The latter stages of this chapter examines this same boundary, and provides more evidence that the distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ are malleable. The cinema of Bava, Argento, Fulci, Franju and Rollin exposed the artistry of certain exploitation narratives, and the prominence of a (deliberate or inadvertent) counter-aesthetic which disrupted audience passivity in a similar manner to that of the art filmmakers. Through the mapping of these traits, the filmmakers where reintegrated into their national linage, and seen as a part of a broader rejectionist stance against mainstream
cinema. Again, these findings were couched within a recognition of their hybridised nature, and thus were read as cultural mobile narrative which, when positioned within the overarching framework of extreme art cinema, can transcend specific cultural limitations.

Importantly, this chapter has not attempted to suggest that there is a direct link between these films and their filmmakers, but propose that they are part of an encompassing filmic convention that can exceed cultural and geographic margins. These findings are vital to constructing a historically expansive extreme art scope, and serve as a context for the forthcoming case studies. However, the current consumption climate is far removed from this particular historical, political and cultural framework. Therefore, with the release on to DVD coming decades later, this study will assess the rebranding of the films, and how they are tailored to fit into a later cinematic and consumption culture. Thus, the following case studies, which originate from this early era of extreme art film, are an investigation into how the films are recycled, repaired and repackaged.
Chapter Three

*Weekend* and *Cannibal Holocaust*

This initial case study, which sees the implementation of the paratextual methodology discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One, investigates Jean Luc Godard’s *Weekend* and Ruggero Deodato’s *Cannibal Holocaust*. These narratives were, and remain, emblematic of the traditions outlined in the previous chapters, and circulate as canonical examples of the art and exploitation cinematic tradition. Conventional scholarship has placed these texts within opposing cultural spaces, firmly locating them within the constraints of ‘high’ (*Weekend*) and ‘low’ (*Cannibal Holocaust*). However, their comparison here will explore both narratives’ treatment of the body, whereby notions of slippage, hybridity and fluidity will be exposed and placed within the historical trajectory mapped in prior chapters.

Although the status of both *Weekend* and *Cannibal Holocaust* has led to numerous critical interactions, little space has been given to the exploration of either film’s presence as tangible items of commerce. As suggested in Chapter One, the DVD industry’s influence upon the filmic product is vast, and consequently an understanding of how paratextual zones project meaning is pivotal to comprehending the role of film in contemporary culture. Hence, the following investigation will explore the films’ DVD mediations to determine the paratextual formation of each text dictates the cultural sites the films inhabit. This will allow for an comprehension of how perceptions of directors and films change through the remediation of historical products, whilst extending the industrial slippage discussed by the likes of Mark Betz (2003), Kevin Heffernan (2004) and Joan Hawkins (2000).
Jean Luc Godard and Weekend

When assessing the career of Jean Luc Godard, links to the French New Wave are unavoidable, due to both the status of the movement, and the director’s role within it (Marie, 2003, p.1). As can be investigated elsewhere in more detailed accounts (examples of which include The French New Wave: An Artistic School, [Marie, 2003], French Cinema: The A-Z Guide to the "New Wave" [Durgnat, 1963], Reading the French New Wave: Critics, Writers and Art Cinema in France [Ostrowska, 2008[, A History of the French New Wave Cinema [Neupert, 2002]) the French New Wave was typified by several chief formal determinants which differentiated the films from the mainstream norm. This rejectionist stance resulted in more experimental filmic forms, subsequently correlating with the formal extremity centralised within the prevailing extreme art taxonomy used within this work. This concentration on a marginal aesthetic, which actively foregrounded and made visible the apparatus of cinema, makes the movement a crucial landmark within the conceptualisation of a historically augmented extreme art tradition.

Godard is considered by most within scholarly discourse as an indispensable component of art cinema. This ‘high’ cultural legitimisation is confirmed within the writing of David Nicholls, who introduces the term “Godardinism” (1979, p.22); an umbrella term used to discuss his aesthetic modes and their application throughout art discourse. The term ‘Godardinism’ works within the parameters of authorial branding mapped previously; a brand identity which operates extra-textually to an individual film, yet simultaneously homogenises a cinematic output under a singular understandings.
Weekend, which has retrospectively been seen as Godard’s move into a more radical type of filmmaking (Morrey, 2005, p.71) and social critique (Loshitzky, 1995, p.145), can be read as a synecdoche for his cinematic output due to the combination of experimentation and allegory. The narrative follows the bourgeois Durands (played by Jean Yanne and Mireille Darc) as they travel across the French countryside in order to murder their respective parents and claim a lucrative inheritance. Throughout their journey, they encounter countless dead bodies on the road, non-fictional and fictional historical characters and a band of hippie revolutionaries. The road trip template, in this example, allows Godard to place his characters in a series of circumstances which test their morality, therein creating a narrative which critiques the ideology of consumerism and correlates with the subversive qualities which characterise the extreme art continuum.

In keeping with the formal experimentation that dominated Godard’s career prior to Weekend, Jan Dawson finds a relationship between form and content (1968), an aspect which is also the focus of Brian Henderson’s article Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style (1970-1971). During Weekend, narrative is at times utterly abandoned in favour of historical digressions or political statements (Westbrook, 2005, p.135), which has led certain scholars to indicate that the film pushed the cinematic medium to its limits (Macbean, 1968-1969, p.35). This formal technique of deliberately dismantling orthodox filmic conventions to create a challenging mode of cinematic address further exposes Weekend importance to the concept of extreme art film, and suggests its comfort within the broader history of the canon.

Importantly the narrative also illustrates a transgressive portrayal of the body which further consigns its appropriation into the extreme art canon. Taking Corrine Durand’s story of sexual fetish and act of cannibalism during the narrative climax as
an example of cross-cultural slippage, the following section will draw attention to
the manner in which Weekend co-opts and reframes traditions of exploitation
cinema. Corrine Durand’s anecdotal tale of her involvement within a bizarre orgy is
a decisive moment of extreme art transgression. Although rejecting eroticism due to
the darkness of the sequence (Morrey, 2005, p.74), the scene blends sexual
explicitness with allegorical depth, thus collapsing the cultural sites of ‘high’ and
‘low’. The active de-sexualisation of Mireille Darc, wherein only her silhouette is
visible, forces the audience to question their fascination with the actresses (Loshzky,
1995, p.146), an inversion tactic which allows the scene to challenges the audience’s
intellect rather than providing the body with simulation. This affords the sequence an
artistic quality (Krzywinska. 2006, p.227), while still portraying semi-nudity and
aural extremity.

Further examples of crossover and inversion can be evidenced during the sequences
in which Corrine is raped, the multiple bloodied corpses encountered by the couple
and the sequence of genuine animal slaughter. In all these examples, the traditional
identification structures of exploitation cinema are blocked, as the rape is obscured
by scenery, the dead bodies become interchangeable with the smashed automobiles,
and the unsimulated slaughter of animals is heavily allegorised within a political
symbolism. Yet most obvious moment of cultural hybridity is the climactic scene of
cannibalism, wherein a trope entrenched within the mores of exploitation cinema
penetrates the ‘high’ cultural space. As Corrine converses with her hippie captor, she
eats a piece of meat which is said to be a mixture of animal and her deceased
husband. Through the consumption of Roland Durand, she becomes the ultimate
consumer; being a cannibal not only in the sense of eating human flesh, but also the
bourgeois life she had previously led. Herein, one can find the allegorical
connotations that are central to the process of re-framing apparent throughout the extreme art canon, as the cinematically exploitative act of cannibalism is given the weight of political activism.

Therefore, *Weekend*, through the depiction of sex, rape, violence and cannibalism, employs exploitation traits within a definably art film tradition, partaking in the process of slippage that defines the extreme art film canon. Thus, this thesis wishes to affirm that *Weekend*, and by extension Godard, can be read as a key part of the extreme art canon mapped in Chapter Two. With this reading of the film in place, the latter part of this chapter will explore whether *Weekend*’s paratextual presentation reflects the duality of the narrative, exploring which areas of the film’s identity are promoted by the distributors within the marketing process.

**Ruggero Deodato and Cannibal Holocaust**

Ruggero Deodato’s *Cannibal Holocaust* serves as a suitable counterpoint to Godard’s narrative, as it is widely regard as one of the most violent exploitation films released. The narrative details Prof. Harold Monroe’s search for a lost group of documentary filmmakers. Monroe discovers the crew have been killed by an indigenous jungle tribe, but is able to recover the footage they filmed during their expedition. The narrative thereafter consists of viewing their documentary *Green Inferno*. The footage, presented as an authentic document, illustrates how the group of young filmmakers constructed several events to gain more sensationalist footage, including the burning of the native’s huts, raping female tribeswomen, encouraging brutal abortions and slaughtering animals.
Within this split narrative structure the film employs the now common premise of ‘found footage’, an aesthetic and thematic construct that Julian Petley neatly summarises:

The 'found' footage itself is an absolute compendium of visual devices which one associates with the documentary mode [. . .] shaky, hand-held camerawork, accidental compositions, crash zooms, blurred images, lens flare, inaudible or intermittent sound, direct address to camera, scratches and lab marks on the print (2005, p.178).

Crucially, this reality was enhanced by the presence of the actual slaughter of several animals, whose indexical bodies were used to break through layers of fictional meaning (van Ooijen, 2011, p.10). These aesthetic and thematic choices, due to their implications of reality, made the film a target for censorship. Within Britain the film became embroiled within the ‘video nasty’ scandal, which Johnny Walker notes reached its apex in the 1980s and early 1990s (2011, p.116). Consequently, *Cannibal Holocaust* became a buzzword for exploitation extremity, and therein it is impossible to detach it from the processes of filmic legalisation. Subsequently, the title *Cannibal Holocaust* carries a vast set of cultural implications based around extreme violence, marginalisation, controversy, exclusivity, legality, illegitimacy and disgust, a set of meanings which cast it within the environs of ‘low’ culture.

Clearly, this cultural baggage has affected the film’s surrounding critical climate. Winston Wheeler Dixon’s statement, in which he claims that the film is “inherently inhumane and senselessly cruel” (2010, p.138) can be approached as a singular instance of a much larger scholarly reading whereby the film’s violence is condemned and demonised. Moreover, the narrative, due to its jungle setting, has been accused of containing colonial undertones (Jauregui, 2004) and mirroring the troubling views of Mondo cinema. However, the film’s sophisticated use of realism, which borrows heavily from the traditions of the Italian Neo-realists, has resulted in
it being celebrated for making profound statements about sensationalist journalistic violence (Morgan, 2006, p.557). Here, the violence of the fictional crew becomes a metaphor for the societies increasing obsession which mediated extremity, a concern which defines the work of filmmakers such as Michael Haneke and Pier Paulo Pasolini. Consequently, *Cannibal Holocaust* exists in conflict, wherein it “manages to both condemn and exploit the grossest excesses of violence” (Morgan, 2006, p.561). Yet, in this thesis, akin to the exploitation texts outlined in Chapter Two, the film will be read within the framework of extreme art cinema, whereby its fusion of fiction and reality creates a challenging cinematic experience which aims to disrupt the viewer’s passivity and question their consumption of violent imagery.

In order to strengthen this claim and expose the similarities present in the narratives, this section will assess *Cannibal Holocaust* in relation to the transgressions apparent within *Weekend*. As noted, the eroticism within *Weekend* was obscured in order to question the viewer’s objectification of the female form, grounding the depiction of sex within intellectual engagement. Within *Cannibal Holocaust*, there are numerous images of the naked body, illustrating an aesthetic difference between exploitation and art cinema. However, it is wrong to assume that the depiction of nudity within Deodato’s narrative simply seeks to provide sexual stimulation. The majority of nude images reflect the colonial representations of island natives, which work in conjunction with the realist register to present indexical symbols of reality. Alongside these images are several sequences of rape, which are compliant to the traditional trajectory of exploitation cinema due to their brutality. However, the rapes illustrate a desexualisation of the female body akin to that present within *Weekend*. The female form is concealed by certain aesthetic choices inherent to the ‘found footage’ narrative mode, while if we adopt the allegory of western savagery, the
scenes become sanctioned by an active political message. Therein the scenes, despite being abhorrent, transcend the remit of titillation and engage the audience’s intellect in a similar manner to those prevalent in Godard’s narrative.

Associations can be again drawn within the use of cannibalism. Whereas the cannibalism within Deodato’s film is more of a spectacle, both within the frame and through its correspondence to generic expectations, it still suggests notions of capitalist consumption. Monroe voyeuristically watches the eroticised other and their indigenous practices, and, akin to Corrine Durand, consumes the human meat of the lost documentarians. Consequently, Monroe’s cannibalism operates as an act of ultimate consumption akin to that of Mrs Durand, as he eats the film’s most obvious consumers; the crew of *Green Inferno*.

Therefore, rather than merely approach *Cannibal Holocaust* as a sensationalist piece of filmmaking; a certain allegorical message surrounding the dangers of violent imagery and the fragility to truth motivates the images. Consequently, as proposed above, it is helpful to approach the film as an artistically relevant exploitation film, which uses visceral images in servitude of a cultural message. This reading was supported by Julian Petley during an interview I conducted with him in January 2013: “in a way *Cannibal Holocaust* is a kind of art movie, it does so many things art movies do; it’s very self-reflective. If it wasn’t for the nature of the subject […] I think people would have taken it rather more seriously” (personal communication, January 21, 2013). Hence, the following analysis of the film’s presence on DVD will explore whether this artistic validity is promoted, or whether the UK distributor, Shameless Screen Entertainment, opted to trade off the film’s pre-existing reputation as an exploitive cultural artefact.
Marketing and Paratextual Identities

Through the use of a communal register, in which formal experimentations are matched by depictions of the sexualised and violently deconstructed bodies, it is clear *Weekend* and *Cannibal Holocaust* blur the distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and partake in the history of extreme art cinema surveyed in Chapter Two. With this sense of convergence in place, an exploration of both films’ paratextual presence will expose which readings of the films are exploited by the distributors, and how this affects their canonisation. In order to research the paratextual presence of the films, detailed primary analysis of the DVD covers and extra features will be undertaken. The selected DVDs represent the films’ newest mediations, and are therefore the most recently circulating images of the film within the consumer sphere. This exploration will be underpinned by an application of Betz’s notion of cultural triangulation, whereby a film can be multi-taste, and defined by both ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural signifiers.

**Weekend: DVD Aesthetic, Marketing and Paratextual Identity**

*Weekend* was released on the 28th February 2005 by Artificial Eye (Godard, 1967b). Before assessing the paratext itself, it is essential to investigate the distributor, as they retain a cultural trace that influences the film’s narrative image and paratextual reading. Artificial Eye distributes the filmic works of established art cinema auteurs such as Reiner Werner Fassbinder, Michael Haneke and Krzysztof Kieslowski, and releases seminal art films such as *Solaris* (Tarkovsky, 1972), *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days* (Mungiu, 2007), and *Russian Ark* (Sokurov, 2002). Following the closure of Tartan Video in 2008, Artificial Eye exists as Britain’s prevailing art film distributor.
Although there are other art distribution companies, such as BFI Distribution and Eureka Masters of Cinema, their catalogues orbit around the uncovering of historical masterpieces and heritage cinema, allowing Artificial Eye to obtain and distribute the majority of contemporary European art cinema.

As a result of this supremacy, Artificial Eye is able to preserve a ‘high’ cultural status. This is maintained by a constantly self-updating process of legitimisation, as the art films released under their banner aid the cultural understanding of Artificial Eye as a proprietor of worthy cinema while any title carrying its branding instantly obtains a level of art film credence due to the company’s pre-circulating identity. This circular process of capital exchange and bestowal correlates neatly to the theory of trace outlined in Chapter One, as the memory of Artificial Eye’s previous releases, though not present, are indicated through certain visual signifiers and thus graft a pre-established level of cultural recognition onto the new product.

Fundamental to the construction of a brand identity, and this bestowal of pre-establish validity, is the uniform presentation of their design aesthetic. This uniformity is repeatedly reproduced throughout their commissioned paratexts, creating a link between their identity and the films they release. Therefore, the capital of the film, accumulated through the notions of authorial, national and critical legitimisation becomes grafted to the Artificial Eye brand image. Within this framework, the logo and cover design employed by the company becomes a generic signifier of prestige, ultimately serving an essential commercial purpose. There are two archetypal design aesthetics employed by Artificial Eye which work within this framework of recognition that will hereafter be referred to as the traditional and the contemporary (see figure 1 [p.114] and figure 2 [p.115]). The traditional design
comprises of a horizontally split cover. The top half is filled by a relevant film still, and features a vertical dark green strip containing the Artificial Eye logo. The bottom half is grey, and is filled with the film’s title, presented in a uniform typeface in large white letters; the director’s name, again in white typography but smaller and framed within a red rectangular box; a quote from a publication which carries its own ‘high’ brow association to add critical legitimacy to the release; and any additional information regarding awards and festival prestige. With a lack of images to generate a generic reading, the conceptualisation of the narrative image is manifested though other channels. The size of the lettering used to construct the title suggests that Artificial Eye expects their demographic to hold a prior knowledge of the film while the framing of the director’s name reinforces the importance of auteur branding within the company’s marketing approaches.

Figure 1: An example of the Artificial Eye traditional design. DVD Artwork (Haneke, 2001b).
The contemporary design, unsurprisingly used on modern releases, is less uniform in its presentation, and uses marketing attributes familiar in mainstream cinema. The spine detail is still present; suggesting that these new releases would comfortably fit into an existing collection without disrupting the library’s composition, yet the body of the cover is different. The sleeve is constructed around a montage of relevant images or features a reproduction of the film’s poster, as the uniform typeface is replaced by an individualised typography. Hence, the cover adopts a pre-established narrative image, allowing the DVD release to exploit a trace manifested through prior exposure. Furthermore, the award credentials are more sporadically positioned throughout the cover, sharing space alongside actors’ names, multiple quotes and taglines. These traditional features rely upon familiarity, and mirror the practices of the mainstream whilst foregoing the uniformity that dictated the company’s previous marketing approach. This shift in cultural branding implies a mainstreaming of the
Artificial Eye brand, essentially diluting the ‘high’ cultural capital that is related to the pleasure of exclusivity. This would be compliant with the demands of the DVD market, as 800 DVDs are released in the UK every month (Davis, 2008, p.51), making mass appeal essential to a company’s success.

*The Cover*

The cover that adorns the 2005 release of *Weekend* provides an intriguing case study in relation to the traditional and contemporary cover designs described above, while supplying an entrance point to this thesis’s discussion of paratextual convergence. The cover is black, with the graphic motif “WEEKEND” repeated in a staggered pattern across the top half of the sleeve (see figure 3 [p.117]) (Godard, 1967b). The bottom half contains Godard’s name and a quotation from the film journal *Time Out*. Although this is not an archetypal traditional design due to the bottom half being black rather than grey, in accordance to its release date and overall composition, which still relies on a horizontal split, it can be approached as a traditionalist design.
The repetition of the “WEEKEND” motif not only imitates the inter-titles within the film, but holds a significant role in influencing the understanding of the paratextual artefact. Firstly, the word, although repeated 24 times in full, is individually smaller than Godard’s name. The large “Jean-Luc Godard” heading dominates the bottom of the sleeve, being as long as a whole line of repeated “WEEKENDs” while using larger letters (the higher case letters with ‘Jean-Luc Godard’ measuring 1.4cm while the lower case letters are 1cm high, contrasting against the letters within the “WEEKEND” motif which are 0.7cm high) (Godard, 1967b). Subsequently Godard’s name overpowers the cover, coding the film and the paratextual product under his established brand identity. The size also relates to the status of Godard in a more general sense, as the size of an author’s name on a cover relates to their cultural reputation (Genette, 1997, pp.38-39). This correlates neatly with the branding of the auteur as discussed in Chapter One, whilst making it clear that
Artificial Eye is exploiting the cultural image of Godard to place *Weekend* within the scholarly framework of auteur theory.

The “WEEKEND” motif is also significant due to its colour palette. The words are presented in Le Tricolour, the national colours of France, and subsequently connote a national reading. French film culture retains an identity as a producer of ‘high’ cultural cinema within non-domestic markets. As such, the French colour palette implies an artistic heritage, and carries a set of meanings and connotations into the commercial sphere. This is usefully expanded within the work of both Martin Barker and Daniel Hickin. Hickin claims that French identity harbours preconceptions and stereotypes regarding levels of intellectualism (2011, p.125) as Barker states “‘Frenchness’ could mean the tradition of difficult, art-house cinema, with overtones for some people of pretentiousness. But for others it signified seriousness, and more than anything a refuge from Hollywood formula films” (2011, p.110). These interpretations, alongside the prominence of an authorial brand and the pre-existing status of the distributor, position the film within the confines of ‘high’ culture, where it circulates as a traditional art text.

Simultaneously however, the presentation of the French national colours is indicative of the country’s reputation as a producer of scandalous imagery and sexual explicitness, as Artificial Eye can be seen to use French identity as a shortcut to signify a certain type of transgression. In the current cinematic climate, French film culture has become intrinsically linked to cultural perceptions of cinematic extremity. French art filmmakers such as Gaspar Noé, Catherine Breillat and Bruno Dumont have, as has been claimed, been placed in Franco-centric movements such as the “New French Extremity” (Quandt, 2004, p.127), “cinema du corps” (Palmer,
2011, p.57) and “French Extreme” (Beugnet, Ezra, 2010, p.33). Furthermore, generically excessive narratives such as *Switchblade Romance* (Aja, 2003) and *Inside* (Bustillo & Maury, 2007), have become infamous for depicting gory visions of bodily destruction. As such, even though Godard’s film pre-dates these associations, the release in 2005 comes at the height of their production, and thus the film collects, borrows and represents trace memories that were not available during its initial release through its latter remediation.

The impact of modification is further prevalent within the description and quotations on the reverse of the sleeve. The description of the film opens with the statement “one of the world’s most influential filmmakers and a leading figure of the Nouvelle Vague movement of the 60s, Jean-Luc Godard’s works have transformed the face of cinema” (Godard, 1967b). This opening declaration establishes Godard as an auteur and commercial brand whilst bestowing further capital onto the director, and can be instigated confidently as a retrospective comment. This authorial validation is then used to confirm the importance of *Weekend*: “[*Weekend*] remains one of the most legendary, audacious and acclaimed films of his distinguished career” (Godard, 1967b). Again relying upon a retroactive look at the narrative, and through the reliance on terminology that alludes to previous legitimisation (‘acclaimed’, ‘legendary’, ‘influential’ and ‘distinguished’), these opening declarations promote the film’s ‘high’ cultural credentials and contemporises the films importance.

However, the rear of the cover also supports the identity of the scandalous other. Within the film’s blurb, the narrative is described as a “journey fraught with violent and dangerous encounters: rape[s], murder[s], pillage[s] and even cannibalism” (Godard, 1967b). This small list selects the most sensationalist, and therein
exploitative moments within the film’s narrative, isolating them from their context and allegorical meanings while exaggerating their prominence. Consequently, they operate as a commercially generated dare, concurrent to the dictum of ballyhoo and the circus barker. This becomes more obvious when we compare this list to the ones employed during the marketing of exploitation cinema. The following quote, taken from the article “They don’t call ’em exploitation movies for nothing!”: Joe Bob Briggs and the Critical Commentary on I Spit on Your Grave (Fidler, 2009), which in itself is a paratextual study of Joe Bob Briggs’ commentary of seminal exploitation narrative I Spit on Your Grave (Zarchi, 1978), neatly illustrates the manner in which the exploitation genre advertises through sensationalist lists:

Briggs then reads the original copy from the poster [. . .] ‘This woman has just cut, chopped broken and burned five men beyond recognition... and no jury in American would convict her’ [. . .] Briggs adds with glee, ‘But they don’t call ‘em exploitation movies for nothing; do they?’ These comments demonstrate Briggs’ delight in the details and trappings of the exploitation genre; in the way a film like I Spit On Your Grave is sold to an audience, emphasising the violence and drama (Fidler, 2009, pp.44-45).

Hence, Weekend’s relationship to extremity is amplified, re-coding it as a series of digestible, exploitative incidents rather than mapping its complicated social message.

This list-based marketing technique is supported by one of the quotations present on the jacket. Although the other statements from The New York Times and The Observer foreground the film’s art house credence (“a fantastic film…must be seen for its power, ambition, humour and scenes of really astonishing beauty” [Godard, 1967b] and “thought-provoking and ground-breaking”[Godard, 1967b]), the quotation accredited to Variety sustains the alternative reading of the film and its relationship to the transgressive identity of exploitation cinema. The quotation reads “disturbing, funny, witty and controversial” (Godard, 1967b). Crucial within this list
is the appropriation of the terms ‘disturbing’ and ‘controversial’, which uphold the film’s exclusiveness, trading off the currency of disgust and marginality rather than artistic authentication.

Consequently, the cover drifts between an endorsement of Godard and French art heritage and a promotion of hyperbolic extremity. Subsequently, the paratextual product places the film between art and exploitation canons, as the cover’s distortion of the film’s violence positions it in an adjacent yet uncomfortable canon which carries additional commerciality. Therefore, in reference to the triangulation of the taste continuum, the paratextual product, while placing art cinema at its apex, dilutes this with exploitation cinemas standard modes of address. Yet, in order to fully explore how the product shapes the cultural understanding of *Weekend*, this chapter will now move to discuss the extras present on the disc, considering whether this crossover between art and exploitation carries through onto the special features.

*The Disc*

The edition being examined is a single disc release, and has no trailers preceding the tile menu. The disc contains three extras: *Interview with Cinematographer Raoul Coutard* (Godard, 1967b), *Mike Figgis on ‘Weekend’* (Godard, 1967b) and *Filmographies* (Godard, 1967b). The extras will be analysed in the order they appear on the disc menu, whereas the biographical filmographies will be discussed at relevant points. The section will begin by assessing the interview with Raoul Coutard.
Firstly, it is vital to investigate the way the various featurettes assemble Coutard’s cultural capital. Coutard was the cinematographer on *Weekend*, and his biography on the disc states he collaborated with Godard on 17 films. Importantly, the interview quickly makes the viewer aware that Coutard worked on *À Bout De Souffle* (Godard, 1960), a film firmly situated within the capital of the French New Wave. This instantly increases the status of Coutard, and for the reminder of the interview his cultural image becomes formed through his relationship to three cultural signifiers: Godard, the French New Wave and *À Bout De Souffle*. By proving Coutard is a worthy and significant subject, the interview is able to authenticate itself and the release as a whole.

The information given within the interview is crucial to understanding the manner in which the paratextual identity of *Weekend* constructs a reading of the film. Ultimately, the interview is about Coutard’s relationship to Godard, rather than the cinematographer’s career. Despite the fact that at some points Coutard explains the construction of certain shots, the focus always returns to Godard and his authorial vision, with the interviewer Colin MacCabe describing Godard as a leading figure in international cinema. As such the interview works solely within the parameters of auteur branding, using Coutard as a vessel in which the legitimisation of Godard can be validated. This belief that Coutard is merely a means to legitimise Godard is echoed in his biography, which while stating that he is “one of the world’s most respected cinematographers” (Godard, 1967b), summarises his career outside of his collaborations with Godard within a single sentence.

However, alongside the authentication of Godard’s unwavering personal vision, is the underlying notion that he was difficult to work with. Coutard cites Godard’s poor treatment of Darc, claiming he enjoyed humiliating her, continuing that “he would
hurt people on the team” (Godard, 1967b). These statements work to debase the celebration of his omnipotence, as he is cast as a roguish exploiter. Alongside this is aesthetic composition of the interview footage, which is littered with unsteady zooms and characterised by a sub-quality stock. This contradicts the ‘high’ cultural image the feature is endeavouring to promote whilst counteracting the established view that the DVD is an item of superiority. In general, the footage correlates with the expectations of ‘low’ brow collectors, in which the quality of the image is of lesser importance, making the slippage between ‘high’ and ‘low’ visible.

The second extra on the disc again is used to confirm Godard’s position as an auteur. On several occasions, Figgis vocalises his admiration for Godard claiming “first and foremost I think he is an artist” (Godard, 1967b). This type of statement works to strengthen the established status of the director, adding commercial value to his brand identity. As such, it becomes obvious that Artificial Eye are foregrounding Godard’s auteur brand, using industry personnel to further qualify the status of the director.

However, akin to the Coutard interview, the image is sub-standard, again channelling a ‘low’ aesthetic more familiar within the bootlegs and pirate copies which define exploitation film consumption. The lack of aesthetic quality has an effect on the brand capital of Artificial Eye, as it correlates with the amateur nature of paracinematic film companies mapped by Joan Hawkins (2000) wherein the author claimed paracinematic distribution companies care little for the technological aspect of film consumption due to certain budgetary constraints (2000, pp.45-46). Thus, Artificial Eye, through a technical inferiority, adopts a sub-cultural distribution aesthetic, contradicting their ‘high’ cultural status formed through their ongoing relationship with art cinema.
Thus, the thematic slippage present within the narrative of *Weekend* comes to typify the paratextual presentation within the contemporary context. Perhaps more apparent upon the DVD cover, yet supported in several ways within the special features, it is clear that certain exploitation tactics are employed alongside, and at times at the expense of, traditional art film marketing tactics. Overall, this begins to expose a continuing history, in which transgressive and extreme art films adopt a multi-layered narrative image during their paratextual incarnations to further the commercial viability of the product and present it to multiple consumer bases. However, the presentation of the product also influences the cultural comprehension of both *Weekend* and Godard. As claimed throughout, Godard retains a trace entrenched within ‘high’ cultural capital, yet, due to the paratextual hybridity apparent here, this status, and especially the cultural understanding of *Weekend*, are imparted with an additional level of meaning steeped in ‘low’ culture. This ultimately helps to shift the commercial image of the film into an ‘unnatural’ space, and begins to re-code it within the economic sphere.

**Cannibal Holocaust: DVD Aesthetic, Marketing and Paratextual Identity**

This chapter will now explore, using the same methodological approach, the cover and special features of the Shameless Screen Entertainment (Shameless hereafter) release of *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980b). Through this comparative study, the section will expose the manner in which exploitation films assume traditional art film marketing techniques, and will endeavour to examine a similar manipulation of filmic identity that became prevalent within the Artificial Eye release addressed above. This particular edition of *Cannibal Holocaust* was distributed on both DVD
and Blu-ray on 26th September 2011 and significantly represents the least cut version of the film ever released within the British market.

Again it is useful to survey the cultural image of the distribution company as it has a large bearing on the paratextual identity of the narrative. Shameless, a sizable cult cinema distributor, specialise in the distribution of European exploitation films of the 1970s and 1980s. Some of their most important releases include Deodato’s *House on the Edge of the Park* (Deodato, 1980), Lucio Fulci’s *Manhattan Baby* (Fulci, 1982) and *The House of the Laughing Windows* (Avati, 1976). Due to the generic implications of these films, the company is not legitimised within the confines of ‘high’ culture. Instead, the company rely upon manifesting a substantial level of sub-cultural capital which can then be grafted to any film carrying their branding.

In order to accumulate this capital, Shameless actively engage with their consumer base through their official forum (Shameless Screen Entertainment Official Forum, n.d). The website has several main threads including: ‘Current and Upcoming Shameless Titles’, ‘The Shameless Collection’, ‘Why Don’t Shameless Release…?’, and ‘Shamelessly Creative’. This forum is crucial in recognising the demographic of Shameless as a fan community, as “since its inception, fans, who are often geographically and socially isolated and yet crave association with others of a like mind, have congregated on the Internet” (Cherry, 2010, p.69). Within these threads, especially ‘Why Don’t Shameless Release…?’ or ‘Shamelessly Creative’, the consumer base is encouraged to actively engage with the company, an important aspect in modern fandom:

This ability to transform personal reaction into social interaction, spectatorial culture into participatory culture, is one of the central characteristics of fandom. One becomes a ‘fan’ not by being a regular
viewer of a particular program but by translating that viewing into some kind of cultural activity (Jenkins, 2006, p.41).

Hence, Shameless are able to appropriate the capital of the fan culture, and ensure their products meet the requirements of the dedicated consumer, actively turning cultural capital into economic capital.

In the same manner as Artificial Eye, the company maintains a strong market presence through the replication of a uniform DVD aesthetic, which is primarily constructed around the use of a yellow DVD case and cover. These covers carry important (sub)cultural connotations based within the Giallo genre, as the literacy tradition of novelised crime thrillers which serve as the foundation for many of the filmic narratives had yellow covers. This reference is essential to the accumulation of sub-cultural capital in various ways. Firstly, the promotion of an Italian exploitation tradition lends Shameless a sense of paracinematic credence, as Brigid Cherry’s detailed exploration of horror fan cultures concluded that Italian horror was held in the highest esteem by various fan communities (2012, p.26). Secondly, the colour palette relies upon a complex communication of capital, in which both distributor and consumer understand the importance of the reference and receive pleasure in understanding its meaning. As the DVD presentation necessitates a pre-existing knowledge of the Italian exploitation industry, we can presume that the majority of Shameless consumers are entrenched in sub-cultural capital, which is reliant on a communal yet exclusive process of comprehension (Thornton, 1995, p.11).

The exclusivity of the reading protocol is enhanced by both the company’s name, which clearly champions its own ‘low’ cultural status, but also the taglines and images portrayed throughout the distributors sleeve designs. For example, the release
of Joe D’Amato’s *Love Goddess of the Cannibals* (D’Amato, 1978b) features the taglines “You’ll die of pleasure!” and “Hold on to your manhood, the Love Goddess is hungry!” (D’Amato, 1978b) alongside multiple images of female nudity. Herein, the exclusive and therefore cultish status of the Shameless brand is confirmed, allowing the company to operate outside of the mainstream and protect and propagate the marginality of their product. As such, the brand identity of Shameless is split between a traditionalist ballyhoo marketing tactic entrenched within ‘low’ brow cultural practices and a sophisticated understanding of generic codes, fan desires and historical context, a combination that rests at the core of paracinematic theory.

*The Cover*

With this duality in place, the chapter can now move to explore the *Cannibal Holocaust* release, taking the yellow colour palette and its generic signifiers as a starting place. Importantly, the connotations of the Giallo colour scheme homogenise the films distributed under its semiotic coding. This affects the comprehension of *Cannibal Holocaust*, as Deodato’s narrative is not a Giallo feature, and is rather part of the substantial Italian cannibal cycle. Interestingly, while this is not an instance of ‘high’ to ‘low’ cultural slippage, it can be recognised as a case of inter-canon fluidity. In this example, the paratextual packaging misrepresents the narrative content of *Cannibal Holocaust*, therefore promoting an inaccurate, but marketable, narrative image. In relation to Cherry’s earlier comments concerning the sub-cultural status of the Giallo, presenting *Cannibal Holocaust* through a Giallo identity allows Shameless to place the film within a commercially proven sub-sector of the
exploitation canon. Again, this is an example of the paratext’s capacity to change the cultural perception and generic make-up of a narrative.

This release of Cannibal Holocaust presents two different cuts of the film: a nearly uncut version, which has only 14 seconds of excessive animal suffering removed, and a new recut by Deodato which aims to address the film’s previous censorial issues. Both of these versions are vital to understanding taste fluidity, as they alter the perception of the previously banned product. The near uncut version shares an inescapable relationship to the hyperbolic, as it promises the most violent account of the narrative. However, it simultaneously presents the most authentic cut of the film, allowing the artefact to return to its original form and therein act as a historically valid article. This is essential, as previous releases of this and many other European horror titles of the era positioned the artefacts as an object of low quality due to the numerous cuts present; which subsequently removes notions of authorship (Guins, 2005, p.21). Thus the restoral of the narrative reinserts authorial activity, a concept supported by the newly commissioned Deodato cut. Thus version places Cannibal Holocaust under an auteur marker, a type of branding Stephen Thrower claims is rare are within the exploitation industry due its unique production conditions (2007, p.18). These interlinking channels of commercialisation dress the product in the familiar furnishings of cultural significance, and thus allow the film to transcend the liminal space of ‘lowbrow’ exploitation.

However, rather than the omnipotent branding of Godard present within the release of Weekend, this edition of Cannibal Holocaust obscures the identity of Deodato. The release promotes the brand of Shameless over that of Deodato by using the heading “Shameless Director edition” (Deodato, 1980b). This suppression of Deodato is continued as his name is far smaller than the other text present on the
cover, meaning the product harbours a paradoxical image of the auteur. Although the Deodato’s involvement in the release is central to obtaining a sense of cultural validation, the overwhelming presence of the Shameless brand image dilutes both its relevancy and power to legitimise the text. Importantly, this influences the manner in which the audience comprehend the film and its cultural worth, as it fails to provoke the processes of authentication related to film academia.

The DVD has a “collector’s reversible sleeve” (Deodato, 1980b), of which both sides will be considered within this section. The first cover (see figure 4 [p.130]) features newly commissioned artwork, and thus creates an original narrative image of the film. The image is an artistically stylised version of the film’s iconic impaled women scene, and contains the key ingredients of extreme horror marketing. The silhouette of the female’s breasts and pubic region is visible, giving the cover sexual overtones, as the cascading red blood works to combine this sexuality with violence. Within its presentation of sexualised violence the jacket art acts as an indicator to the transgressions present within the film, and recalls the hyperbolic tradition used throughout the paratextual presentation of exploitation cinema.
The sparse cover, which only includes this main image, the film title, Deodato’s name and Shameless branding, features a tagline which furthers the films extreme credence. Reading “the most controversial film ever made” (Deodato, 1980b), the tagline is a classic example of ballyhoo marketing and dares the consumer to watch the film as a test of their threshold. This dare is restated within the blurb on the back of the box: “a film so violent and depraved that the director was charged with killing his own cast!” (emphasis in original) (Deodato, 1980b) and: “still THE most controversial film ever” (emphasis in original) (Deodato, 1980b). The repetition of the tagline strengthens the claim and the addition of the word ‘still’ alongside the capitalisation of ‘the’ contemporises the proclamation. Through the statement, Shameless suggests that the film should not be considered a nostalgic piece of extremity, but a relevant text within the current discourse, placing it alongside, and in competition with, contemporary horror. Consequently, it is clear that the film’s
original identity as a text of substantial controversy still informs its current meditation and cultural image.

The trend of contemporising the film continues with the sole quotation on the back cover. The quotation reads, “it is one of the most brutal, relentless, violent, realistic films ever made” (Deodato, 1980b), and though drawing neat parallels to the *Variety* quotation seen within the marketing of *Weekend*, is more important due to its source: Eli Roth, director of the *Hostel* (Roth, 2005). Through this association, Roth’s trace performs a specific function in contemporising *Cannibal Holocaust*, as the appearance of his name allows the release to adopt part of his sub-cultural legitimisation. Importantly, Roth’s capital works in the same manner to those sources that adorned the *Weekend* release, as it legitimises the film within its specific community. Herein the cover retains a tension between historical image and contemporary relevancy, enabling the paratext, in part, to transcend temporal limitations the narrative cannot.

Significantly, the recollection of the film’s specific historical image, and the idea that this current paratext is trading off the film’s initial controversy, comes to the fore on the reversible cover. An exact replica of the illustration that adorned the original 1982 Go Video release, the reproduced image shows a drawn savage eating flesh surrounded by tall grass, with the dual taglines “Eaten Alive” (Deodato, 1980b) and “The Ultimate Terror Movie…” (see figure 5 [p.132]) (Deodato, 1980b). The image represents a conventional ‘video nasty’ aesthetic by showing the forbidden spectacle of violence (Egan, 2007, p.52). Crucially, it is steeped in national nostalgia, as it is identical to the image which became ensconced within the censorial scandal instigated on the film’s initial release. Hence the cover harbours an important and influential cultural weighting within several key frameworks.
Initially the replication of the original cover self-consciously attracts an existing fan base. Mapped in detail in Egan’s *Trash or Treasure* (Egan, 2007), the fandom exists:

> As a marked example of how *past* nationally-specific commercial and political circumstance can inform [. . .] present day video collections, and the hierarchies of selection, value and categorisation through which such collections are constructed (Egan, 2007, pp.157-158).

Subsequently, the importance of the past and notions of authenticity motivate collectors, further underscoring the significance of this cover within the context of the film’s commercial desirability. As Lincoln Geraghty claims, the appropriation and duplication of nostalgia is imperative to consumption cultures of fan communities (2014, pp.61-64), and therefore this replica artwork partakes in a longstanding commercial dialogue between the industry and the consumer. This becomes even more prevalent when the dedicated Go Video website is assessed. Set up for “fellow collectors”, the site acts as a way in which enthusiasts can view the
artwork of Go Video releases, collate their desirability and authenticate their value. On the *Cannibal Holocaust* page (Cannibal Holocaust Go 121, n.d), the film’s rarity as a pre-certificated VHS sporting this cover artwork is rated at two stars (represented by asterisks), while its desirability gets five stars. This website and their grading system stress the importance of authenticity to the fan discourse, consequently suggesting the duplication of the image entrenches the film within its existing sub-culture. Petley furthers this discussion by stating:

> You couldn’t really not have that cover could you? In our country that became so iconic of the movie, you know it’s in fairly bad taste and is fairly shocking, but I think [. . .] not having it, one would have wondered why it was not there. It seems to me at least in the UK, not perhaps in other countries, it has become [. . .] part of the movie text (personal communication, January 21, 2013).

Essentially, Petley and the work of Egan indicates that an exclusion of this artwork would affect the product’s credibility, and hence its ability to appropriately trade off a legitimised sub-cultural capital. Though this is a commercial decision in the most part, it does have repercussions for the cultural coding of *Cannibal Holocaust*. The image aims to accurately replicate the original artefact, and therefore adopts the role of a modernised archival artefact. Consequently, the product maintains a level of historical, cultural and national importance within the British market, not only as a signifier for the film, but also its inseparable relationship to a nationally based controversy.

Thus, it would be wrong to ignore the hyperbolic nature of the cover and the pre-established and widely recognised cultural stigma it retains. When asked about this during the aforementioned interview, Petley noted that the use of the cover can be seen as existing within inverted commas, a joke entrenched within a communal knowledge of the film’s censorial history (personal communication, January 21,
2013). Egan supports these claims, stating that re-released versions of the ‘video nasties’ trade off the visual humour of the replicated covers rather than trying to rekindle the controversy (2007, pp. 205-211). However, due to the purposeful application of exploitation marketing techniques apparent throughout the rest of the cover, wherein eight of the nine small images used advocate either violent or sexual themes, the image’s commitment to originality invokes the infamy that encircled the film on its initial release. Therefore, the two covers preserve a cultural duality. Both trade off a similar employment of ballyhoo marketing, through a reincarnation of the film’s historical notoriety and an isolation of the violent spectacle. However, this interpretation is reliant on a sophisticated recognition of the film’s past, and hence, through its refined replication of history; the paratextual identity of the film promotes a level of ‘high’ cultural authenticity.

The Disc

History is pivotal to investigating the disc’s paratextual features. The release is a two disc set, and therefore this section will investigate Disc One before considering Disc Two. Ahead of the main title page on Disc One are three trailers which are vital to understanding the manner in which consumption habits are shaped by distributors. The first trailer, promoting *House on the Edge of the Park*, portrays scenes of nudity and violence and alludes to the auteur brand of Deodato. The second trailer strays from this authorial notion, and promotes *Don’t Torture a Duckling* through a similar framework of nudity and brutality. The third trailer, again Italian and therefore confirming a national trace, advertises *New York Ripper*. Another Fulci film famed for its incredibly violent content, the trailer centralises a particular line of dialogue:
“a very sharp knife, rammed in her vagina” (Deodato, 1980b), in order to confirm its transgressive kudos. Though sharing a geographic parity, the collective violence of these films suggests that Shameless is positioning Deodato’s film as a centre piece of a transgressive catalogue, while trading off the pre-existing stigma of Cannibal Holocaust to promote equally brutal narratives.

However this exploitive market directive is diluted by the short introduction by Ruggero Deodato which appears after these trailers. Within this introduction, the importance of the auteur, which was downplayed on the cover, is re-established, exposing a moment of slippage and cross-cultural borrowing. Within this instance, the paratextual extra appropriates a traditional art film marketing strategy, and uses the academic theory of auteurism to validate the feature. This also begins to re-write the history of the film, which in previous incarnations would have acted independently from the artistic discourse of authorial legitimacy. This is furthered during the consumption of the Deodato cut, which is preceded by an explanation from the director.

Although the justification of the new cut sees a validation of the auteur and the feature itself, the appearance of a colloquial inter-title dilutes this legitimacy and again exposes the instability of Cannibal Holocaust’s historic linage. The inter-title portrays a mock warning label, in which a red outer circle has a diagonal line crossing through a cartoon turtle and axe (see figure 6 [p.136]). The superficial nature of the image undermines Deodato’s strong sense of remorse regarding the film’s use of genuine animal slaughter. This contradictory discourse is continued throughout Deodato’s monologue, as the lithe motif that characterises the film’s most extreme sequences is used alongside images of animal slaughter. As such, Deodato’s guilt and artistic integrity are suppressed by de-contextualised images of
extremity and transgression. Therefore, while the new cut looks to actively address the history of the film by removing the animal slaughter that proved so controversial, the paratextual composition of the feature looks to promote that same historical infamy.

Disc two, entitled *the extras*, contains two special features which will be assessed in the order they appear. The first, *Film & Be Damned* (Deodato, 1980b), is an interview with Carl G. Yorke (who starred as Alan Yates, the director of the fictional *Green Inferno*) and Ruggero Deodato. The paratextual extra balances legitimisation and ballyhoo, creating a shifting yet at times contradictory narrative image. Deodato, the first subject on screen, instantly discusses how one can place his film within the tradition of satire, stating that the narrative was born out of his dissatisfaction with the violent journalism of the period. This gives the film’s transgressions an allegorical context, subsequently justifying the narrative’s portrayal of extreme

Figure 6: The warning sign. DVD Extra (Deodato, 1980b).
violence through similar critical schemas mapped at the start of this chapter, and those common throughout the art film discourse.

The sense that the interview is aiming to legitimise the film within the confines of ‘high’ culture continues with the comments of Yorke, who, though the proclamation that the film was the vision of Deodato, elevates the director to the status of auteur. This echoes the comments prevalent within the *Weekend* disc, however, rather than add to a pre-existing consensus, helps to overturn previous condemnations. This is extended through the use of trace surrogates, as throughout the interview, Deodato associates himself and his work with a series of established auteurs. The most obvious example of this process comes when Deodato states “I learnt to improvise from Roberto Rossellini, who taught me everything” (Deodato, 1980b). The mention of Rossellini enables Deodato to claim a part of his legitimate status, allowing a sense of historic reconsideration to come to the fore (other directors mentioned by Deodato include Sergio Leone, Oliver Stone and Quentin Tarantino, who all retain substantial capital within film culture).

However, as stated earlier, ballyhoo tactics can still be located. On several occasions the film’s censorial history is mentioned, as Deodato details the artefact’s seizure and the suspended prison sentence he received. Despite the fact that trace legitimacy can be found within this section, as Deodato compares the controversy to that of *Last Tango in Paris* (Bertolucci, 1972), the details of the court trial and the subsequent outcome only verify the film’s most transgressive aspects. Through this anecdote, the interview adopts the principles of ballyhoo, daring the viewer to see a film that resulted in the director’s near imprisonment. Consequently, even though the feature presents a framework in which the viewer can contextualise the transgressive nature
of the narrative, it further propagates its exploitive identity and supports the extreme nature of the cover.

The second feature on this disc is entitled *The Long Road Back From Hell with Kim Newman, Prof. Julian Petley, Prof. Mary Wood. Featuring Carl G. Yorke, Ruggero Deodato & Francesca Ciardi* (Deodato, 1980b) and was directed by film academic Xavier Mendik. The subtitle is principal to the creation of the film’s cultural understanding, as it foregrounds academic intervention into the discourse of *Cannibal Holocaust*. Through the use of ‘Prof’, a level of ‘high’ cultural capital grounded within academic longevity can be located. This validates the interviewee’s responses, *Cannibal Holocaust* as a film, and this edition as a cultural artefact, as it elevates the text to the realm of academic (re)consideration.

Again, similar to the *Film & Be Damned* interview, the documentary balances validation and hyperbole. In regards to the foregrounding of the film’s more transgressive moments, the talking heads segments are intercut with sequences from the film. These scenes include the finding of the impaled women (which opens the documentary), the abortion sequence and the final slaughter of the crew. While not shown in their entirety, these set pieces represent the most extreme moments within the narrative, and their de-contextualisation projects a narrative image grounded in violence. This is supported by the comments of both Yorke and Francesca Ciardi, who talk extensively about the feelings of distrust which arose from the instances of genuine animal slaughter. These proclamations characterise the film as depraved, and suggest that Deodato was a roguish and distrustful director.

However, through the continued presence of the academia, the documentary ultimately endeavours to reappraise the narrative. Mendik’s voiceover narration
continually foregrounds *Cannibal Holocaust*'s influence over modern horror, notions supported by both Wood and Petley, who see their academic credentials reiterated during their introductions. Wood states the film is an allegory for the Italian man’s loss of power, and therein positions the film as a product of its socio-political climate. In doing so, Wood moves the discussion of *Cannibal Holocaust* away from notions of violence and into consideration of the film’s symbolic meaning. Petley’s comments operate in the same manner as he locates the film within the Italian tradition of realism by claiming that it should be approached as a piece of meta-cinema. Here, the scholarly practice of reappraisal mapped briefly at the start of this chapter is grafted to the narrative and furnishes the film within the conventions of academic study. Thus, the paratext, operating externally from the main body of the film, has the capacity to alter the cultural perceptions of a narrative by placing it within a previously unavailable and impenetrable cinematic environ.

However, within recognising this release’s ability to breach the barriers of ‘high’ and ‘low’, it is essential to investigate the additional role Julian Petley held. Petley served as a consultant for Shameless regarding an advice screening with the BBFC (Petley, personal communication, January 21, 2013). Within his role as advisor, Petley filled out the form which had to be submitted to the BBFC as part of a revaluation of *Cannibal Holocaust* in a hope that it could be passed with fewer cuts than previously seen in Britain. Petley, talking about the advice screening form, claimed “the main point I made [was] that this was not to be exploitative or sensationalised [. . .], it was an attempt to present what I think is generally regarded by many people now as an important film in a way that did it justice” (personal communication, January 21, 2013). Through this role, Petley acted as a signifier of legitimisation and a cultural anchor with an inherent capital, via which a broader
sense of acceptance could be comprehended. As a result of his involvement, his scholarly validity became attached to this edition of *Cannibal Holocaust*, furnishing it with a new level of ‘high’ legitimisation and allowing the disc to take the form of an artefact of reconsideration.

Petley noted that it is not just his position as an academic that resulted in the BBFC’s leniency. Petley states:

> I think a long long period of time had passed since *Cannibal Holocaust* was so badly demonised and trashed and I think the writing of people like me, but obviously there are others, [...] have helped to give the film a kind of [...] ‘respectability’ that it hadn’t had before (personal communication, January 21, 2013).

What Petley alludes to here is the importance of history and scholarly interaction. As such, the respected scholarship that has come to take *Cannibal Holocaust* as its focus has resulted in its removal from a critical quarantine of controversy, and encouraged the BBFC to be more sympathetic and thus pass it with fewer cuts (Petley, personal communication, January 21, 2013). This has been suggested elsewhere within studies of Italian exploitation cinema and its various paratextual identities. Raiford Guins usefully notes “the voice articulating the Italian horror film now has a historical tone, one that is educational and premised in informative criticism and genre knowledge” (2005, pp.27-28). Herein, the Shameless release created what Egan has termed a historical portrait of the film (2007, p.186), in which its exploitative past is contextualised within an academic present.

Aside from historical distance and critical legitimisation, Petley noted that a central factor within the BBFC’s less censorial approach was the identity of the distributor. As noted earlier, distributors can withhold a brand identity that carries a cultural image which can ultimately affect the manner in which the audience approach,
understand and consume their commercial products. Within this framework, Petley notes “Shameless are not, you know Vipco [. . .] Vipco were pretty roguish people and Shameless, in spite of the title, is serious about what they do” (personal communication, January 21, 2013). Petley notes Vipco, a prolific distributor during the heyday of the ‘video nasty’ era, as a company that retained a negative reputation which was naturally attached to the films within their catalogue. Although it can be noted that Shameless exploit the controversy of their releases through a traditional application of hyperbolic visuals and linguistics, Petley went on to assert the importance of their catalogue as a sign of their commitment to distributing a series of previously overlooked Italian films (personal communication, January 21, 2013). In addition to this, Shameless’s brand identity is not steeped in the stigma of the era, allowing their releases to avoid being coded in the same way as previous exploitation distributors while further exposing the importance of time within the remediation of certain extreme products.

Within the study of Cannibal Holocaust, it becomes clear that a distributor releasing an archetypal exploitation narrative succeeded in employing the ‘high’ cultural validation practice of scholarly intervention. This effectively collapses the barriers between the distribution sites, exposing the fluidity discussed in Chapter One. Overall, in regards to this Cannibal Holocaust release, the paratextual identity present on Disc Two contradicts the hyperbolic marketing present on the cover, wherein the use of critical and academic anchoring, familiar within the art film discourse but rare within the exploitation realm, works to position Cannibal Holocaust as an important piece of legitimate, although still marginal, cinema. Subsequently, the film becomes a two-sided cultural product, presenting itself as both an artefact of cultural importance and filmic extremity.
Conclusion

In conclusion, these initial case studies begin to suggest that the history of slippage and crossover which was mapped by the likes of Hawkins, Heffernan and Betz is still prevalent within the paratexts of art and exploitation cinema within the contemporary climate. Distributors are still influencing the canonisation system, altering the cultural spaces that films inhabit through the application of certain marketing frameworks. In a larger context, this illustrates the permeable nature of cultural barriers, as it is clear that certain texts can transcend original filmic forms of categorisation through the application of various semiotic dressings.

However, what is perhaps most interesting within the comparison of these two releases is the manner in which *Cannibal Holocaust* adopts an art film marketing directive, placing Deodato’s narrative within the dressings of ‘high’ culture. It is clear that the *Weekend* release traded off the film’s thematic transgression, and employed ballyhoo techniques to promote and exaggerate them. Yet, it would be wrong to suggest that Godard’s film becomes an exploitation film, as the centralisation of extremity is countered by the strong promotion of cultural validity. However, in the case of *Cannibal Holocaust*, the notion of transformation is clearer. Due to the overwhelming condemnation of the film prior to the Shameless release, the academic credence present has a large impact on the film’s cultural reception. Although the film still promotes its infamy in several ways, the extra content of the discs creates a completely new history of the film: that of an allegorical and influential horror narrative worthily of academic consideration. This is crucial to Guins’ argument, in which he claims the remediation of Italian horror narrative onto DVD repair and refashions the texts (2005, p.25). It is clear here that the Shameless release of *Cannibal Holocaust* ‘repairs’ it through restoring it to its near fully uncut
state and ‘refashions’ it firmly within the discourse of artistic and historical importance. Even though the transformation is not completely realised due to the promotion of extremity of the cover, the film’s encasement within official cultural practices enables it to breach the barriers of taste and position itself on the perimeter of ‘high’ culture, effectively altering its cultural understanding from illegitimate cinematic sensationalism to landmark Italian filmmaking. Petley commented on this during the interview conducted for this case study, stating that the film has been reclaimed, and that it is time to discuss it more routinely within discourses of hybrid forms (personal communication, January 21, 2013), a process this release, and its examination here, can be seen to be aiding.
Chapter Four

_Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom_ and _Ilsa the Wicked Warden_

This second case study will examine Pier Paolo Pasolini’s _Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom_ and Jess Franco’s _Ilsa the Wicked Warden_. In accordance to the research aims, these two directors and their respective cinematic output encapsulate the traditions of art and exploitation filmmaking surveyed in the Introduction, while further partaking in the history of slippage and crossover mapped thus far. In order to stress this shared relationship, the films selected for the forthcoming analysis retain a commonality due to their employment of certain thematic signifiers. Most definably, both narratives utilise the thematic imagery of fascism through an application of specific narrative constructs, costumes, settings and political messages. With this thematic affiliation forming a basis for the films’ comparison here, the chapter will again position each text as part of the extreme art canon before examining the films’ DVD presence within a contemporary British context. Working within the framework established in the first case study, the investigation of the two commercial products will explore the away they borrow from art and exploitation discourses, their principal marketing techniques, and the manner in which the films’ paratextual identities enable them to cross traditional cultural barriers.
Pier Paolo Pasolini and Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom

Pier Paolo Pasolini, like Jean Luc Godard, Luis Buñuel and Ingmar Bergman, is an essential filmmaker within the framework of extreme art cinema. Described by Robert Gordon as a restlessly experimental artist (1996, p.1), Pasolini started his career as a poet and intellectual before becoming a filmmaker. The director’s combination of artistry and provocation means he retains a dual cultural image, mirroring the conflict present within this thesis’s conceptualisation of the extreme art cinema. Pasolini has been both condemned for his transgressive filmic catalogue by critical and cultural discourses, with the Pope denouncing his early film Theorem (Pasolini, 1968) (Greene, 1990, p.134), and celebrated as an auteur:

Pasolini’s belief in his capacity to impose his voice on any medium, despite its constraints was reaffirmed [. . .] by his experience with film. He repeatedly asserted his autonomy and authority as an ‘auteur’, confidently declaring his control over every aspect of the film-making process (Gordon, 1996, p.191).

Pasolini’s critiques of the bourgeoisie become a central to positioning him within the extreme art canon. Maurizio Viano describes the director as the ‘black’ filmmaker of the bourgeoisie (1993, p.296), an outcast operating externally to the parameters of ‘high’ culture yet still able to penetrate its barriers. This semi-marginality arose from Pasolini’s attempts to challenge his primary demographic with a mixture of extremity and intellectualism, and thus can act as a synecdoche for the entire continuum due to the combination or violence, artistic experimentation, authentication and condemnation.

This amalgamation is at the centre of his final feature, and this chapter’s case study, Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom (hereafter, Salo). The film is summarised neatly by Naomi Greene, who claims it is not only Pasolini’s most scandalous and chilling
film, but one of the most disturbing and radical films in the history of cinema (1990, p.196). The narrative is based on Marquis de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* (2009) (originally published in 1785), and as such carries on Pasolini’s tradition of being overwhelmingly citational (Rodhie, 1995, p.18). Pasolini not only cites Sade, but a series of authors, such as Roland Barthes, Pierre Klossowski and Philippe Sollers (Greene, 1990, p.200), illustrating the manner in which film borrows from the ‘highbrow’ literacy discourse.

The narrative, which takes place in the fascist controlled Salo, a geographical and temporal setting which actively invokes Benito Mussolini Nazi controlled sister state, details the sexual torture of 18 teenagers by four male characters known as The Duke, The Bishop, The Magistrate, and The President. The presence of these characters, which although being materialisations of major societal pillars are consistently stripped of any dignity due to their extreme perversions (Gordon, 1996, p.250), allows the film to portray an anti-bourgeoisie message. Importantly, this politically informed allegory is realised via the employment of various scenes of extremity, in which the film, in order to comment on the corrupting nature of power, breaches almost all societal taboos, including the consumption of faeces, rape and forced castration. Herein, the literacy ‘highbrow’ of the films source material and the clear political activism of the narrative is placed in close proximity to what Robert Gordon claims is a lexicon of absolute horror borrowed from several ‘lowbrow’ filmic genres (Gordon, 1996, p.259).

This double axis of sexuality and politics (Greene, 1994, p.234) reflects the composition of manner extreme art narratives, and has characterised the critical discourses that surrounds the film. It is valuable to briefly explore these, as they invariably affect the film’s paratextual characteristics. Pasolini summarises *Salo’s*
message as follows: “the body becomes merchandise. My film is planned as a sexual metaphor, which symbolizes [. . .] the relationship between exploiter and exploited. In sadism and in power politics human beings become objects” (Bachmann, 1975-1976, p. 40). In order for the film’s explicitness to be sanctioned (Krzywinska, 2006, p.45), Pasolini’s allegorical explanation must be accepted and read as justification for the images on screen. Without this, the film exists merely as a series of exploitative sequences of extremity.

Unsurprisingly, like many extreme art narratives, the film’s allegorical message has been a point of contention within the critical sphere. Viano states that the fascism merely operates as a signifier for a political reading that is never actually explored, as the brutality of the images refuses the audience the ability to move between the film’s layers of meanings, leaving only the literal meanings available for consumption (1993, pp.299-300). This rejection of the political message is recognised by Greene, who usefully states that many critics objected to the film’s use of a sensitive historical period in a narrative that was so deliberately abhorrent (1990, p.126). However, though Greene claims that the extremity of the image threatens to exceed the bounds of the symbolic (1990, p.205), the narrative’s political undertones are established as transparently as the sexual explicitness. For example, after a guard is caught having normative sex with a black servant, he performs a communist salute in an act of defiance towards fascism before being gunned down by the libertines. This scene operates as an un Concealed moment of political activism, and weakens the argument that the symbolism cannot break through the extremity of the sexual images.
Nonetheless, this critical inability to move beyond what it saw as an exploitation of historical authenticity led to the film being framed as pornography by scholars such as Gideon Bachmann (1975) and Danny Georgakas (1978), thus rendering the political allegory redundant. However, asserting that Salo becomes pornographic due to the extremity of its images, as has been proposed in sectors of the surrounding scholarship, illustrates a complete misunderstanding of both Pasolini’s film and the purposes of pornography. As Gordon states, the sexuality within Salo is made deliberately repulsive through the combination of excess and repetition (1996, p.260). Greene also highlights the film’s purposeful repulsiveness, noting that that Pasolini aimed to strip sadomasochism of the sexual titillation that had been placed upon it by its appearance within romance and pornography (1994, p.234). Therefore, although Salo uses the trappings of the pornography industry, such as particular poses and equipment, the film’s removal of pleasure and sexual excitement ultimately leave a pornographic reading inadequate. It is this depiction of ‘unpleasure’, alongside the illustration of sex as an ingestible commodity, which itself has come to be a constant throughout the extreme art film canon and acts as a point of demarcation between artistic extremity and generic excess, which marks Salo as a piece of intellectual extremist art. Indeed, this thesis will approach Pasolini’s feature as an allegorical exploration of power which tightly frames its depiction of extremity within a strict formed metaphorical message, and firmly place it within art cinemas’ history of rejection and confrontation.

Nonetheless, this spread of critical engagement exposes a conflicting discourse, and Salo’s employment of transgression becomes isolated and reproduced across both condemning and defensive dialogues. This has been recognised in Christopher Roberts’ article The Theatrical Satanism of Self-Awareness Itself (2010). Within the
article Roberts claims that the film’s reception history has been irreversibly affected to the point that the shocking content obscures its form (2010, p29), resulting in its encasement within a “critical quarantine” (Roberts, 2010, p.30). Through the consistent isolation of the film’s extremity, Salo has, in certain sectors, been reduced to a series of exploitative moments of transgression and placed within a critical zone dominated by generic models. This process of consistent disapproval retains a secondary consequence, as an alternative reading sees the denunciation of the feature become a hyperbolic promotion of the film’s disgusting qualities. This is acknowledged by David Church, who states that the film has developed into an example of the ‘sickest film ever made’ to sectors of the paracinematic community (2009, p.342).

Consequently, Salo, perhaps more than any other extreme art film of this era, exists in a suspended space between ‘highbrow’ practices of intellectual symbolism and ‘lowbrow’ sequences of provocation and disgust. With several contradictory dialogues operating both within the film’s narrative and the surrounding academic discourse, Salo is a multifaceted text, able to move between art and exploitation depending on which features are highlighted within its cultural triangulation. This intermediate cultural site, where it is both actively excluded and included within both art and exploitation traditions, introduces interesting questions regarding how the film comes to be presented within the market sphere, and which set of social and cinematic signifies shape its public face.
**Jess Franco and Ilsa the Wicked Warden**

With *Salo’s* position as a dual cultural artefact confirmed, this chapter will now study Franco and his text *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* as a cultural counterpoint. Famed for his prolific filmography, Franco, despite being sporadic, is a confirmed paracinematic auteur (Hawkins, 2000, pp.88-89), whose work is firmly entrenched within the trappings of the exploitation genre. Of Spanish birth, Franco worked with almost every low budget European producer (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, p.101) directing under a series of pseudonyms (for example Clifford Brown Jr. and A.M Frank). With such a vast body of work, Franco’s career has been broken into different periods of production. Tim Lucas, a leading scholar in regards to European exploitation, divides his filmography into six phases: the First Period (1959-64), the Second Period (1965-67), the Harry Alan Towers Period (1968-70), the Peak Years (1970-78), the Porno Holocaust Years (1976-81), and the Homecoming Years (1981-Present) (Lucas, 2010, p.17). However, regardless of his paracinematic praise, Franco is generally only discussed in ‘low’ cultural publications (Hawkins, 2000, p.88), with both Joan Hawkins (2000, p.95) and Lucas (2010, p.17) claiming his career was only beginning to be debated in English in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This refusal to accept exploitation cinema into the canon of national production relates to the hierarchal nature of academia highlighted within the Introduction, and proves vital within the assessment of Franco’s paratextual identity.

Nonetheless, some scholars have endeavoured to locate Franco within ‘high’ cultural discourse. During her seminal study *Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific Avant Garde* (2000), Hawkins provides a key investigation of Franco’s output, discussing his films within the parameters of a Spanish antifascist aesthetic. Hawkins notes that the rawness of the image, a consequence of Franco’s low budget
productions, bestows his cinema with artistic and politically important characteristics (2000, p.112). Hawkins extends this, stating “viewers have to learn to like Franco’s style, have to learn how to watch his movies, remov[ing] the director’s work from the arena of what Adorno would call true ‘mass culture’” (2000, p.112). Subsequently, Hawkins claims that Franco’s work occupies a liminal cultural site (2000, p.113), mirroring the paracinematic counter aesthetic surveyed by Sconce and mapped in the Introduction. This bestows Franco with a hybrid cultural identity, as a viewer must retain a sophisticated level of capital in order to appropriately comprehend narratives which are patently commercial. Indeed, it is this project’s wish to approach Franco as a director who actively engages with these modes of challenge and capital, and therefore position him within the parameters of extreme art cinema.

*Ilsa the Wicked Warden* was produced 2 years after Pasolini’s film, and as suggested employs a comparable thematic template due to its use of sex as a metaphor for misuse of power within the context of a totalitarian dictatorship. The narrative is based within an all-female asylum, run by Greta del Pino, who uses her position of power to force the inmates to act out her sexual fantasies. Essential to placing the film within the exploitation tradition is the title itself, as it is a direct reference to the most famous franchise within the Nazi sexploitation cycle; the *Ilisa* trilogy. Comprising of *Isla: She Wolf of the SS* (Edmonds, 1975), *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (Edmonds, 1976) and *Ilsa the Tigress of Serbia* (LaFleur, 1977), the brand of Ilsa became a valuable commodity, and although controversial due to the convergences of sex, torture and Nazi imagery, the films were commercially successful. They have subsequently become engrained within Film Studies through a series of appearances on university syllabuses, and culture through their involvement
on Trivial Pursuit, various club nights and songs (Rapaport, 2003, p.72). Franco’s narrative was an unofficial fourth addition to the original trilogy (Spiderbaby, 2011, p.32), and was produced by Erwin C. Dietrich in order to exploit its popularity while it still held market value (Tohill & Tombs, 1994, pp.114-115). All the films starred Dyanne Thorne, who as well as being credited as the real attraction of the film (Spiderbaby, 2011, p.32) can be seen as the most iconic signifier within this particular cycle of exploitation. As Lynn Rapaport states, “when Ilsa first appeared on the screen she became a pop-culture icon. Dyanne Throne, the blonde and busty star of the film, today still receives over 200 fan letters monthly” (2003, p.71).

Consequently, *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* serves as a marked example of the exploitation marketing tradition outlined in Chapter One as it actively exploits the success of the official trilogy (this is the explanation for the difference in names. Thorne’s character here is named Greta as this is not a recognised Ilsa narrative).

Whilst the film is dominated by the counter-aesthetic that remained a constant throughout Franco’s career, legitimising *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* within the confines of historical metaphor in the same manner as *Salo* is problematic. The tyranny portrayed within *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* is a less historically specific illustration of dictatorial rule, as Franco employs the semiotics of political domination (uniformed soldiers, oppressed prisoners, a single authorial figure, expensively ornamented headquarters) within an unspecified tropical setting. As such, the debasement of the bourgeoisie which is at the core of Pasolini’s narrative is missing from Franco’s film, making it difficult to sanction the multiple transgressions present within the narrative. Furthermore, while the sub-par acting and dubbing complicate certain channels of identification, the sexuality present within the film is, within the most part, cast within the remit of pleasure, as the lighting, soft music and focus of the
female form create aesthetic links to pornography. As such, the subversive attitude present within Salo is replaced by an eroticisation of the same imagery within Isla the Wicked Warden.

Due to this relationship to sexual titillation Franco’s narrative can be comfortably positioned within the women-in-prison narrative cycle, a sub-branch of exploitation cinema which later morphed into Nazi-sexploitation text (Petley, 2011, p.213). Although Greta’s asylum is not coded definably as a Nazi state, it is informed by semiotics of a faceless fascism and the trace of the Ilsa franchise, and for that reason, the link to the Nazi-sexploitation cycle is useful. This series of films use a very particular aesthetic template in order to make sexually violent films which exploit a politically motivated history of fact in order to make a deliberate effort to sexualise the holocaust (Krautheim, 2009, p.5). These women-in-prison narratives have been largely condemned due to their controversial use of actual events, and fail to assess the ideology behind the iconography in any detail (Krauthiem, 2009, p.5). Notably, as alluded to in the earlier assessment of Salo, these accusations have been made against Pasolini’s narrative. However, as indicted, Salo does seek to present a political message, and looks to explore the meanings behind the images it uses. In this sense, Salo was positioned as a mode of ‘anti-pornography’ rather than a text which encourages sexual stimulation.

Conversely, Ilsa the Wicked Warden is, as mentioned above, far more forthcoming in its portrayal of sexual pleasure and less firmly housed in political symbolism. Indeed, it can be argued that due to this Franco’s film welcomes and incites the erotic reading, as it seeks to use the semiotics of fascism to frame various sadomasochistic acts rather than foster a political metaphor. As such, Isla the
Wicked Warden provides an interesting case study as it balances images of sexual pleasure and the counter-aesthetic which obstructs unimpeded identification. Moreover, Franco’s own dualistic cultural persona, which drifts between his identities as a paracinematic auteur whose work must be approached through a sophisticated lens, and traditional exploitation director who uses the mores of the industry in an unapologetic manner (sex and violence as commercial channels), further complicates the positioning of this narrative. Therefore, the following paratextual exploration will investigate how these conflicting readings impact the commercialisation of the product, and whether the film is branded as a narrative of pleasurable sexual explicitness or artistic exploitation.

Consequently, although the films’ share an iconographical register, the deployment of fascist imagery and sexual transgression differs, producing shifting yet interchangeable cultural personas. As claimed by Hawkins, Franco retains a level of auteurship due to the employment of a paracinematic counter-aesthetic, as Salo’s extremity has disrupted its placement within the discourse of art cinema. This shows how the films could slip between taste economies, a line of investigation which will inform the forthcoming evaluation.

Marketing and Paratextual Identities

Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom: DVD Aesthetic, Marketing and Paratextual Identity

This chapter will now explore Salo’s latest remediation, released on the 23rd of May 2008 by BFI distribution (Pasolini, 1975b). The product under evaluation is a special edition dual format Blu-ray DVD. Within this investigation, an exploration of the
cultural position of the BFI distribution will act as a contextual background to the textual analysis of the product. BFI distribution is part of the British Film Institute, a charity that curates both the BFI National Archive and BFI Library whilst being a leading publisher of film academia. Its distribution label is responsible for releasing many queer cinema titles, culturally legitimised global art films, forgotten British films and the catalogues of Akira Kurosawa and Jacques Tati.

Consequently, the label preserves a prestigious quality, which becomes linked to the company’s brand identity and any film they release. Akin to the brand identity of Artificial Eye, BFI distribution and its associated imagery becomes a signifier of cultural worth, an aspect fundamental to the remediation and generic understanding of Salo. The official prestige of the BFI works to invert the critical ‘quarantining’ outlined earlier, and the negative stigma of Pasolini’s film becomes eclipsed by the legitimised status of academic worthiness. Consequently, due to the paratextual presence of the BFI, this commercial product allows Salo to transcend its previous condemnations, and become welcomed in to the broader scope of acceptable art alongside other canonical BFI releases.

The Cover

This edition of Salo is a premier release by the BFI, signified by the additional cardboard sleeve which encloses the slim line Blu-ray case and a 52 page colour booklet. The presentation of this artefact conforms to Klinger’s theories regarding special editions. As Klinger neatly states:

Special-edition marketing in particular provides an opportunity to elevate film to the status of high art, [. . .] In addition, through the often
extensive background materials that accompany it, a special edition appears to furnish the authenticity and history so important to establishing the value of an archival object (2006, p. 66).

As such, this edition and its supplementary paratextual items immediately legitimise the film, a process which runs concurrently to that of the brand identity of the BFI. This is advanced by the use of the Blu ray format, which due to its relationship to quality, maintains its own levels of prestige which are automatically grafted to any film released unto its format.

However, whilst the film acquires a level of legitimisation due to its distributor and commercial desirably, the product’s cover, and the narrative image it projects, sees the film promote a different identity (see figure 7 [p.157], figure 8 [p.157] and figure 9 [p.158]). The sleeve is composed of a black and white still image of two naked females, who are positioned on all fours with open mouths and leather dog collars. This image, in which the women are placed in a subservient pose, recalls traditional sadomasochistic iconography. The word “Salo” (Pasolini, 1975b) runs horizontally through the centre of the image, partially obscuring the women’s naked breast, however nipples are visible. This level of exposure is significant as even though the black and white photography alludes to a sense of artistic erotica, and the capital of the BFI logo gives an implicit indication that this is a text of cultural worth, the image is unavoidably sexual. The females’ pose and nudity asserts a male dominance, which despite serving an allegorical purpose within the narrative, fails to do so in its de-contextualised state. Unless one retains a familiarity of the film’s political message, the image works as a semiotic signifier for sexual supremacy and pleasure rather than political exploitation. Thus, the image has the capacity to re-dress the release, coding it under the perceptions of fetish pornography through the isolation of hyperbolic extremity.
Figure 7: *Salo*’s cardboard sleeve (front). DVD Artwork (Pasolini, 1975b).

Figure 8: *Salo*’s cardboard sleeve (back). DVD Artwork (Pasolini, 1975b).
The image of the two females is illustrative of the way a distributor can attempt to capitalise on the most exploitative part of a film’s narrative. There is no suggestion in this sexualised image or the small blurb of the film’s fascist allegory and aside from the standardised mention of the director, Pasolini’s authorship and directorial status is subservient to the promotion of the film’s sexual qualities. Subsequently, the film is marketed off its currency as a sexually explicit narrative. Hence, it can be proposed that the BFI are extending the traditions of the art film and exploitation cinema distributors of the 1960s and 1970s, as they too seek to exaggerate the film’s prevalence as an extreme text in order to make it appealing to a non-conventional demographic. It is obvious that by opening the film up to a different market sector, in this case an alternative adult audience, the distributor increases the commercial opportunities of the product. However, as a consequence of this economically motivated decision, the exploitative aspects of Salo’s narrative are promoted...
unchecked, and therefore circulate independently from the film’s allegorical symbolism.

As considered at length within Roberts’ article (2010), the film’s transgressive portrayal of sexual fetish has resulted in its continuing issues with censorship, a history which informs the small blurb on the rear of the sleeve. The text reads “Banned, censored and reviled the world over since its release, Pasolini’s final and most controversial masterpiece is presented here fully uncut and uncensored in a brand new restoration” (Pasolini, 1975b). Akin to the exploitation lists that adorned both Weekend (Godard, 1967b) and Cannibal Holocaust (Deodato, 1980b), the opening line; “banned, censored and reviled”, serves to isolate and promote the film’s extremity. This approach draws further links to exploitation marketing mores. As Kate Egan claims, the longevity of a film’s censorship increases its desirability, as the exclusivity becomes the central selling point to the paracinematic community (2007, p194). Herein, the promotion of the film’s censorial history works as a hyperbolic endorsement of the narrative’s forbidden quality. Unmistakably, the BFI is marketing the film as a historically abhorrent text, wherein the claim that the film is “presented here fully uncut and uncensored” (Pasolini, 1975b) not only marks the narrative out as a spectacle, buts situates it alongside a multitude of previously scandalous exploitation narratives which proudly advertise their illegitimacies.

Before analysing the vast paratextual presence available across both discs of this edition, a consideration of the exclusive accompanying 52-page booklet, which is described on the film’s outer cardboard sleeve as having a “new introduction by Sam Rohdie, Gideon Bachmann’s on-set diaries, reviews, BBFC correspondence, stills and on-set photographs” (Pasolini, 1975b), will take place. The cover of the booklet
mirrors that of the film in regards to colour pallet and typography, however, whilst nudity is present, an image of Pasolini acts as the foci (see figure 10[p.161]). Subsequently, a traditional form of authorial branding, which rests more comfortably with the cultural understanding of BFI distribution, prevails. However, the isolation of transgression which characterised the film’s cover is re-established on the booklet’s overleaf, where the selected film still contains several naked bodies (see figure 11[p.161]). This juxtaposition continues throughout the booklet as 10 out of 18 stills portray either nudity, suggested sexual situations or allude to violence, while 6 present pictures of Pasolini (Pasolini, 1975b). Although it can be argued that if one is to include stills from a film which is dominated by images of extremity than those screen caps will unavoidably portray nudity and violence, the reproduction within this booklet replicates the hyperbolic promotional tactic of segregation and repetition. Through having more images portraying extremity, and therefore de-contextualising and emphasising some of the film’s most transgressive moments, the booklet creates a narrative image based aroundexploitive incidences rather than an authorial artistry.
Figure 10: Front cover of Salo’s additional booklet. DVD Artwork (Pasolini, 1975b).

Figure 11: Booklets overleaf and Rohdie’s Introduction. DVD Artwork (Pasolini, 1975b).
These pictures are supported by a series of written passages, which are central to assessing the paratextual characteristics of the entire release. The first piece is a five page introduction entitled *Salo – An Introduction by Sam Rohdie* (Pasolini, 1975b). The foreword places Pasolini and the film within several contexts; Pasolini as a poet, his early filmmaking career, and his political beliefs, and thereby positions the filmmaker within an authorial environ. Overall, despite being flanked by images of extremity, Rohdie’s work locates the narrative within the scholarly discourse by providing a contextual background for the film’s transgressions.

This is followed by *Pasolini and Marquis de Sade by Gideon Bachmann* (Pasolini, 1975b). This article is a reproduction of the onset diaries of Bachmann originally published in *Sight and Sound* in 1975-76. The piece is informed by a personal style which judges the film subjectively, rather than the academic distance present within Rohdie’s introduction. The final sentence of Bachmann’s article neatly summarises this subjective tone: “I have seen sadomasochisation, rape, hanging, shooting, scalping, a variety of anal activities, executions by garrotting and electric chair, disfigurations of all sorts, beauty defiled in all possible ways, human bodies destroyed” (Pasolini, 1975b). While this quote clearly de-contextualises the violence, delivering it within a digestible list in which each event serves as a new market point, its linguistic construction is also problematic. Bachmann asserts the incidents witnessed are acts of reality, stating ‘I have seen’. This collapses the barriers between fiction and reality by merging the production process with real acts of exploitation, and consequently positions Pasolini as a real life exploiter.

This practice is continued within the next segment of the booklet; another retrospective review entitled *Salo o le Centoventi Giornate di Sodoma reviewed by Gilbert Adair in 1979* (Pasolini, 1975b). Within this review, originally published in
the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Adair compares Pasolini to the fictional libertarians depicted within the narrative, stating:

P.P.P, dandy [. . .] cineaste and homosexual, encloses himself and his crew for 52 days in an isolated villa (studio interiors) with sixteen beautiful young men and women, on whom he inflicts humiliations less appalling, certainly, then those depicted in the film [. . .] but humiliations nonetheless (Pasolini, 1975b).

This statement, akin to the one by Bachmann, problematically confuses the line between reality and fiction, and marks cinematic events as real exploitation.

Although these reviews condone the reading of *Salo* as a exploitive and pornographic narrative, their reproduction within the booklet is important in understanding the way this paratext reconstructs the cultural image of *Salo*. Through the inclusion of negative reviews, this release is allowed to act as an amendment piece, whereby the additional material found across the booklet and discs are comprehended as an attempt to reappraise the narrative using the discourse of ‘high’ culture. This increases the importance of the release, and, in a similar manner to the archival nature of the *Cannibal Holocaust* release studied in the previous chapter, codes the film as an artefact of serious cultural and critical worth.

The next two segments within the booklet tread the familiar line of ‘high’ cultural legitimisation and hyperbolic promotion. Both pieces focus on the censorial past of *Salo*; the first of which is a brief overview of the film’s censorship history written by Rodhie entitled *Salo Censored* (Pasolini, 1975b). The piece concentrates on the film seizer and the creation of a ‘club’ cut, and marks the narrative as an important part of British censorial history. The story of the film’s confiscation draws unavoidable parallels to the ‘video nasty’ scandal, and as already investigated, a film’s history with a censorship board often informs an exploitation marketing directive. However,
after Rohdie’s written piece is a transcription of the spoken word prologue and epilogue which bookended the aforementioned ‘club’ cut. Used to “legally ‘explain’ the context of Mussolini’s regime at Salo and the writings of Marquis de Sade” (Pasolini, 1975b), its reproduction here gives the booklet historical relevance, as it stands as evidence of the version’s existence. Therefore, while notions of censorial controversy construct a currency of notoriety, the recognition of this forgotten history again foregrounds this edition as an important part of the film’s cultural revision.

This is continued within a *Letter from the BBFC to the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1979* (Pasolini, 1975b), the second piece to evaluate the film’s censorship history. Written by James Ferman, the Director of the BBFC from 1975-1999, the letter was sent to Sir Thomas Hetherington as a defence of the feature. The correspondence works within the framework of historical contextualisation, but also, as the letter endeavours to legitimise the narrative, it contextualises much of the film’s extremities. Ferman locates the film firmly within its political metaphors, stressing that the narrative is a construct of fictional art, overturning the complicated vision of the film produced within the previously assessed reviews. The strong relationship this letter has to governmental procedures, along with the academic register adopted by Ferman, removes any sense of hyperbolic ballyhoo from the paratext, and again centralises the act of scholarly reappraisal.

As such, the cover and supplementary booklet retain the same contradictory status as the text itself. Impressions of academic legitimisation contrast against the isolation of sexual transgression to create a cultural product which bears a dual narrative image. This internal contradiction means the film, as a tangible commercial product, drifts between art and exploitation cultures, as some aspects of the cover and the booklet
situate the film within the confines of the Nazi-sexploitation aesthetic, as others simultaneously lobby for the film’s re-evaluation.

The Disc

Only through an investigation of the vast array of extras present across the film’s two discs can we determine whether this dual paratextual identity remains. In keeping with the established methodology, this section will consider the first disc before moving on to explore the second; examining each relevant extra in the order they appear on the menu. The first disc, which uses the Blu-ray format, contains the original Italian and English versions of the narrative, continuing the notions of historical authenticity which were foregrounded within the booklet and are central to approach this item as an artefact of cultural renewal.

However, it is the second disc which contains the majority of paratextual extras. Presented on the standard DVD format, the disc contains five features: Open Your Eyes (Pasolini, 1975b), Walking with Pasolini (Pasolini, 1975b), Whoever Says the Truth Shall Die (Pasolini, 1975b), Fade to Black (Pasolini, 1975b) and Ostia (Pasolini, 1975b). Open Your Eyes, a twenty-one minute long on-set documentary, resolutely positions Pasolini as auteur. Showing Pasolini directing scenes throughout, the on-set documentary contradicts the earlier statements that questioned the production environment, as the directorial process is shown to be an authorially precise exercise rather than a series of exploitative events. The feature also has interviews with two actors, Tatiana Mogilansky and Uberto Quintavalle, who both confirm the depth of the film’s message and its position within the art discourse.
The second extra, *Walking with Pasolini*, continues to strengthen this, reaffirming the brand identity of Pasolini. Interviews with Neil Bartlett (a film director), Craig Lapper (Senior Examiner at the BBFC) and Prof. David Forgacs (an academic) are intercut with BBC archive footage of Pasolini and segments of the film. Both Lapper and Forgacs confirm the narrative’s political metaphors, while Bartlett removes the film from the discussions of exploitation by stating *Salo* should be considered as one of the most beautiful films ever made. Crucially, the three interviewees represent fundamental pillars of legitimacy: the filmmaking world, the government and scholarly academia. Subsequently, an official capital, generated both through spoken legitimisation and the positions held by the talking heads, is grafted to the film text. As such, *Walking with Pasolini* enables *Salo* to become authenticated within the prevailing discourse of respectability.

The next special feature is the documentary *Fade to Black*, which, analogous to the other features on the disc, combines new interview segments, archive footage and montages of key scenes. However, *Fade to Black* is presented by Mark Kermode; a persona with a distinctive trace history capable of affecting the comprehension of *Salo*. Kermode, whilst having academic capital due to his PhD in English, also retains a concurrent image associated with the championing of transgressive cinema. This is evident in his chapter *I was a Teenage Horror Fan: Or ‘How I learned to stop worrying and love Linda Blair’* Mark Kermode (Age 36) (Kermode, 2001), in which he writes a highly personal account of his own horror fandom, subsequently authenticating his sub-cultural capital. In conjunction with this, his academic credence is often underplayed, with a more populist identity as a film critic becoming his dominant persona. Importantly, it is the secondary cultural identity which the feature, as Kermode’s often sensationalist delivery and lyrical description
of Pasolini’s film hyperbolically presents it as a transgressive spectacle. For example, his opening line: “in November 1975 Italian filmmaker Pier Pablo Pasolini was beaten to death by a rugged youth who could have easily stepped out of one of the director’s famously homoerotic films” (Pasolini, 1975b), sees Kermode perform as a circus barker. This continues as Kermode’s choice of words are deliberately provocative, subsequently manifesting a narrative image based around transgression and extremity. Words such as ‘orgy’, ‘degradation’, ‘sadist’, ‘death’, ‘languishing’, ‘notorious’, ‘ritualised’, ‘sodomy’, ‘coprophila’ and ‘rape’ (Pasolini, 1975b), despite being relevant to the narrative, recount the ballyhoo list tradition considered throughout this thesis. As such, his involvement here, through an understanding of his externally functioning cultural history, grafts an additional layer of meaning to the release.

The casting of the film within an extreme framework is continued within this documentary through the presence of interviewee Catherine Breillat. Breillat, akin to Kermode, carries her own cultural memory based in extremity due to the consistent centralisation of explicit sexuality and rape within her films (Wheatley, 2010, p.28). As a consequence of her presence, this extreme trace grafts itself to Salo and further codes the film as transgressive. Importantly, the documentary heightens the potency of this association by introducing her as the director of A Ma Soeur (Breillat, 2001) and Romance, two films which retain a relationship to Franco-extremity. Though Breillat states Salo is “one of the most important movie[s] of the world” (Pasolini, 1975b), thus critically validating the film, it is significant to note that within this instance her comments also confirm Salo’s extreme status. Through a combination of the viewer’s comprehension of her trace identity and the comments she makes regarding both the film and Pasolini, the audience is able to position Salo as an
artistic predecessor to the work of Breillat. As such, Pasolini’s film becomes an inspiration for even more extremist cinema, confirming its importance within a marginalised filmic category based around provocations, extremity and transgression.

The next paratext on the disc is the longest; a 58 minute documentary entitled *Whoever Says the Truth Shall Die*. The length of this special feature shows the BFI’s commitment to package the film as a definitive edition, further dressing it in the conventions of prestige. The documentary opens with newspaper clippings of Pasolini’s murder before discussing his objection to the war and life as a poet, with Alberto Moravia stating that “he is [Italy’s] most important poet since the fifties” (Pasolini, 1975b). The documentary is intercut with readings of Pasolini’s poetry, underling his presence as a multifaceted artist, and strengthening his relationship to the ‘high’ cultural discourse. While the feature confirms Pasolini’s auteur status, constructed through both its concentration on personal stories and the employment of trace surrogates such as Federico Fellini, Godard, and Bernardo Bertolucci, the slippage between traditional legitimisation and hyperbolic titillation continues.

The feature discusses Pasolini’s homosexuality and death in similar manner to the gossip dialogues which engulf mainstream releases. In regards to Pasolini’s sexual preference, his homosexuality is demonised through coding it as sexual promiscuity. Actress Laura Betti states that he was an intellectual but corrupting homosexual, who was tried 33 times for various crimes but always acquitted. Moreover, information surrounding Pasolini’s teaching career alludes problematically to paedophilia, as it is claimed his position was terminated due to allegations surrounding homosexual relationships with students. This fascination and morbidity is supported by the details and gory images of his death. The newspaper images of Pasolini’s deceased
body are edited in order to create a relationship with Salo’s violent climax, again dismantling the barriers between fictional images and reality. The feature casts the death in mystery, stating first that there were issues with the trial before Maria Antonietta Macciocchi claims the murder was a politically charged public execution (Pasolini, 1975b). This idea of mystery presents Pasolini within the remit of cult icon, explored in detail by Matt Hills in his book Fan Cultures (2002, pp.138-142), and again places Pasolini between paracinematic validation and official authorial standing.

Hence, throughout all the paratexts available on this disc, taste slippage is visible, as three main readings come to the fore: Pasolini as auteur, critical legitimisation and the currency of disgust. However, through the film’s restoration and its encapsulation within this new paratextual context, the BFI release of Salo becomes a new entity with a rigorously researched context. Hawkins argues that via the addition of new paratextual contexts, the screening of DVDs within the private sector becomes the film’s world premiere (2000, p.44). In this sense, a commercial product has the ability to rejuvenate the film and refashion it as an entirely new object, not only entrenched in new meaning, but official capital due to its ‘newness’. Indeed, similar to the Cannibal Holocaust release in the last chapter, this release of Salo exists as a divided entity, yet is able to gather ‘high’ cultural capital and validity due to the accumulation of paratextual features which provide a new context for the transgressions present.
The chapter will now investigate the 2004 Anchor Bay Entertainment Jess Franco Collection (Franco, 1976-1977), of which *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* is contained. This collection contains eight films; *Ilsa the Wicked Warden*, *Barbed Wire Dolls* (Franco, 1976a), *Blue Rita* (Franco, 1977a), *Jack the Ripper* (Franco, 1976a), *Love Camp* (Franco, 1977a), *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun* (Franco, 1977a), *Sexy Sisters* (Franco, 1977a) and *Voodoo Passion* (Franco, 1977a). Through the reproduction of the collection, the boxset correlates neatly with Lucas’ comment that nearly all of Franco's most important titles are available on DVD (2010, p.17). This is significant due to the lack of scholarship surrounding his work; meaning the cultural identity of Franco is intrinsically linked to the DVD format rather than the critical discourse, thus making an exploration of his commercially created narrative image indispensable to the broader consideration of the director.

Anchor Bay Entertainment is part of the larger Starz Media, LLC Company. The distribution label was part of the Handleman Company (1995-2003) before being sold to IDT Entertainment (2003-2006), which itself was brought and renamed Starz Media. In 2007 the Anchor Bay label was renamed Starz Home Entertainment, before being reinstalled as Anchor Bay Entertainment in 2008, which is its present incarnation. Even though within the contemporary climate the company distributes children’s films, horror cinema, fitness DVDs and stand-up comedy, during the mid-2000s, Anchor Bay was synonymous with the distribution of horror and cult cinema. Though it is important to recognise that the company’s varied catalogue dilutes its sub-cultural capital, Anchor Bay continues to maintain a level of sub-cultural capital due to the distribution of canonical narratives.
Fundamental to this identity is their special edition release of *The Evil Dead* (Raimi, 1981a). Raimi’s film is considered a genre classic within Brigit Cherry’s study of the horror fan discourse (2008, p.213), and consequently its distribution bestows Anchor Bay with sub-cultural capital. The edition, encased within a rubber sleeve, aims to replicate the ‘book of the dead’, a prominent part of *The Evil Dead’s* iconography and fictional mythology. The product opens like a novel, and the thick, card pages are filled with drawings akin to the ones present within the fictitious manuscript. In regards to the aforementioned comments of Klinger and her work on DVD special editions, the employment of specialised packages elevates the narrative, and by association the company, within the cultural hierarchy. Moreover, the elaborate cover aesthetic complies with fans’ collecting habits as it centralises the importance of ownership outlined in the Introduction. As such, Anchor Bay carries a dual brand image, as it pools the sub-cultural credence of understanding fan desires with economic capital to provide mainstream quality special editions. Importantly, the Jess Franco Collection trades off this distinction through its ‘boxset’ status.

*The Cover*

This section will begin with a brief examination of the collection as a whole due to the influence it holds over the interpretation of *Ilsa the Wicked Warden*, before undertaking a more focused examination of the case text. The fundamental question motivating this assessment is whether the notions of auteurism noted by Hawkins and Lucas impact the marketing direction of this release.

As stated, the collection features eight Franco films directed between 1976 and 1977. Each film is presented on a single disc within a slim case, which is then housed
within the larger cardboard sleeve. The front of the outer sleeve has large gold writing which reads “the Jess Franco Collection” (Franco 1976-1977), and serves as the focus point of the aesthetic design. The gold writing lends a sense of prestige to the release, bestowing the collection with an impression of authority and legitimacy through the adoption of grand signifiers, while clearly relying on an auteur brand identity (see figure 12 [p.173]). Four of the covers that adorn the individual cases of *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* (Franco, 1977b), *Barbed Wire Dolls* (Franco, 1976b), *Blue Rita* (Franco, 1977b) and *Jack the Ripper* (Franco, 1976b) appear below this title. From this, it is clear that the boxset trades off the branding of Franco rather than that of his individual films, as the reproduced sleeves are too small (4cm) to present any distinct narrative image. This notes an important shift in the vocabulary afforded exploitation cinema, as previous incarnations of paracinematic features would have promoted terms such as ‘gore’ and ‘splatter’ over any sense of authorial expression and control (Guins, 2005, p.26).
The back cover follows the same aesthetic composition, with gold writing forming the focus while portraying the four remaining covers (see figure 13 [p.174]) (Franco, 1976-1977). The small blurb revolves around the dual concepts of auteurism and technology, as the passage claims the films can be experienced as never before “with brilliant colours, clear sound and technical perfection surpassing the originals by far” (Franco, 1976-1977). Here, Anchor Bay elevates themselves to the status of archivist, and, through the centralisation of restoration, cast the films contained in the boxset as new ‘world premiers’. Again this illustrates a co-option of traditional art film marketing strategies, clearly displaying the edition as a hybrid artefact.
In regards to aesthetic composition of *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* and the other films included within the collection, this ‘high’ cultural legitimisation is replaced by more traditional exploitation marketing models. Out of eight covers, seven contain nudity on the front cover, which, as the images are reproduced on the outer case, becomes externally presented. Out of the seven that show nudity, six show breast, with *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun* (Franco, 1977b) showing a female’s pubic area (see figure 14 [p.175], figure 15 [p.175], figure 16 [p.176], figure 17 [p.176], figure 18 [p.177], figure 19 [p.177] and figure 20 [p.178]). This portrayal of female sexuality mirrors the images of sexuality that adorn the cover of *Salo*, highlighting the fluidity of the two cinematic arenas. However, while the legitimisation of the BFI helped to validate the sexuality of the *Salo* cover, the paracinematic brand image of Anchor Bay amplifies the exploitative nature of the image.
Figure 14: Voodoo Passion. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1977b).

Figure 15: Blue Rita. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1977b).
Figure 16: Love Camp. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1977b).

Figure 17: Barbed Wire Dolls. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1976b).
Figure 18: *Jack the Ripper*. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1976b).

Figure 19: *Sexy Sisters*. DVD Artwork (Franco, 1977b).
Though female sexuality is centralised, the boxset further blurs the barriers between art and exploitation marketing directives by emphasising national cinema trace identities. Five of the releases: *Barbed Wire Dolls* (Franco, 1976b), *Blue Rita* (Franco, 1977b), *Love Camp* (Franco, 1977b), *Sexy Sisters* (Franco, 1977b) and *Voodoo Passion* (Franco, 1977b), present the German title of the film underneath the English language version. All the films were produced by the Swiss production company Elite films, and through an inclusion of the foreign title, it is evident Anchor Bay are foregrounding what Rosalind Galt terms European-ness (Galt, 2006, p.6). By drawing attention to national identity Anchor Bay eroticises the film, trading off the cultural capital of European film culture, which Galt claims has specific levels of capital (Galt, 2006, p.6). Evidently, the perception of Europe here is used to homogenise Franco and his cinema under a communal understanding of cultural prestige, and gain authentication through the trace of art cinema.
With this fluidity in place, this section will now focus on the individual *Ilisa the Wicked Warden* cover (Franco, 1977b), which deliberately invokes several established brands in order to connote various messages (see figure 21). As will become apparent, this approach allows the film to become understood on a number of levels, motivating consumption through assorted frameworks in an attempt to reach a broader demographic. Firstly, the cover extends the concept of Franco as a commercial brand, as a border confirms the film’s inclusion within the official Jess Franco Collection. The word ‘official’ here performs an important role within the legitimisation of the film, as it welcomes the director into the authorised space of auteur cinema.

Nonetheless, the brand of the *Ilisa* franchise and the intertextual presence of Thorne, which cannot exist separately due to her continued centralisation within the series, can be seen to oppose the authorial presence of Franco. Significantly, the largest
word on the cover is “ILSA” (Franco, 1977b), measuring at 2cm high, which is four times the height of Franco’s name. Furthermore, the word is 7.5cm wide, meaning it is over half the width of the entire front cover (13cm), clearly provoking and promoting the trace of the entire *Ilsa* series. In support of this claim, the second part of the title: “the Wicked Warden” (Franco, 1977b), is not capitalised or presented in a bold typeface, indicating that Franco’s variation of the concept is of little importance when compared to the commercial potency of the entire franchise. Therefore, it is clear that the word ‘Ilsa’, when placed within this framework, triggers a series of generic meanings that are more significant than the sum of its individual composition.

The dominance of the word ‘Ilsa’ is emulated by the presentation of Thorne on the cover. The actress draws the focus of the audience as she is placed centrally, in colour, between two green toned sepia images (Franco, 1977b). The predominant image sees Thorne assume the stereotypical Ilsa pose, as Thorne is presented holding a whip in a green military uniform which is unbuttoned to show cleavage and drawn in at her waist to accentuate her breasts. The correlation this shares with other images of Ilsa seen throughout her paratextual identity enables the cover to sit neatly within the pre-existing culture that surrounds the franchise. Crucially, the association with Nazi-sexploitation is extended through the two images that flank Thorne. The screen shot on the right depicts a women begin restrained by male hands, as the still on the left portrays a nude woman. Through the juxtaposition of three images; the empowered figure, nude female and restrained women, the cover neatly summarises the generic traits of the woman-in-prison narrative.

This is continued throughout the films blurb, which quickly establishes notions of fascism stating “Greta del Pino is the sadistic warden of a female concentration camp
 thinly disguised as an asylum, somewhere in South America [. . .] the last destination of the undesirable elements in an obviously fascist state” (Franco, 1977b). This opening line connects Franco’s film to both the Ilsa series and the broader semiotics of the Nazi exploitation cycle. The two stills on the back cover reaffirm this generically motivated narrative image, as one portrays a lesbian kiss, and the other illustrates a naked female being handled by uniformed men (Franco, 1977b). Consequently, the individual paratext of Ilsa the Wicked Warden counteracts the ‘high’ cultural standing presented on the larger slip case and underplays the film’s association to the extreme art discourse by placing emphasis on sexuality, the cultural impression of Ilsa and the generic trappings of the women-in-prison narrative.

The Disc

As stated, this is a single disc edition, and as such the structure will follow the order in which the paratextual featurettes appear on the menu. A slow montage of sexual images, matched with music and a sexual groan of ‘Greta’ plays before the main menu. This foregrounding of sexuality continues on the title screen, as it is framed by a moving image of a female touching her breasts (see figure 22 [p.182]) (Franco, 1977b). Although both Thorne and Franco intertexts can are present, the menu sequence is dominated by notions of sexual titillation and thus normative pleasure. This theme continues throughout the disc, as all menus and backdrops are coded through the dictum of soft-core pornography. However, it is hard to ignore the correlation these de-contextualised images share with the proliferation of nudity within the Salo booklet. This affiliation is continued with the first paratextual feature
on the disc entitled *Production and Film Stills* (Franco, 1977b). The gallery hosts 25 images, 15 of which depict either nudity, violence or a combination of the two, collating neatly with the division of visuals present in the *Salo* booklet. Akin to the main title menu, a green sepia image of a female with exposed breasts is located in the bottom left corner of the gallery frame. Significantly, this image is almost the size of the production stills, and therefore, even when the picture does not display nudity, the impression of pornography is still present (see figure 23 [p.183]).

![Figure 22: Ilsa the Wicked Warden’s main title screen. DVD Extra (Franco, 1977b).](image-url)
The second feature, entitled *Cast and Crew* (Franco, 1977b), includes biographies of Dyanne Thorne, Erwin C. Dietrich, Tania Busselier, Lina Romay and Jess Franco. Again the title screen features a nude female, and this persistent presence of nudity alongside Franco’s authorial signature shapes his cultural persona, resolutely positioning his branding within the dictum of sexploitation. The three women; Thorne, Busselier and Romay, all have a 2 page selected filmography, presented over a green sepia still of a nude shower scene (Franco, 1977b).

The film’s producer Erwin C. Dietrich’s biography is the second listed, illustrating his importance to the text. Dietrich receives 6 pages, split between a 4 page biography and 2 page selected filmography. While the background image strongly recounts the semiotics of sexploitation and pornography with its promotion of nudity, the written text operates within the framework of traditional art film legitimisation. Stating Dietrich “was one of the largest film producers in Europe”
(Franco, 1977b); it positions him as a cinematic visionary. The text aims to place Dietrich in three different cultural locations: American exploitation cinema, mainstream cinema and European art cinema, all of which locate the producer within pre-existing notions of respectability. Firstly, though the text mentions his links to exploitation cinema, it carefully states Dietrich could be considered as Roger Corman’s European counterpart. The importance of Corman here is found within the acceptability of his work, with films like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (Corman, 1957), *The Wasp Women* (Corman, 1959) and *A Bucket of Blood* (Corman, 1959) representing an era of American exploitation cinema based on shocks rather than excessive violence and sex. Secondly, the biography states that Dietrich gave eventual Oscar winner Xavier Koller his first shooting experience, wherein the mention of the Oscars allows Dietrich to be read through a culturally validated context of mainstream approval. Finally, the biography positions Dietrich within the discourse of European cinema, using the trace of national production as a way to heighten the legitimacy of his work, declaring he is “an irreplaceable and integral part of the European film entity” (Franco, 1977b).

The same employment of trace surrogates is evident within the biography of Franco, as it looks to station him within several culturally established sites: American film history, British theatre, festival legitimisation, authorial control, and art cinema. Firstly, the biography mentions that Franco worked with Orson Welles on an adaptation of a Shakespeare play, which was in turn nominated for a British Film Award. These three aspects: Welles, Shakespeare and culturally valid recognition (the biography later mentions the Berlin Film festival), all work to draw legitimacy from differing cultural locations and graft them to the brand image of Franco. Later the biography asserts that “it was not unusual for him to be the screenplay author,
director, cameraman, composer and star all at the same time” (Franco, 1977b), a statement that recalls the taxonomy of auteur study. Finally, the biography remarks that “in the 1970s, Franco shared, along with Luis Buñuel, the Catholic Church’s title of most dangerous film maker” (Franco, 1977b). The mention of Buñuel here enables the paratextual feature to graft the director’s capital to Franco, and positions him as an artistic rouge rather than mere exploiter.

The next feature is the interview with Dietrich and Franco, entitled Interviews (Franco, 1977b). As a standalone paratextual artefact, the feature harbours the conflict seen throughout the rest of the release. The extra affords the viewer an audience with Franco, reasserting the importance of his auteur status, yet simultaneously promotes sexual explicitness by replaying scenes of de-contextualised nudity. Despite the fact that the presence of Franco and the comments of Dietrich are important in situating the release within the remit of cultural validation, the constant duplication of sexual images works to entrap the film within its most explicit taboos.

The final paratextual feature to be considered here is entitled DVD Production Report (Franco, 1977b). The feature bestows the collection with ‘high’ capital through an explanation of the production process. Claimed to be “the resurrection of Jess Franco’s films” (Franco, 1977b), the new transfers are said to be from original negatives, drawing parallels to the description of the Salo print made throughout the BFI release. Furthermore, the mapping of the production process draws a distinct comparison to the process of recovery which underpinned the discussion of the Salo ‘club’ cut. The reciprocal nature of the language between the BFI and Anchor Bay is important, as while the companies are working within different parts of a mutual marketplace, the emphasis they place on providing information about the film’s
transfer achieves the same results. Essentially, through highlighting their role as restorers, Anchor Bay endorses Franco’s film, showing it as ‘worthy’ of this treatment, a concept that relates Raiford Guins’ work on the remediation of Italian horror cinema. He claims that Italian horror went from a ‘gore-object’ when on VHS to an ‘art-object’ on DVD (Guins, 2005, p.17), as the various extras retain the ability to correct the film’s status (Guins, 2005, p.27). This process of transformation is evident throughout the *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* release, and has a large impact on the cultural economy the film positions itself within.

However, although there are implications of legitimacy in drawing attention to the film’s restoration; the focus on and de-contextualisation of sex is a constant throughout the paratexts and overpowers all other semiotic signifiers. Essentially therefore, while small areas of crossover with art cinema marketing tactics can be located, such as the authorial branding of Franco, which itself proves the validity of Hawkins earlier suggestions, the paratextual identity of the film reflects the cultural image of exploitation cinema.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, these two releases again present the slippage and crossover that defined the history of exploitation and art film marketing mapped in Chapters One and Two. Both releases accentuated of the restoration process, which afforded the distribution companies an elevated status. The encapsulation of the releases within a context of paratextual activity allowed these editions to act as scholarly incisions within the discourses of the films. Both releases packaged and marketed the editions as ‘events’ within the history of the narratives, and therefore bestowed their products
with the ability to change their cultural positioning. This is particularly important when evaluating the Jess Franco Collection, as it comes to imply Hawkins’ divisions between art and paracinematic labels, mapped in Chapter One, are more fluid than she acknowledges. In this example, the distribution company associated with cult cinema shares the attention to detail prevalent within the art market sector. This consequently proposes that the introduction of DVD enables exploitation films to instantly increase their status as cinematic artefacts through their association with the medium. This idea is suggested within Guins’ Blood and Black Gloves on Shiny Discs: New Media, Old Tastes, and the Remediation of Italian Horror Films in the United States (2006) wherein the author notes that previously ‘lowbrow’ products are given a ‘highbrow’ status through their encapsulation on the new format, which within society and the consumer space is considered a designer product (Guins, 2006, p.29). This reading allows us to more readily position Franco within the discourse of extreme art cinema, even as parts of his cultural persona becomes entrenched within generic excess.

Likewise, both releases constructed their public face through a concentration of the naked female form. The Jess Franco Collection outwardly endeavours to be part of this sexual quarantine, due to its profitability, and laces its paratextual zones with references to sexual extremity at every opportunity. In the case of Salo, the BFI actively invoke the stigma, and pleasure, of sexual extremity. Importantly, in regards to Pasolini’s film, this ultimately means the film still exists within the quarantine of disgust, reconstructing the history, comprehension and additional readings of the text, proving the influence paratextual items hold over the films they promote.

However, upon consumption of the special features, one can put forth an additional reading of the sexualised body used on the cover. The sexual body can be read as an
extension and inversion of Pasolini’s main political theory; the belief that within society the body has become a commodity. In this framework, the centralisation of the female body on the cover of the BFI release works as a visualisation of the director’s world view. Although this reading is reliant on a sophisticated understanding of the film’s political messages, and therefore is not available to the casual consumer, it is still important within finding distinctions between generic marketing mores and those that define extreme art film and its hybridity. In relation to this, the representation of explicit sexuality itself, while being titillating, is also confrontational due to its restrictedness. Therefore, perhaps more in terms of its application on Salò due to the contextual history provided throughout the release, yet still applicable to Franco’s film, the presentation of sex acts as a mode of rejection as it refuses the mainstream conventions and bourgeois mores of marketable representation. It is therefore clear that both texts borrow from ‘high’ and ‘low’ taste structures, and illustrates that within the contemporary home cinema environ, the history of slippage remains prevalent.
Chapter Five
A Historical Context Contemporary Extremity: 1985-2009

Following the intent of Chapter Two, this chapter will create a cinematic and cultural framework in which the forthcoming case studies of Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier can be positioned and thoroughly explored. The earlier context chapter mapped the history of art film extremity and exploitation artistry by highlighting certain landmark directors and films, and therein exposed the lineage of generic and cultural crossover. This chapter will continue investigating this history, and survey the various industrial shifts that impacted the progression of extreme art cinema. The chapter will start by evaluating the economic changes which lead to a lack of extreme art production in the 1980s, before exploring its resurgence in the 1990s and 2000s. During this investigation, the chapter will undertake detailed analysis of key French extremity narratives, before looking at extreme art texts from Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, and Greece. Through the selection of these foci, the chapter will more thoroughly examine the pan-European nature of extreme art film and the transitional climate these films circulate within. Again, at the centre of these discussions will be the notions of hybridity and rejection that have so far defined this project’s account of extreme art cinema.

Thereafter the chapter will explore the state of exploitation cinema during this era, initially noting the affect the refinement of the horror industry had upon the portrayal of the extreme spectacle. Afterwards, the chapter will move to discuss the re-emergence of violent European horror cinema, and, through an application of Betz’s modes of cultural triangulation, address the manner these texts differ from extreme art cinema. Within this exploration, the Optimum Releasing marketing campaign for Martyrs (Laugier, 2008) will be used as format to discuss the ways European horror
is given a preferred reading which differs from extreme art cinema. In the use of this document, the source becomes illustrative of a wider process of commercialisation.

Again, akin to Chapter Two, this chapter aims not to provide a complete history, but a snapshot of seminal shifts, narratives and directors which expose the historical and geographically mobile nature of extreme art cinema. The period of production under consideration runs roughly from 1985 to 2009, and therein creates a concise and workable history of extreme art cinema in which the forthcoming case studies can be housed, assessed and understood.
Art Cinema

The 1980s and early 1990s

Market forces and changes to the industry are fundamental to comprehension extreme art film within this era. Central to this process was the fall of the Berlin wall, which ushered in new forms of European cinema and new areas of expansion (Galt, 2006, pp.1-2), whereby post-Wall art cinema operated within a newly formed global film market (Galt, 2006, p.6). This new economic culture was itself grounded within the increased pressures of globalisation, as the geographic developments within Europe allowed Hollywood to find audiences within a larger number of territories (Chaudhuri, 2005, p.14). Consequently, European art cinema found itself under mounting financial demands as it was forced to compete on a global stage.

In order to assess the impact of this new climate, it is useful to refer to the cinema of Italy, which, as the first part of this thesis illustrated, had been vital to the progression of extreme art film through the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bernardo Bertolucci, Federico Fellini, Dario Argento, Ruggero Deodato and Lucio Fulci. Following the deregulation of television broadcasting and the impact of globalisation, the Italian industry of the 1980s was struggling to find an audience (Wood, 2005, p.29). In response, national production began to concentrate on more mainstream friendly features. This resulted in a series of Italian narratives, including Cinema Paradiso (Tornatore, 1988) and Life is Beautiful (Benigni, 1997) being nominated for Academy Awards (Oscars) (Brunetta, 2005, p.299), a clear signal of homogenised recognition. As such, the extreme art features of the 1970s became secondary to the demand for commercial acceptance, temporarily stifling production.
of transgressive cinema from Italy, a national cinema which had previously been a preeminent producer of extreme art cinema.

A similar trend was occurring across other European territories, as the pressures of globalisation were changing the aesthetic, formal and thematic concerns of art cinema. Within both France and Spain cinematic excess began to eclipse the presence of transgressive extremity. Here it becomes useful to refer back to the definition of extremity and excess provided in the Introduction, where it was suggested that extremity employs cinematic realism to deny gratification and challenge the audience’s consumption of transgressive material. In contrast, it was claimed that cinematic excess provided a non-obstructed vision of transgression, which was concerned with delivering excitement, enjoyment, and titillation.

Within the cinema of France and Spain, these excessive mores became the prevailing cinematic style, and can be read as a response to the ongoing process of globalisation. In France, excess took form within the Cinéma du Look, a movement which was active from 1980-1994 (Harris, 2004, p.228), and was constructed around Jean-Jacques Beineix’s *Diva* (Beineix, 1981), Luc Besson’s *Subway* (Besson, 1985) and Leos Carax’s *Mauvais Sang* (Carax, 1986). This cinematic form defied the generation of directors schooled in the intellectual and naturalistic modes of the French New Wave, and instead centred on extravagant spectacles of visual excess (Harris, 2004, p.219). This visual excess, as Rosalind Galt claims, was used indiscriminately, without depth or realism (2006, p.15), and, as Sue Harris asserts, offered the audience moments of sensory pleasure (Harris, 2004, p.221). The centralisation of fulfilment, a key factor within this work’s distinction between extremity and excess, was amplified by the use of American genre templates (Chaudhuri, 2005, p.21) which removed the methods of disruption familiar within
the extreme art film canon. This change is vital within addressing this particular era of French production, as it illustrates a shift in the concerns of the art industry at the time.

A similar process can be located within Spanish cinema of the era, most notably in the filmography of Pedro Almodóvar. The early cinema of Almodóvar, in relation to industrial shifts, encapsulated the new found cinematic liberalism brought about by the fall of Francisco Franco. As Rob Stone neatly notes, it “all seemed to happen at once. Film-makers found themselves in an unsupervised candy store of previously forbidden treats” (2002, p.110). Stone’s ‘candy store’ allegory is constructive in framing the cinema of Almodóvar within the models of excess; however it has been suggested by certain critics that his work would fit within paradigm of traditional cinematic extremity. Paul Julian Smith, for example, claims *Pepi, Luci, Bom* (Almodóvar, 1980) marked a new level of Spanish explicitness which shamelessly offended the sensibility of the average viewer (2000, pp.15-17). This frames Almodóvar within the practice of artistic transgression, a view echoed by Mark Allinson, who states Almodóvar exploited the relaxation of censorship and the novelty selling power of nudity, whilst claiming *Pepi, Luci, Bom* acts as “a virtual catalogue of taboos, a carnivalesque sexual and scatological challenge to accepted public taste” (2001, p.94). What prevails within both these interactions is the notion that Almodóvar is challenging the homogenised consensus of acceptability, a principal factor which often differentiates extreme art film from more genre driven forms of excess.

However, certain narrative tropes problematise Almodóvar’s placement within the extreme art continuum as it is defined within this thesis. Almodóvar uses comedy as a narrative template, a genre that not only enjoyed success under the Franco regime
(Triana-Toribio, 2003, p.136), but also frames the acts in a manner which encourages a more fluid interpretation of transgression, affording the audience space to read the acts as gratifying moments of pleasure. This is reflected upon by Stone who concludes Almodóvar’s films were more cheeky then anarchic, stating “camp, kitsch and cozy, his [Almodóvar] films were playful, rude and fun” (2002, p.110). It is this ‘tongue-in-cheek’ representation of transgression which ultimately highlights the manner in which Almodóvar’s filmography is dislocated from extreme art films’ centralisation of confrontation and audience interrogation.

Within the context of this thesis, it is this excess, by which transgressive images are framed in the generic models of horror and comedy in order to incite entertainment rather than displeasure, and the growing pressures of globalisation, which temporally lead to the suppression of extreme art film production. However, in the latter part of the 1990s, a re-emergence of extremity began to take place. The centre of this reoccurrence was France, which through the late 1990s until the present can be characterised as the principal producer of extreme art narratives. Yet, in line with this work’s wish to analyse extreme art production beyond that of the French industry, the following section will also consider texts from Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, and Greece.

French Extreme Art Cinema

Due to the volume of French productions, this section will act as a brief contextual overview, discussing only the most significant films and filmmakers. Within this framework, several texts come to the fore as landmark artefacts. Seminal texts include the cinema of Catherine Breillat, most notably Romance, À Ma Soeur!
(Breillat, 2001) and Anatomy of Hell, alongside Gaspar Noé’s I Stand Alone (Noé, 1999) and Irreversible. In conjunction with these are narratives such as Twentynine Palms, Dans Ma Peau, Trouble Every Day, and Baise Moi, all of which feature extreme violence, sex and a cinematic aggressiveness which seeks to incite displeasure through an inversion of generic tropes.

As mapped in the Introduction, critical dialogues concerning French extremity have often drawn a relationship between cinematic extremity and commercial imperatives. As stated earlier, the likes of James Quandt and Hampus Hagman discussed the manner in which the shocking nature of the narratives simply garnered attention within the overcrowded market place and positioned the films as ‘must-see’ texts. As Tim Palmer notes, “those filmmakers [...] associated with the cinema du corps have either drastically advanced their reputations [...] or else become agit-prop auteur’s seemingly overnight” (2011, p.58). Despite aspects of these arguments being difficult to dismiss, this practice, as argued within the Introduction, does stifle the ability to discuss French extreme art films within the broader debates of art cinema.

However, these discourses, despite creating one image of the canon, are not the only forms of critical interaction available. Many scholars have worked to redefine the ambitions of French extremity, and dislodge the singular focus on commercialisation. Here, it is important to recall the prevailing notion of challenge and confrontation that rests at the core of this thesis’s conceptualisation of extreme art film as it enables us to position these French extreme texts within an art film history of experimentation and disruption. Palmer, despite pronouncing the marketability of these narratives, locates them within art cinemas’ power to stimulate the mind of the audience, claiming that in an age of the jaded spectator, the brutality
of the texts illustrates films’ continued potential to inspire bewilderment (2006, p.22). This ability to stir a reaction within a generation saturated by media images is crucial to positioning these narratives as a continuation of art cinemas’ historic concerns, and is one echoed by Tanya Horeck and Tina Kendall. Horeck and Kendall note that the practice of provocation displayed by these extreme narratives is key to theorising contemporary cinema as a whole (2011, p.2). These dialogues help to overturn the reductive concentration on market exposure, and productively enable French extremism to bebannered under the dominant mores of art cinema.

It is this section’s wish, and in a broader sense the thesis’s as a whole, to partake in this practice. Therefore the forthcoming consideration of Catherine Breillat and Gaspar Noé; directors whom are entrenched within the cultural and scholarly conceptualisation of extreme art cinema, will look to highlight their relationship to the modes of rejection that have thus far defined this project’s examination of extreme art cinema. The work of Breillat fits nicely within the duality of the above dialogues, as her work has been read as both finically exploitative and artistically challenging. Due to her consistent use of hard-core sex, Breillat has been labelled a pornographer. This is important not only due to both the stigma of the industry and its strong relationship to the economy of the filmic form, but also how it affects the audience’s interpretation of Breillat’s cinema. As Lisa Downing states, pornography reproduces the gendered power imbalance of socio-sexual reality, staging male porn stars as active, aggressive bearers of the phallus and the gaze, and female porn actresses as passive, objectified victims (2004, p.267). By understating Breillat cinema as pornographic, one immediately denies her cinema the reading protocol commonly used in the consideration of art cinema, and more readily accepts the prevailing notion of transgressive gimmickry.
However, again to return to the work of Downing, Breillat’s use of sexual explicitness exists as an active reworking of the male gaze (2004, p.269). Evident in Romance’s use of voiceover, whereby the metaphysical monologues of Marie disrupt the audience’s identification with sexual explicitness (2004, p.269), Breillat dislocates pleasure and inverts the normative structures of pornography. Catherine Wheatley’s article Contested Interactions: Watching Catherine Breillat's Scenes of Sexual Violence (2010), further articulates how Breillat and her work circulate in a traversed space between transgressive extremity, in which the use of unsimulated sex is read as an exploitative gesture, and an allegorical, artistic deconstruction of dominant ways of seeing. It is this project’s aspiration, as it has been throughout, to address Breillat not as a pornographer who employs sexuality in order to achieve economic gain, but a filmmaker who reframes exploitive mores in an art film lexicon of experimentation and challenge. Yet, as a consequence of her contradictory status, Breillat can act as a cipher in which we can understand critical opinions of French extreme art film: a disputed, inconsistent cultural site which shifts between critical condemnation, ‘low’ cultural branding, and academic validation.

This dual cultural image can also be attached to Gaspar Noé and his film Irreversible, which Palmer notes is the most disliked film in the canon (2006, p.27). This aversion stems from the film’s rape sequence, which Daniel Hickin claims set a new precedent for onscreen depictions of rape (2011, p.128). The sequence, which shows Alex (Monica Bellucci) being anally raped for seven minutes in an unedited static shot, was seen as an un-amusing way to capture attention (James, 2003, p.20), and read within the framework of hyperbole and spectacle. As a consequence of this, the experimentations of the narrative (reversed story arch, fluid camera work and
juxtaposing uses of pace) were reduced to cinematic gimmicks (Brottman, 2004, p.38).

Yet, as seen throughout this thesis’s attempt to draw together a series of narratives, the mores of exploitation which form the basis of this sequence are inverted to create a disruptive and confrontational cinematic experience. Through the extended length of the sequence, and the lack of flesh exposed, the rape becomes an act of violence (Kermode, 2003, p.22), denying the audience the titillation that is often associated with scenes of rape within more generic frameworks. Moreover, the reversed narrative denies the pleasures of the rape revenge narrative it uses as its foundation, as the act of vengeance occurs with no narrative context. Therefore, *Irreversible* disrupts the audiences’ engagement with the act of rape and the violence of revenge, supressing the excessive excitement of both deeds through an inversion of exploitation modes of address. Again, the film and Noé as a director retain the dual image of French extreme cinema, as he is characterised in equal parts as a condemned and demonised figure who employs extremity as a mode of attention seeking and an artist who challenges the audience through framing transgressions with a strict rhetoric of confrontation, experimentation and rejection.

The same confliction is found within the extreme narratives of both Claire Denis and Bruno Dumont. Here, it is useful to address the manner extremity affects the comprehension of a directors auteur status, as it usefully exposes the ramifications cinematic transgressions have upon modes of art cinema appraisal. Prior to *Trouble Every Day*, Denis retained a legitimised status as a successful art film director; however this film was met with some extremely negative reviews (Ratner, 2010, p.36) due to the mixture of narrative banality and extreme violence. Notably, the
extremity of the film, in which there are multiple scenes of cannibalistic bodily mutilation, clashed with the existing culture image of Denis, resulting in a disavowal of her legitimacy. A similar dialogue is echoed within Bruno Dumont’s *Twentynine Palms*, another important extreme art narrative. As Demetrios Matheou states, the film “polarise[d] opinion, eliciting applause and outrage, academic treatise and mockery” (2005, p.16), while seemingly defiling Dumont’s established auteur image (Quandt, 2004, p.126). Again, akin to the reading of Denis, the use of extremity jars with the modes of validation intrinsic to auteur study, resulting in a sullying of any recognised legitimacy.

Quandt reflects on this idea within the afterword of *The New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe* (Horeck & Kendall, 2011), wherein he states “shocked by *Palms* in all the wrong ways, and feeling betrayed by a director whose early work I had taken considerable stock in, […] I intended to puzzle out the reasons for Dumont’s descent into gore and hard core” (2011, p.209). The author’s self-reflective account illuminates the uneasiness between auteur status and extremity, as in both these cases, the use of exploitation traits disrupts the authorial image of the director, and hence breaks an unspoken understanding between filmmaker and critical reader. This agreement, built around the classical mores of art cinema, once broken, excludes the director from the ‘high’ cultural sphere and affords their cinematic transgressions little justification.

Yet, the generic inversion present within *Trouble Every Day’s* use of the cannibal template and *Twentynine Palms* combination of slow cinema and extreme violence can be read through the broader tradition of challenge and rejection. Consequently, despite their renunciation, both films’ partake in the history of reframing and
slippage that defines the cultural-historical conceptualisation of the extreme art canon. Therefore, alongside the work of Breillat and Noé, these narratives are key within French and Pan-European extreme contexts. Thus, through the analysis of these seminal texts, it is clear that this period of French extremity is defined by its existence in a contested, continually shifting space. The aforementioned directors are condemned and championed in equal parts, and become defined by either a disapproval of their transgressions, or an academically monitored justification. Significantly, despite not being the focus of this thesis, Franco-extremity is central to cultural perceptions of the canon, and performs a crucial role within the conceptualisation of modern extremity and the continuation of the extreme art aesthetic of brutality and rejection.

The following section will move to explore extreme art narratives that were produced before and concurrently to the seminal French texts. In doing so an expanded history of transgressive cinema can come to the fore which exists beyond, yet does not discount, national contextual conditions. To begin this consideration, this section will evaluate the Dogme 95 movement, which pre-dates the Franco-extremity of the early 2000s.

*Dogme 95*

Dogme 95 has traditionally been read through a national lens, casting it as a response to the pressures of globalisation which were briefly outlined at the start of this chapter. Within this framework, the movement has been distinctly positioned within a Danish context as it is coded as a small nation’s reaction to a particular economic circumstance (Hjort, 2003, Stevenson, 2003, Hjort, 2005). However, due to the
prevailing aesthetics present within Dogme 95, the movement can be addressed as an important part of the extreme art film continuum. In doing this, the movement’s fundamental concerns can be positioned as a continuation of the historical modes of transgression surveyed in Chapter Two.

Fundamentally, Dogme 95 was dominated by a series of prescriptive rules entitled the Vow of Chastity. These rules shaped the films’ formal construction and demanded the film must be shot on location, only use hand-held cameras, and refute genre while forbidding special/artificial lighting, non-diegetic sound, director accreditation and temporal/geographical shifts. This level of formal experimentation draws unavoidable links to the French New Wave (Stevenson, 2003, p.39), and enables Dogme cinema to actively deconstruct normative viewing experiences. The comparisons to the French New Wave are further useful in recognising the movement’s anti-establishment attitude:

[Dogme’s ambition was] to unsettle an increasingly dominant filmmaking regime characterised by astronomical budgets and marketing and distribution strategies based on, among other things, vertical integration, stardom, and technology-intensive special effects (Hjort, 2005, p.34).

Mette Hjort clarifies that the movement was a deliberately provocative gesture instigated in order to elicit a reaction from audiences and critics (2005, p.49). Therefore, akin to the French texts and the examples mapped in Chapter Two, Dogme, as a movement, is defined by its desire to challenge the standardised practice of audience identification, and as a result belongs to the fundamental logic of extreme art cinema.

While the movement as a whole encompasses the extreme art logic of provocation, von Trier’s *The Idiots* neatly merges formal extremity and bodily transgression, and
consequently stands as a prime example of both traditions. Importantly, by recognizing the film’s association to extreme art cinema this chapter does not seek to replace national readings, but looks to exist in addition to them, supplying new perspectives on the film. The narrative follows a group of bourgeois adults, who when in public, act like disabled people in order to circumvent normative societal practices. Decisively, the already distasteful depiction of actors mimicking disabled people was heightened by von Trier’s centralisation of nudity and sexuality within the garden orgy sequence (Hjort, 2005, p.57), which houses a full penetration shot. This shot pre-dates the use of the technique within the cinema of the French extremists, and, within the framework of denying pleasure, is used to heighten the reality of the scene and comply with the rules of the manifesto rather than to instigate sexual stimulation. Consequently, The Idiots displays the hybridity of extreme art cinema as it fuses artistic address with pornographic mores. Thus, the film and the formal experimentation that motivates the movement can be placed in the extreme art canon and read as essential influences on contemporary forms of extremity.

**Man Bites Dog**

In a similar manner, *Man Bites Dog*, a Belgian mockumentary detailing the exploits of a serial killer, can be approached as a seminal work within the discourses of extreme art film. The narrative is characterised by the fusion between horror and art, and can be read as a prime example of art-horror. Whereas within its domestic reception culture its relationship to horror cinema was under-acknowledged due to Belgian’s critics longstanding refusal to engage with the horror genre (Hunter &
Mathijs, 2012, pp.36-37), the film merges formal and bodily transgression, using the iconographies of documentary filmmaking whilst depicting sudden bouts of violence.

This hybridised form is fundamental to recognising the film’s importance to the extreme art cinema canon, as it allows the film to drift between taste cultures in a similar manner to the other texts discussed throughout this work. The use of the mockumentary mode clearly mirrors Ruggero Deodato’s *Cannibal Holocaust*, an association highlighted outside of its domestic environment, as references to horror and the horrific frequently appeared in reviews (Mathijs, 2005, p.322). This critical persona, despite being underplayed in Belgium, amplifies the text’s slippiness, and also its ability to be read within the framework outlined in this study. By explicitly using the traits of the horror genre, the film reframes key generic motifs in a similar manner to the cinema of Breillat (pornography) and Noé (exploitation).

The association to these directors is more pronounced when the symbolism of the violence is assessed. As Lindsay Coleman claims, the scenes of violence are complemented with scenarios which mock the bourgeoisie hypocrisy of Ben (the serial killer, played by Benoit Poelvoorde) (2009). This mockery of bourgeoisie mores reflects those that defined the cinema of Luis Buñuel, while further reflecting the aims of the avant-garde addressed by Joan Hawkins (2000, p.117). Moreover, the complicity of the film crew following the murderer invites a reading which condemns Belgium’s production and consumption of violent media (Mathijs, 2005, pp. 325-326). Here, the film challenges the audiences ingestion of transgressive material in a similar manner to that of Michael Haneke (who will be addressed in Chapter Six), and therefore disrupts the traditional mores of horror film identification and pleasure. Hence, due to the film’s formal and symbolic hybridity *Man Bites Dog*. 

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although often circulating outside of extreme art film debates, can be resolutely placed in the canon and its primary modes of disruption.

_Tesis_

_Tesis_, directed by Chilean born Alejandro Amenábar, is another feature that works to suggest that a trans-European approach to the consideration of the canon yields useful and original readings of certain, previously underexplored extreme narratives. In order to comprehend the film’s importance to the extreme art canon, this section will use Mark Betz’s notion of cultural triangulation in order to illustrate the manner it slips between, and becomes a composite of, several taste structures.

The film is the directorial debut of Amenábar, and tells the story of a snuff ring within the University of Madrid. Instantly, this narrative template resulted in _Tesis_ regularly being cast within the generic mores of horror cinema (Russell, 2006, p.81), as it uses the mythology of a concept often enclosed within the lexicon of the horror genre. As a consequence of the cultural stigma which engulfs the snuff legend, the film maintains a ‘low’ cultural identity. This is supported by the fact Spanish films’ produced during the 1990s and early 2000s whose plots feature violent overtones enjoyed relative commercial success (Klodt, 2008, p.3). Consequently _Tesis_ can be seen to exploit this trend of consumption, using the cultural opinion of snuff to ensure a commercial desirability. This is confirmed by Barry Jordan, who states “_Tesis_ was widely admired by its publics (particularly the under 25s), precisely because its well-designed thriller format and strong production values did not look or feel Spanish at all, but American” (2012, p.1). As such it could be proposed that
*Tesis* is a basic horror narrative, absent of the inversion that has come to define the canon.

However, analogous to the discussion of *Man Bites Dog*, *Tesis* contains several allegorical critiques. Firstly, the film’s use of an Americanised vision of horror comments upon Spanish cinema’s relationship to Hollywood (Russell, 2006, p.81). Here, the polished nature of the text, rather than being a marketable attribute, becomes a symbolic message regarding the control the American industry commands over smaller national production sites. Moreover, due to the implicit associations present within snuff, whereby a circular process of violence is present via the recording of murder and its equally exploitative consumption, *Tesis* is able to interrogate the audience’s appetite for the macabre (Klodt, 2008, p.5). Herein, the film can be read as a manifesto text set out to warn audiences of the dangers of trash television and screen violence (Jordan, 2012, p.1). Therefore, as Jordan notes, “*Tesis* has been championed by some critics and academics as a piece of work whose aesthetic agenda goes well beyond the level of affect and the delivery of visual hits, as one which is to be valued as a self-conscious construct aimed at cine-literate audiences” (Jordan, 2012, p.57).

Hence, in this work, the film is read as an allegorical art narrative which uses the extremity of snuff and its relationship to the horror genre to interrogate audience’s ingestion of violent imagery. Indeed, in regards to the film’s cultural triangulation, it becomes both art and horror, as the two forms inseparably merge to create the film’s message. Amenábar becomes additionally important in regards to the pan-European conceptualisation of extreme art cinema as he went on to transcend national borders, and akin to Buñuel, Haneke and von Trier, made successful films outside of his domestic industry (in Amenábar’s case *The Others* [Amenábar, 2001]). This further
supports a less nationally restrictive reading extreme art cinema, and proposes it should be read as a transitional mode of address.

_A Hole in my Heart_

The Swedish produced _A Hole in My Heart_ is further appropriate to mapping the pan-European nature of extreme art film, and the hybridity that defines its conceptualisation. Detailing three people’s attempt to make a pornographic movie, the film is shot on handheld camera, and intercut with scenes of labia reconstructive surgery. The combination of formal and bodily extremity has resulted in the film being described as having an assaultive approach (Pierce, 2005, p.31), while Mariah Larrson notes the way it destroys visual pleasure (2011, p.148). This description mirrors those given to the canonical Franco-extremity texts, and is crucial to noting the manner in which the film inverts the traditional mores of pornography. Furthermore, the film shares the dualism of Denis’ and Dumont’s work analysed earlier, as the pre-existing authorial capital of its director, Lukas Moodysson, clashes with the transgressive nature of its images. Although the pre-established capital legitimises the film for some, evident in the comments of Gunnar Rehlin, who states “the film is yet another proof of Moodysson's fearlessness and his willingness to push forward and break through the boundaries of convention” (2004, p.49), it also instigates a set of expectations which subsequently become broken by the continued appearance of extremity.

The most extreme moment in the film sees a food fight cumulate in Geko (Goran Marjanovic) vomiting in Tess’s (Sanna Bråding) mouth. In the accompanying review in _Sight and Sound_, Ryan Gilbey notes that even through this scene is the climax of
Moodysson’s metaphoric message, it “plays like a run-of-the-mill Jackass outtake” (2005). What Gilbey’s assessment neatly exposes is the manner in which Moodysson’s pre-circulating capital collapses under the strain of extreme transgression. Therefore, while the extremity holds allegorical meaning regarding the ill-effects of mass consumption, and the transgression of conventional barriers are central to asserting auteurism, the level of extremity present leaves traditional authorial reading protocols redundant, resulting in a negative backlash which stigmatises the narrative.

Ultimately, in the case of Moodysson, this understanding is rooted within a national reading of his cinema, in which he is continually compared to Ingmar Bergman: “though "Lilya 4-Ever," [. . .] is only Lukas Moodysson's third feature film, he has become Sweden's most praised filmmaker since Ingmar Bergman. But unlike Mr. Bergman, he is no metaphysician” (Kehr, 2003). As suggested in Chapter Two, Bergman retained a highly legitimised status within official culture, and Moodysson’s continued comparison to him affects the expectations of his cinema and his personal authorial status.

However, by looking beyond a national framework, and Moodysson’s role as the saviour of Swedish cinema (Larrson, 2011, p.143), A Hole in my Heart can be placed within the more encompassing logic of European extreme art film. By removing the shadows of Bergman - and the artistic expectation of his legacy - one can read A Hole in my Heart as an extension of the prevailing aims of the canon. Here, the acts of sexual extremity, bodily mutilation, formal experimentation and generic inversion partake in the history of confrontation and rejection surveyed throughout this work, and work to place Moodysson within a longstanding artistic tradition. It is constructive to use the production context of the film to further support this re-
positioning, as the film is a co-production between Sweden and Denmark. Thus, seeing it as a Swedish narrative solely responding to certain Swedish traditions is to ignore its transnational production context. Consequently, the pan-European approach established here is not only useful in mapping a more coherent history of artistic extremity, but can also aid a more accurate description of the contemporary production contexts of marginal filmmaking.

**Dogtooth**

The final text evaluated here is again central to illustrating the manner in which the extreme art tradition impacts cinematic productions across a series of narratives from various national contexts. *Dogtooth*, a Greek production, focuses on three adult children kept within the closed world of the family home. Within this setting, the siblings, unnamed throughout (referred to within this work as the Youngest Daughter, Eldest Daughter and Son), are subject to the cruel games they devise, a unique language sanctioned by their parents and ultimately incest (between the sisters and the Eldest Daughter and the Son).

The film has been championed as signalling the beginning of New Greek cinema, as “writer-director Yorgos Lanthimos won the new talent (Un Certain Regard) section at Cannes in 2009 [. . .] the first major prize at the festival for Greece in a decade” (Armstrong, 2010, pp.73-74). Following the film’s success, Kieron Corless claims that there has been an increase in the amount of young Greek directors who are able to find financing (2010). This centralisation of the national is extended within the critical dialogues that surrounded the film, for example: “as with the very best Greek tragedy, Lanthimos' story of domestic extremes can accommodate broader
sociopolitical readings” (Bitel, 2010). In addition to this national reading, Dogtooth has been commonly placed in the tradition of satire and dark humour, and the history of the absurd drama ([Horner, 2011, p.81], [Fischer, 2011, p.25], [Georgakas, 2010, p.48]). As a consequence of these readings, its relationship to modern extremity cinema has been continually understated.

However, through evaluating the film within framework applied during this project, one can see that Dogtooth neatly continues the traditions of many seminal extreme art directors and narratives. The film’s climax is defined by a single act of extreme violence, whereby the eldest daughter removes her canine teeth with a hammer. The shot is unedited and framed within a realist sensibility, and thus draws aesthetic comparisons to the cinema of Noé, Haneke, Dumont and von Trier, as the unflinching depiction of violence disrupts the viewing experience. Moreover, the scenes of sex, whilst extreme due to the representation of incest, further expose the film’s comfort within the extreme art paradigm as they are framed as an un-erotic spectacle (Georgakas, 2010, p.49). These sequences of clumsy and awkward sex deny the audience the pleasure implicit within scenes of intercourse, and impede the audiences’ consumption of the sexual spectacle in a similar fashion to the cinema of Breillat.

The film’s relationship to the extreme art canon has been confirmed outside of academic structures via its inclusion within the Film4 Extreme Season. Hosted by Mark Kermode, the season was used to contextualise the television premier of von Trier’s Antichrist. Within this schedule Dogtooth held a position of prestige and authority as it served as the penultimate film, a decision which confirms its extreme credentials. This season, which is vital to identifying the processes of canonisation happening outside of academia, will be considered in more detail in Chapter Seven’s
assessment of von Trier’s *Antichrist*. However, in regards to *Dogtooth*, it allows the film to maintain the dualism and hybridity which defines the extreme art canon. Like many extreme art narratives, *Dogtooth*’s cultural image shifts between its place as a critically acclaimed part of a national cinema and its industrially defined position as an extreme art film. Therefore, *Dogtooth*, when studied alongside other extreme art texts, enables a deeper understanding of the progression and impact of extremity within different European production contexts.

Overall, what has been mapped here is an expansion of the history surveyed in Chapter Two, and one which exposes the longevity of the convention and its relevancy in the contemporary cinematic climate through the focused discussion of seminal narratives. Importantly, the above investigation further illustrates the transnational spread of the extreme art tradition, where directors in France, Spain, Denmark, Greece, Sweden and Belgium use the internal codes of the canon and create similar forms of artistic rejection. The forthcoming case studies of Haneke and von Trier will further extend this history, yet bring the focus back to paratextual slippage and fluidity. In order to return to that prevailing question of crossover, this chapter will now survey the state of exploitation in this era.

**Exploitation Cinema**

*The 1980s and 1990s*

During the 1960s and 1970s, extremity was the province of marginal independent producers. The films they produced, which most often shared the generic
conventions of the horror genre, retained a level of nonconformity due to the overarching counter-aesthetic outlined in the Introduction. However, during the mid-1980s and into the present, the violence and sexual extremity which defined the exploitation arena began to transcend the marginal cinematic space and propagate within the mainstream. It is this shift that will be detailed here, due to the large ramifications it has on the production of extreme texts and the manner in which transgressive cinema is marketed in the contemporary climate.

The movement of extremity into the mainstream commences with the success of *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973). Even though the film was critically acclaimed (Dixon, 2010, p.148), it contained transgressive set pieces that were, at the time, the territory of exploitation cinema. This is summarised neatly by Rick Worland:

> The collapse of traditional social and ideological barriers in these gory movies paralleled the erosion of institutional barriers between major studio releases and exploitation horror exemplified by Warner Bros.’ *The Exorcist*. A big budget movie with an Oscar-winning director, *The Exorcist* brought explicit horror firmly into the mainstream (2007, pp. 99-100).

Importantly, following the achievements of *The Exorcist*, other horror narratives were conceived, produced and marketed as blockbusters (Abbott, 2010, p.28), ushering in the shift of transgressive material from the margins into mainstream. An important text within the continuation of this movement is *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991). The narrative, while containing set pieces of graphic violence, became ensconced within official culture through its accumulation of Academy awards, and thus, akin to *The Exorcist*, instigated an influx of high concept horror narratives ([Abbott, 2010, p.29] [Worland, 2007, p.115]).
This was matched by the franchise mentality that dominated the horror genre in the 1980s and 1990s (Dixon, 2010, p.125). Within this tradition of producing several sequels for a single narrative in order to increase its market longevity, the majority of critics draw attention to John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978). Worland notes that the film’s success led to the boom in the ‘slasher’ film, which was quickly solidified into a repetitive formula (2007, pp.104-105) of sexual explicitness and violent bodily corporeity. Significantly, the subsequent ‘slasher’ narratives could be made with only minimal resources of labour, skill and materials (Tudor, 1989, p.68), the most successful of these replicas being *Friday the 13th* (Cunningham, 1980) (Worland, 2007, p.104). The commonality of these narratives, and their commercial success again moved to normalise acts of extremity within the cinematic frame and impacted the marginal appeal and accessibility of transgression.

In order to sanction the newly acquired extremity within the mainstream discourse the images either arose from a popular literary tradition (as is the case for *The Exorcist* and *The Silence of the Lambs*) or became safely housed within supernatural framework (see the immortal resilience of Jason Voorhees as a primary example). Moreover, the films’ illustrated a refinement of the counter-aesthetic which dominated exploitation cinema. Here, the transgression became part of the standardised cinematic register, essentially removing the need for a learnt viewing protocol and sophisticated reading structures. This enabled the acts of violence to perform unobstructed by the cinematic failings of the productions, thus allowing them to be comprehended in a pleasure manner rather than a challenging one. Within this the previously marginal acts of extremity became accessible moments of excess, and impacted the understanding and consumption of transgressive material. Importantly, this notion of refinement was further supported by the wealth of
additional paratextual merchandise which boosted the acceptability of screened violence. Stacey Abbot notes *A Nightmare on Elm Street* as a marked example of this process, as while it depicted several scenes of excessive gore, it became safely housed within a merchandising directive aimed at a younger audience (2010, p.28). As such, the franchise developed into part of a larger cultural platform (Abbott, 2010, p.37) which effectively re-coded violent extremity as acceptable or conventionally commercial.

Through this process the shocking nature of sex and violence became diluted. Therein, the forbidden spectacle of exploitation cinema, a key marketing draw in the previous areas, was no longer able to compete with the more polished and coherent forms of transgression. This saw a decrease in European exploitation as audiences would no longer have to seek out niche releases and read sub-titles to see extremity. Ian Onley notes that American audiences had lost interest in European horror films by the 1980s due to the dominance of the Hollywood blockbuster (2013, p.218), concluding that “defeated, many of the filmmakers who had played key roles in shaping European horror over the previous three decades abandoned the genre” (2013, p.218). Although the focus here is on an American climate, a similar rejection of extremity took place in Britain with the ‘video nasty’ scandal. Discussed in the *Cannibal Holocaust* case study, the ‘video nasty’ controversy essentially saw many European exploitation narratives banned amidst concerns that it would stimulate real violence. While the two countries suppression of extreme horror imagery arise from different and nationally specific contexts, the proximity in which they occur is central to the production and understanding of extreme imagery in this era.

Importantly, within the framework of this study, this changed the tradition of extreme art marketing. As was noted in Chapter One, marginal art film of the 1960s
and 1970s was often sold through the semiotic dressings of the equally marginal yet more commercially viable exploitation tradition. Yet, in the current climate, contemporary commercialisations can be seen to manifest a generic horror image which seeks to promote pleasure and enjoyment. Indeed, within the forthcoming case studies, examples of extreme art films will not be compared exclusively to exploitation narratives, but will also look to find relationships with the general paratextual identities and marketing practices of mainstream horror films. This will come to illustrate a changing tradition, an idea which builds upon the early theoretical work of Kevin Heffernan (2004), Mark Betz (2003) and Joan Hawkins (2000), while recalling Betz’s triangulation of taste discussed throughout this work (film’s become a composite of ‘high’, ‘low’ and ‘middle’ tastes).

**European Horror Cinema: the 2000s**

Whilst this absorption and refinement of horrific modes of representation is fundamental to understanding paratextual image making in the present climate, Onley notes that “the first decade of the twenty-first century saw a wave of horror movies emerge from France, Spain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe [. . .] this new wave of genre cinema has put Europe definitively back on the horror map” (2013, p.219). Building on narratives such as *Tesis, Man Bites Dog, Romance, Irreversible* and *Trouble Every Day*, the 2000s saw a re-emergence of the European horror tradition, a notion Caroline Verner concurs with (2010, p.31). Narratives such as *Switchblade Romance, Satan* (Chapiron, 2006), *Inside, Frontier(s)* (Gens, 2007a), *Martyrs, [Rec]* (Balagueró, Plaza, 2007), *The Ordeal, Antibodies* (Alvart, 2005), *A Serbian Film* (Spasojevic, 2010), and *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* (Six,
(2009) are landmark texts within this resurgence. However, through the foregrounding of violence, and a distinct temporal and geographic imminence, these contemporary horror films have become hard to differentiate from extreme art film, with most attempts at demarcation being framed within hierarchical taste structures. In response to this the following section will map this existing discourse, both in an attempt to expose the aforementioned intersection and cite points of separation, ultimately concluding that due to a lack of formal transgression and modes of mainstream rejection, these horror texts circulate outside of the extreme art canon as it is defined here.

Recognising contemporary Euro horror’s relationship to American horror genre conventions is essential in demarcating them from extreme art cinema. Current Euro horror narratives borrow heavily from the American horror cinema of the 1970s rather than the European counterparts (Onley, 2013, pp.219-220), and therefore extend the process of refinement discussed above through a reliance on excess and higher value production aesthetics. Verner states that *Switchblade Romance* pays homage to 1970s American cinema due to its play on the final girl trope, and that director Alexandre Aja relies heavily on the audiences’ fluency in the conventions of the Americanised norms of the genre (2010, p.31). The reliance on US generic codes is clear within the use of the ‘rural other’ trope in *Satan, Frontier(s), Switchblade Romance* and *The Ordeal*. Importantly, within these narratives the inversion of generic conventions which typifies extreme art cinema is not present, and therein the films present conventional genre models which allow notions of pleasure, satisfaction and gratification to circulate unimpeded. Thus, Euro horror films do not interrogate the audience’s consumption of violence, but conform to their expectations and allow them to revel in the articulation of excess. Accordingly, they
can be positioned outside of the extreme art canon as they fail to follow the traditions of rejection, hybridity and challenge.

_Martyrs: A Case Study in Marketing_

However, it has been noted that certain Euro horror narratives, such as _Martyrs_, do challenge the idea of horrific pleasures in the same manner as the cinema of Haneke, Breillat, Noé and von Trier. _Martyrs_ sees Lucie (Mylène Jampanoï) exact revenge against her former abusers whilst being haunted by a demonic ghost-like entity. After she slaughters the people she believes to be her former capturers, her lifelong friend Anna (Morjana Alaoui) helps dispose of the bodies. However, while in the house of the deceased, the pair uncovers a sect that, through the creation of true martyrdom, seeks to better God. The cult captures the girls, and the second part of the narrative features the prolonged torture of Anna, which ultimately culminates in her being skinned alive.

Amy Green notes that _Martyrs’_ brutal and unrelenting violence forces the audience to address their own consumption of extremity (2010, p.22); a stance that is present throughout discourses of extreme art film. Verner, supporting the claims of Green, states “in true art-house form, Laugier allows his audience to commune with the film, writing an enigmatic ending that leaves the legitimacy of death-for-higher-purpose to the viewer’s discretion” (2010, p.34). The recognition of an ambiguous ending and a need for an active audience casts the film closer to that of the extreme art canon than the broader discourse of horror cinema. Subsequently, it becomes evident that through the application of a certain reading protocol, the film’s fantastical narrative of religious sects and demon apparitions, which alludes more to
the supernatural category which dominated American horror in the 1980s than that of an art film tradition, grants *Martyrs* the ability to share the same space as extreme art cinema.

Within the confines of this thesis, this problematises the history of extreme art film, as these contemporary narratives clearly suggest a return to the cinematic practice of excess due to their reliance on placing high concept spectacles of violence within narratives that incite unobstructed pleasure. Therefore, further delineation is needed in order to assert a difference between extreme art cinema and European horror film a process that will be undertaken via the analysis of the manner in which *Martyrs* was introduced and categorised within the DVD industry. To facilitate this exploration, the thesis will explore Optimum Releasing’s marketing campaign for *Martyrs* (Optimum Releasing, n.d.). This primary source (found in this thesis’s appendix, p.358), which takes the form of a word processed document, was distributed within the industry, and was made available to me via a former employee. Using *Martyrs* as a cipher for a broader convention, the marketing campaign is illustrative of the commercial presentation of contemporary Euro-horror, and it’s investigation here will afford the thesis the ability to evaluate the distributor’s preferred reading.

The source is a large table of information, which is split into subsections. The left side of the two column table provides the headings of each subsection, and the right side contains the relevant information. Firstly, within the section entitled ‘Background’, the film is discussed as being “a new horror film that has caused a stir worldwide due to its extreme and boundary-pushing nature” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.1). Instantly the film is cast as a horror narrative rather than an auteurist art film which inverts generic tropes. This is furthered by the mention that the director,
Pascal Laugier, is “hotly tipped” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.1) to direct the American remake of *Hellraiser* (Barker, 1987), underplaying his lineage in European cinema in favour of a relationship to the American mainstream. *Martyrs* is then placed within a small European horror tradition alongside *Switchblade Romance*, *Frontier[s]* and *Inside*, other films that have, according to the document, cemented “France’s current reputation for button pushing viscera” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.1). This industrial placement is confirmed later within the document, as it states “À l’intérieur [*Inside*] (this yet to be released in the UK but from festivals, the US release through Dimension Extreme and the Frightfest all-nighter it has garnered widespread notoriety and praise among horror fans and is the current benchmark for extreme horror…until now!” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.1). Within this statement, *Martyrs*’s generic pleasures are stressed with the line ‘…until now!’, whereby the use of the hyperbolic promise implies that the film’s transgression is a desirable commodity rather than an allegorical tool.

This promotion of the film’s ‘horror’ credentials is extended throughout all sections of the text. The section entitled ‘Key Selling Points’ claims that the narrative is “widely acclaimed and where not acclaimed talked about anyway due to the extreme and unusual content” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.2), a factor the document claims will propel the release beyond the traditional “foreign film” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.2) audience. This signifies that the normative art house demographic is not the target consumer for this release, and indicates that the preferred reading of the text is one which stresses its horrific attributes. This is extended in the ‘Weakness’ section of Optimum Releasing’s marketing document, wherein it is claimed that the film’s media and visual advertisements will avoid obvious foreign language aspects, underplaying the film’s ‘Europeaness’ in favour of a more accessible narrative image.
of genre cinema. This is further confirmed when the document lists its primary audience: fans of casual horror, impulse buyers and fans of left field cinema; clearly ignoring the art cinema market. This notion is finally cemented through the ‘Marketing Strategy’ and ‘Objectives’ sections, which state that the film will be promoted on mainstream film and horror websites, as well as “brand endorsed promotions with Bizarre or Nuts” (Optimum Releasing, n.d., p.3). The targeting of ‘lad’ magazines and their attached youth culture is evidence that Martyrs is not being aimed at the ‘highbrow’ educated audience that is traditionally associated with foreign language cinema. Moreover the proximity that the adverts will share with images of female nudity on these websites invokes the sexual titillation which is inherent to the pleasures of the horror genre. In this sense, the reading of the film provided by the distributor does not seek to triangulate it across taste economies, but present a singular reading grounded in cultural definitions of horror. This clearly contrasts against the slippery paratextual forms considered thus far, and is illustrative of a broader marketing process which defined the cultural persona of several contemporary European horror narratives.

Thus, through the assessment of this document, it becomes clear that contemporary European horror is positioned as an accessible filmic commodity rather than a challenging cinematic exercise which requires skilled deciphering and decoding. While this thesis seeks to explore market slippage and crossover between exploitation and art, the refusal to engage with the film’s European heritage or relationship to the transgressive art tradition mapped throughout this work exposes contemporary Euro horror’s lack of hybridity and its unwavering relationship to the singular discourse of horror cinema. Therefore, although it must be recognised that Euro horror and extreme art cinema share important similarities due to the flexible and porous
registers of extremity, Euro horror, through its depiction of excessive pleasure, is far more comfortable within the generic tradition than it is and artistic one. In a more general sense, this re-emergence of transgressive European horror cinema again alludes to a re-coding of extremity, in which violence operates as desirable and enjoyable cinematic commodity. Yet, whilst within the parameters of this work these narratives fall outside of the extreme art canon, the re-emergence of an excessive European horror tradition does have ramifications for the paratextual portrayal of extreme art film, and will be addressed within the forthcoming case studies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that this era has seen several large changes that ultimately affect the composition and conceptualisation of extreme art cinema. Within art cinema it is apparent that transgressive and violent narratives were missing for a large part of the 1980s, and were replaced by levels of visual excess which looked to adhere to the changing economic pressures of the era. Yet, a return to extremity during the late 1990s and into the contemporary climate has seen an increasingly violent and sexual art cinema product prevail. Within these contemporary narratives, the crossover between exploitation industries and art cinema has gone beyond the realm of horror cinema and into the pornographic production site, as sequences of hard-core sex are now commonplace within extreme art narratives. As such, slippage and hybridity between taste economies is even more visible.

Within this chapter it also becomes clear that a comparable process of re-emergence happened within the horror sphere. As has been suggested, the assimilation and refinement of exploitation cinema into the mainstream has resulted in an increasingly
violent and transgressive mainstream. This process has re-coded the audience’s understanding of extreme imagery, as it has shifted from the cinematic margins into the mass sphere. Within this, the images of extremity that were formerly located within the counter-aesthetic of European exploitation cinema became polished, and thus adopted a more widespread accessibility and mass appeal. Subsequently, the cinema of modern horror, both American and European, despite being more violent than ever, provided pleasure and gratification rather than a challenging cinematic experience.

Therefore, during this era, transgression can be read and understood through two differing frameworks. It either works as a pleasurable experience intrinsically linked to the horror genre, or a way to challenge and question modern audiences’ consumption of violent imagery. However, these distinctions are neither exclusive nor stable, as some contemporary horror narratives, such as *Martyrs*, do go some way to question the audience’s bloodlust, whereas some critics read the transgressions present within modern extreme art film as commercially driven gimmicks. As such the following studies of Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier are produced and released into a filmic culture entrenched within shifting definitions of extremity, suggesting that the paratextual identities of the narratives will become more fluid, transgressive and important within comprehending the cultural persona of the product.
This chapter will focus on Michael Haneke, and will investigate how his paratextual identity fits into the broader history of taste slippage mapped throughout this study. With this singular focus comes a change in the methodology which guided the previous case studies. This switch seeks to respond more appropriately to the findings of the previous contextual chapter, wherein shifts and exchanges between exploitation and horror have led to an increasingly extreme cinematic climate. Hence, a straight comparison between art and exploitation becomes less useful due to the transgressive nature of contemporary media. Rather, it becomes interesting to explore how a single auteur, a concept itself linked to the foundations of art film academia, is paratextually presented within the contemporary environment. Indeed, this chapter will look at how Haneke’s commercial image is filtered through the traditions of art cinema, exploitation cinema, mainstream American genre cinema and excessive European horror, enabling the case study to react accordingly to the current cinematic culture while addressing a new set of concerns regarding paratextual identity, taste slippage and extreme art history.

The chapter will investigate the way different distributors market and package the same film. This line of enquiry will allow the chapter to examine how the changing identity of cinematic extremity affects the paratextual representation of the extreme art canon. This will permit the chapter to highlight the varying tradition of taste slippage and the shifting cultural locations inhabited by extreme cinema. Overall, although the focus of this chapter is broader due to certain industrial changes, the structural composition will reflect the earlier case studies; beginning with an
assessment of Haneke as a director and cultural figure before investigating the paratextual identity of *Funny Games* and his Glaciation trilogy. Importantly, by taking Michael Haneke as a focus, the thesis wishes to place him as an integral part of the broader extreme art discourse, wherein his thematic and aesthetic considerations influence and propagate the history mapped throughout this study.
Michael Haneke

Michael Haneke can be approached as one of Europe’s leading auteurs. His last two films; *The White Ribbon* (Haneke, 2009a) and *Amour* (Haneke, 2012a), both claimed the Palme d’Or at Cannes, an award which serves as a definitive sign of critical validation. This official status is supplemented by various scholarly interactions, which, in line with the work of Gerard Genette, can be approached as semi-paratextual artefacts. Genette states that documents such as reviews and interviews, though existing outside of the main paratext, can still furnish our understanding of the main text (1997, pp.344-346). Therefore, within this section, these epitexts (Genette, 1997, p.344) will be approached as items that circulate away from the main text, the director and paratext, but hold a level of influence over the cultural comprehension of the entire artefact.

In support of Genette’s ideas, it is useful to consult David Bordwell’s work on film criticism. Bordwell discusses the idea of a conceptual field; a series of items, cues and stylistic features which enable critics to interpret and make meaning of film while actively positioning it within a particular theoretical framework (1993, p.101). Bordwell states “we don’t just see meanings, literal or interpretive; the critic constructs meaning through a complex process of assumption, testing, projection, inferential trial and error, and comparable activities” (1993, p. 103). These meanings then become a loaded interpretation with the capability to develop into a public consensus, and invariably influence the position of the film within the cultural discourse. Here it will be suggested that there exists a deliberate attempt to position Haneke’s filmic canon within a framework of traditional intellectual artistry, whereby his work is consistently read within the schemas of ‘high’ cultural
legitimisation. Immediately, this understanding implies that Haneke is critically positioned in a different manner to the majority of the extreme art filmmakers considered throughout this work.

The following quote from Kevin Wynter illustrates the application of a schema loaded with critical validation. As the statement shows, the cinematic extremity of Haneke is firmly encased within the traditions of allegorical significance:

> Increasingly, spectatorship is devoid of critical accountability leaving saucereyed, disaffected spectators whose physical immobility before the screen is doppelganger to their intellectual passivity. Here we can locate the significance of Haneke's interventionism (2006, p.45).

Accordingly the cinema of Haneke is positioned as a fundamental form of cultural art, and one which can perform a crucial role within maintaining the relevancy of the cinematic form. Evidently, this notion of authorial importance affords scholars appropriate room to validate the cinema of Haneke through an application of auteur theory. David Grossvogel's work, wherein he states that the critical discourse must decide whether the violence that permeates Haneke's films derives from a desire for sensationalism or partakes in a more rational strategy (2007, p.36), provides a neat entrance point to this prevailing discussion. Adopting Grossvogel's stance, it is evident that the majority of critical interactions are informed by the latter reading. For example, Robin Woods states “all of Haneke's films [. . .] take as their starting-point our contemporary predicament: the desensitization and dehumanization of modern life lived beneath the monstrous umbrella of corporate capitalism” (2007, p.45). Roy Grundmann adds further confirmation that the director’s extremity is framed within a tightly controlled dialogue of social relevance, stating Haneke evokes:

> The alienation of the individual in the modern world, people's inability to communicate, a loss of the capacity for giving and receiving love, the
brutalization of the young, society's constant need for distraction, and the steady rise of violence of the mundane as well as the spectacular kind (2007, p.6).

The inability to recognise this allegorical depth has been suggested to represent the social decline discussed within the narratives themselves, as Christopher Sharrett claims that it provides evidence of an intellectual bankruptcy (2003, p28). This reading protocol can be seen to be instigated and monitored by Haneke himself. As Frey Matthias notes “Haneke has always insisted in interviews that his films are about the coldness of Western bourgeois society, the representation of violence through media, and an interrogation of the real” (2006, p.34). The interview Family is Hell and so is the World: Talking to Michael Haneke at Cannes 2005 (Badt, 2005) illustrates Matthias’s claim neatly, as Haneke discusses his use of transgression at length; “the society we live in is drenched in violence. I represent it on the screen because I am afraid of it [. . .] all my films deal with issues that I find socially relevant” (Badt, 2005). This statement supports the critical approaches to his work, as he couches the transgressions present within a discourse of social critique, creating a circular motion of critical authentication.

Invariably this strictly monitored framework enables Haneke’s cinema to comfortably take root within the discourses of ‘high’ culture, as the circulating epitexst maintain a level of cultural legitimisation which attaches itself to the text and paratext. Thus, the extremities of his narratives are granted an allegorical depth which bestows the director with the role of a social commentator, who transgresses social barriers in order to expose and examine contemporary civilization. As seen in both the Introduction and Chapter Five, this type of unwavering critical legitimisation is rarely afforded contemporary extreme narratives, and consequently
enables Haneke’s work to circumvent the generic readings often applied to the continuum. This exposes an important part of Haneke’s cultural image: that he represents the respectable face of extreme art film, a status sustained by his auteurism, and supported by the application of particular scholarly schemas within the surrounding epitexts.

However, even though positioning Haneke within the environs of ‘high’ culture is customary, ignoring the parity between his use of extremity and those frequently marked as extreme art filmmakers is problematic. Therefore, within the confines of this thesis, Haneke will be positioned as a key figure within the history of extreme art film. In order to justify Haneke’s inclusion within the canon surveyed here, this chapter will now explore key moments of extremity present within his filmography, drawing comparison to established extreme art filmmakers so to further the importance of his inclusion. Importantly, through undertaking this exploration, the chapter does not wish to discount the above dialogues or remove the allegorical depth of the transgressions present. Instead, the forthcoming section endeavours to more coherently address Haneke’s employment of extremity within the overarching history surveyed throughout this work.

Essentially, akin to the majority of extreme art filmmakers, it is clear that Haneke is aiming to debase the conventions of cinematic representation. Oliver Speck usefully states that within Hollywood narratives brutal violence occupies the same space as other thematic aspects such as comedy (2010, p.45), and is hence stripped of its impact and affect. However, Haneke’s minimalist approach contradicts the excess present within these depictions (Wheatley, 2012, p.208), and as such refuses to stimulate traditional notions of pleasure and gratification. This refusal to indulge in
the fulfilment of generic convention is apparent within *Funny Games* and its American remake *Funny Games US* (Haneke, 2007). In both narratives, when Anna finally shoots and kills Peter, the audience is afforded a sense of reprieve, and is seemingly encouraged to revel in her triumph. However, Paul simply rewinds the footage, denying the audience their gratification, forcing them to question their own celebration of death. This denial of pleasure compares to the thematic traditions of the extreme art continuum mapped throughout this thesis. For example, the reversal of *Irreversible* negates the audience satisfying catharsis, as the act of revenge takes place without a narrative context to justify the bloodshed. Subsequently, while many critics, due to the aforementioned conceptual fields, locate Haneke’s cinema outside the dialogues concerning contemporary filmic extremity, his use of anticlimactic violence creates a point of mutuality.

This generic denial is extended through Haneke’s concentration on the emotional aftermath of the extreme act. For example, whilst *Benny’s Video* (Haneke, 1992a) contains an act of violence, the murder is not the climatic end of the narrative as it would be in many horror films (Wheatley, 2012, p.210), but rather a catalyst which allows for an exploration of contemporary middle classes morals. Again, within *Funny Games* we do not see Paul and Peter shoot Georgie, Anna and George’s young son, but are instead left to witness the parents’ reaction to the slaughter. Lastly and perhaps most obviously, *The Piano Teacher* (Haneke, 2001a) uses pornography’s generic memory (Chareyron, Gural-Migdal, 2011, p.58) to show Erica Kohut’s slow escalation into depression, rather than indulging in the excess of the industry.
This depiction of emotional turmoil is again prevalent within the cinema of Noé, Catherine Breillat, and Claire Denis. Moreover, the depiction of dramatic aftermath also functions within the mores of the body genre. Within Linda Williams’ concept, a body genre text is defined by its portrayal of the human form “caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion” (1991, p.4). Williams’ sites horror, pornography and the melodrama, all considered to be ‘low’ culture in prevailing critical and academic dialogues, as the fundamental body genres. Using Williams’ concept, it is evident that the work of Haneke, despite carrying a ‘highbrow’ intellectual capital, also utilises the primary concepts of the body genre. Although the violence within Haneke’s narrative is not horrific or gratifying enough to sit comfortably within the horror genre, and the various sexual transgressions again foreground unpleasure over the normative responses to sexual imagery, the disturbing scenes of emotional trauma correlate with William’s findings on the melodrama. Williams states that the portrayal of emotion on screen within the melodrama initiates a comparative response within the audience, and can be read as gratuitous emotion that leads to sensation (1991, p.3). The clearest example of the melodrama’s gratuitous emotion appears within the aforementioned psychological deconstruction of Kohut in The Piano Teacher. As the centre of the narrative, the audience identifies with Kohut, therein accompanying her on the repressive journey she undertakes. Though it would be wrong to put forward that the film is a traditional piece of melodrama, there is a correlation with conventional melodramatic forms, a concept noted efficiently here by Catherine Wheatley:

The rises and falls in the destinies of its characters, from the sublime to the ridiculous, seem in many ways to characterize melodrama [. . .] The earliest definition of melodrama was a dramatic narrative in which musical accompaniment marks emotional effects (2006, p.119).
Therefore, the slippage and crossover between ‘high’ and ‘low’ which defines the extreme art canon can be found within the work of Haneke. Whereas the level of fluidity present within the cinema of Noé, Breillat, and Dumont is harder to find within the filmic catalogue of Haneke as much of the violence happens off screen (Speck, 2010, p.172), Lisa Coulthard states that:

By focusing on a multitude of actions and reactions, Haneke places acts of physical, interpersonal violence alongside other forms of violence that are less overt, obvious or visible: emotional and psychological abuse and humiliation, the killing of animals, marginalisation and alienation, suicide (2011, p.181).

Herein, the general representation of cruelty and continued inversion of popular forms of narrative address which defines the extreme art canon is a constant within the cinema of Haneke. Furthermore, whilst Speck’s claims regarding off-screen violence are important, certain moments of extremity, which employ the realist frame common within the majority of extreme art narratives, are apparent within Haneke’s catalogue. For example, the suicide of Majid in Hidden (Haneke, 2005), the rape of Erika Kohut in The Piano Teacher, and the shooting of Peter in Funny Games all comply to the shock tactics that are central to exploitive modes of representation, and hence exist as examples of the hybridity that defines extreme art cinema.

Thus, Haneke can be seen to retain the same dual cultural image that defines the filmmakers usually associated with the extreme art continuum. Whilst Haneke receives a far more homogenised celebration of his work, and therefore circumvents much of the stigma bestowed upon others within the canon, his narratives still evaluate similar themes through an analogous use of exploitive motifs. As mapped in the latter part of this section, Haneke’s use of onscreen brutality, although firmly
ensconced within a strictly maintained social commentary, draws unavoidable, yet often ignored, comparisons to conventional extremity cinema. Consequently the forthcoming section will aim to explore the balance between ‘high’ and ‘low’ semiotic signifiers within Haneke’s paratextual presentation, and whether, through his shelf-life and paratextual identity, the identity of the director created in academic and critical spaces becomes distorted and malleable.

**Funny Games: Tartan Video and Artificial Eye**

The original *Funny Games* is Michael Haneke’s most traditionally extreme narrative, and has been distributed on DVD by both Tartan Video (Haneke, 1997b) and Artificial Eye (Haneke, 1997c). As such, the film’s paratextual presence offers useful insights into how Haneke’s identity as a transgressive filmmaker is balanced with his image as an auteur. In order to facilitate this exploration, the following section will study in detail the Tartan Video release of *Funny Games* distributed in 2004 and its 2009 remediation via Artificial Eye. However, before considering the commercial artefacts, it is key to examine the film itself, and how it fits into Haneke’s cinematic catalogue, as this understanding helps us to navigate the paratextual discourses that envelope it.

The film details the torture of a wealthy bourgeois family via two well-spoken and intelligent strangers, referred to mostly as Paul and Peter. Significantly, the film breaks the illusion of cinema on several occasions through the employment of Brecht’s Verfremdung technique (Grossvogel, 2007, p.37), drawing attention to Haneke as the author, and subsequently allowing the film to circulate within an artistic discourse. Additionally the Brechtian device forces the audience to
continually question their role as voyeurs, allowing the tropes of extremity to comment upon the propagation of violence within media. This is recognised by Sharrett, who claims *Funny Games* is a commentary on the social ramifications of violent cinema, suggesting that the film never comes to partake in the violence it aims to condemn (2003, p.28). However, Wheatley’s chapter ‘*Le Cineaste D’Horreur Ordinaire*: Michael Haneke and the Horrors of Everyday Existence’ (2012) places the film within the realist horror tradition, stating “in some ways, Haneke’s films can be seen as the Europeanisation of a genre which has often stressed that the essence of the horrific lies within human relationships and the collapse of a false social order in which we are in great denial” (2012, p.214). This relationship to realist horror exposes the film’s hybridity, wherein social commentary and brutal violence fuse to create a film which slips between the spaces of art and exploitation. This slippery status is common, as has been reiterated throughout this thesis, within the extreme art cinema, and illustrates how important *Funny Games* is to the general history of the canon.

The fusion of taste cultures has come to define the epitexts which encircle the narrative. The film was supported, as seen above, in certain sectors of the critical discourse, where its mediations regarding screened violence further illustrated how the medium of cinema could be used as a platform for intelligent communication (Grundmann, 2007, p.7). However *Funny Games’* relationship to exploitation cinema resulted in a backlash which counteracts the authorial respectability of Haneke. Grossvogel’s work on *Funny Games* characterises this approach to the film, as he states that the “distancing Haneke envisioned worked too well [. . .], turning on itself: the sight of two psychopaths terrorizing, maiming, humiliating a household, destroying it gratuitously, became for them just that—a sadistic exercise” (2007,
Wood’s article *Michael Haneke: Beyond Compromise* (2007) furthers this line of criticism, as the author states “brilliant and unforgettable as it is, *Funny Games* is clearly a minor work, the least of the films Haneke has both written and directed, a deliberately limited ‘chamber’ piece with little of the social/political resonance of the other four” (2007, p.53). Coding the film as an idiosyncratic horror film (Wood, 2007, p.54), Wood’s comments mirror those that prevail throughout the critical interactions with Franco-extremity, underplaying the film’s message yet drawing it closure to the prevailing tradition.

As a consequence of this scholarly discourse *Funny Games*, while being a clear continuation of Haneke’s fundamental cinematic message, exists as his most extreme, controversial and unstable film. This dialogue between authorial stature and extremity makes it an interesting case study, as it can, due to its fusion of iconographies, straddle several disparate cinematic environs simultaneously.

Artificial Eye’s brand identity was explored within the first case study featuring *Weekend* and *Cannibal Holocaust*, however Tartan Video, whose cultural image is pivotal to comprehending the paratextual characteristics of their *Funny Games* release, has yet to be investigated in detail. Tartan Video was a UK distributor founded in 1984. Following its closure and administration, the company’s expansive filmic library, which its website states held the rights for over 400 films, was brought by the American corporation Palisades Media Corp. Rebranded Palisades Tartan, the company still operate as an active distributor of foreign art and genre cinema. However, it is the company’s original incarnation that is of interest here, as it was fundamental to the distribution of extremity cinema within Britain, especially Asian extreme narratives (Dew, 2007). Coining the now widespread term ‘Asia Extreme’, Tartan Video created a successful sub-genre of violent films from East Asia that
were branded through the distributor’s name and distinct panelled cover. The company released fundamental contemporary Asian films such as *Ring* (Nakata, 1998), *Audition* (Miike, 1999), *Battle Royale* (Fakasaku, 2000) and *Oldboy* (Park, 2003), which can be seen as operating within an adjacent canon to the extreme continuum surveyed within this study. Additionally Tartan distributed fundamental European extreme narratives such as *Irreversible*, *Anatomy of Hell*, *The Idiots*, *Tesis*, and *The Ordeal*. Even though these films were not branded under a commercial sub-banner in the same manner as their Asian peers, they did manifest as a smaller collective within the larger Tartan Video catalogue.

Usefully Oliver Dew notes how the combination of artistic legitimacy and extreme bodily transgression seen within Tartan’s Asian and European extreme narratives led to the accumulation of a dual demographic, made up of cult cinema fans and a traditional art house audience (2007, p.57). This consumer split mirrors the demographics noted in the historical accounts of art film audiences, who Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover noted were composed of educated patrons and paracinematic voyeurs (2010, p.8). Essential to achieving this dualism was the brand memory and image of Tartan, which through its constant repetition, helped to assure the art film audience that the transgressions contained within the narratives were culturally valid. This enabled the company to circulate their films within both ‘high’ and ‘low’ consumption sites, as their company identity became a symbol of artistic extremity. This pre-established facade, along with the aforementioned identity of Artificial Eye, is vital to understanding how their respective releases of *Funny Games* manipulate, use and promote certain semiotic signifiers within the construction of the films’ narrative image.
The first cover to be analysed will be the Tartan Video edition, as its earlier release date allows the impact of time to be explored when undertaking the assessment of the Artificial Eye remediation. The Tartan Video cover features the company’s traditional aesthetic design, as a single image is flanked by thin black borders and a wider white panel that runs across the bottom of the cover (see figure 24 [p.236]) (Haneke, 1997b). Within the white panel are three quotations, the film’s rating, and the DVD logo. The central image that dominates the front cover sees Paul, played by Arno Frisch, looking back at the audience. Importantly, Frisch was Benny in Benny’s Video, and thus carries a level of trace imbedded within the cinematic history of Haneke and notions of media violence. The still has been altered in order to heighten its horrific appeal, as a ‘ripped paper’ effect acts as a red band across the eyes of Frisch. Interestingly, this connotation is only implied through the use of red and direct address, as a lack of clear danger, such as weapons or victims, softens the extremity of the cover image. This is significant as the existing market image of Tartan Video implies that the company would actively seek a more generic framing of the film in order to cast the narrative within a similar sector as their Asian extreme products. However, while the cover is indicative due to the lack of implicit extremity, its concentration of Paul does trade off a particular tradition in genre film marketing. The presentation, in which an aesthetically pleasing male killer is centralised on the cover of realist horror films’, is seen clearly on the covers’ of Bundy (Bright, 2002), American Psycho (Harron, 2000) and Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (McNaughton, 1986) (see figure 25 [p.236]). As such, despite not depicting weapons or victims, the cover does invoke the generic understanding of the ‘serial killer’ narrative through the appropriation of Frisch’s face.
The three quotations are also crucial to recognising how the cover evokes the horror genre. Whereas the quotations from both *Time Out* and *The Daily Telegraph* perform
within the remit of traditional legitimisation, respectively stating “brilliant, radical provocative...it’s a masterpiece” (Haneke, 1997b) and “as unsettling as it is brilliant” (Haneke, 1997b), the statement from The Independent proposes a set of connotations motivated by horror iconography. The proclamation states “its stranglehold atmosphere leaves you fighting for breath” (Haneke, 1997b). Clearly the remark employs an aggressive dialect which likens the viewing experience to an act of violence, and is pivotal in not only suggesting the transgressive nature of the narrative, but reaffirming the ‘serial killer’ brand identity projected through the central image. This portrayal of aggression contradicts the traditional art film dialect of the earlier quotations, neatly illustrating the dual demographic that Tartan Video attracts. However, this balance between art and genre is disrupted when the presence of Haneke’s auteurism is considered. Haneke’s name is far smaller than the title and quotations, illustrating a lack of authorial imprinting, affording the horrific overtones less validated cultural grounding. When this is combined with the extreme a trace of the company, the overtones of transgression are amplified and allowed to propagate freely.

The back cover portrays three images from the film, which work to neatly sum up the narrative, yet is dominated by a textual passage. Within this blurb, the balance evident on the cover becomes redundant. The text resolutely employs the hyperbolic vocabulary of horror cinema, with the opening line stating “if you thought that you’d experienced cinematic terror at its most extreme, then here is a dark and terrifying journey into the dark side that will prove you haven’t seen anything yet” (Haneke, 1997b). This sentence trades on the traditions of circus entertainment by promoting the film as spectacle and that transcends the narrative and delivers unbridled entertainment (Kernan, 2004, pp.20-23). This type of marketing, which is linked to
notions of ballyhoo and hyperbolic provocation, as noted throughout this work is common within the paratextual presentation of horror cinema. Upon the Vipco release of Lucio Fulci’s *Zombie Flesh Eaters 2* (Fulci, 1988), the blurb states “The army goes ballistic and all hell breaks loose...What follows is terrifying... Zombie Flesh Eaters 2 is here” (Fulci, 1988). Comparably, the Anchor Bay release of *Contamination* (Cozzi, 1980) asks the question “how many actors will die screaming in a massive explosions of blood, guts and gore?” (Cozzi, 1980). Within both these examples the covers set up the films as a trial of endurance in which the consumer can test their threshold for violence; a process recalled within Tartan Video’s marketing of *Funny Games*.

This is continued within the following paragraphs, which states that the family is undertaking “a holiday that they will never forget” (Haneke, 1997b) wherein the strangers will “embark upon a twisted campaign of torment and terror that knows no bounds” (Haneke, 1997b). The latter quote infers that *Funny Games* will advance the horror spectacle, a notion seen within the Optimum Home Entertainment release of *Frontier(s)* (Gens, 2007b). An important Euro horror narrative, the blurb states the film “is an all out sensory assault – a brutal and shocking masterpiece of extremity” (Gens, 2007b). Furthermore, *Freddy vs. Jason* (Yu, 2003a), a high concept ‘slasher’ narrative based around a competition between two horror icons, features the statement “now, with a terrified town in the middle, the two titans of terror enter into a horrifying showdown of epic proportions” (Yu, 2003b). Clearly, within these examples, the progression of the horrific experience is a key to the marketing. Through a similar hyperbolic application of language, *Funny Games* is cast within an ongoing history of horrific advancement and generic spectacle, and thus the tangible paratext instigates a migration to the horror marketplace.
Although the final paragraph introduces Haneke and a level of authorial legitimisation, this is instantly destabilised by the closing statement: “a thriller that will take you beyond terror, beyond evil, beyond suspense into a new realm where the viewer must decide just how far is *too* far…” (Haneke, 1997b). Again, Tartan utilise a language template entrenched within the ballyhoo tradition, daring the consumer to challenge their limitations. The last part of the sentence, ‘how far is *too* far’ inverts the film’s allegorical message, which seeks to question the consumption of violence rather than aid its progression. Within this example Tartan Video promote the film as a traditional violent narrative, and render the text as the type of product the film aims to critique and challenge. Clearly, this enables the product to attract a larger demographic, as the film can appeal to certain art demographics and horror fans, therein confirming the commercial viability of cinematic extremity.

Notably, when approaching the release from a historical viewpoint, Tartan Video’s decision to code the film within the parameters of horror is in-keeping with the cultural and commercial image of the distributor. At the time of the release, Tartan Video’s brand identity was based around the exhibition of extremity due to the launch of the Asia Extreme sub-branch two years prior, which came to make up over a third of their entire catalogue by 2005 (Dew, 2007, p.54). Furthermore, the film’s DVD meditation comes at the height of extreme art production, many of which were released by Tartan Video, allowing the distributors to adjust the film’s persona to fit comfortably into two commercially proven areas of consumption. As such, the distributor employs a traditionally exploitative marketing tactic: altering the public image of the film in order to position it within financially established environs regardless of the narrative content or filmic allegories. In a larger sense this practice suggests that cinematic extremity becomes an economic tool, validating parts of the
scholarly tradition that drew a relationship between extreme art cinema and the
ginical pressures of modern art film. This line of investigation will be more
thoroughly mapped in the Conclusion, yet is central to flag up here as it begins to
illustrate the manner in which extremity becomes commercialised.

Thus, it is evident that the Tartan release actively engaged with generic models of
marketing in order to fit in with the time it was released and the established brand
image of its distributor. Consequently it becomes useful to explore the Artificial Eye
release as a point of comparison. The cover of the Artificial Eye edition, released in
2009, discounts the traditional branding of the company’s filmic library outlined
within Chapter Three, and instead illustrates a blue cover with a single definable
image (see figure 26 [p.241]) (Haneke, 1997c). The light blue background has a
scratchy, punk aesthetic, which gives it a youthful feel, contradicting the thematic
depth of the narrative. The traditionally green Artificial Eye brand detail has been
turned black, suggesting the darkness of the text, and differentiating this release from
the rest of the company’s catalogue.
The central image that defines the cover is of a captive Georgie, the young son of tortured parents Anna and George. The still is taken during his encounter with Paul and Peter, and he is depicted with a pillow case over his head and face (Haneke, 1997c). The image immediately connotes danger, terror and kidnapping, and trades off the connotations of torture and captivity which at the time of the film’s remediation were dominating the mainstream horror market due to the post 9/11 popularity of the ‘torture porn’ cycle. The centralisation of a captive victim, often bound and in a state of discomfort, is seen clearly within the narrative images of mainstream horror releases such as Hostel Part II (Roth, 2007), The Hills Have Eyes 2 (Weisz, 2007), and Borderland (Berman, 2007) (see figure 27 [p.242]). Additionally, the image of the imprisoned Georgie neatly conforms to the prevailing attitude of ballyhoo marketing, as it presents one of the most emotionally transgressive and extreme images present within the film. Consequently, Artificial
Eye, a label entrenched within the cultural implications of art cinema, forego their identity as a provider of ‘high’ culture, and promote a psychologically loaded image of violence. As such, within this instance, Artificial Eye shifts between the distribution of legitimatised art cinema and promotional tactics synonymous with exploitation.

![Figure 27: An example of 'torture porn' paratextual tradition (Jorbet, 2010).](image)

However, the image of the kidnapped youth is counterbalanced by the strong authorial branding present on the cover. The film is part of a larger Michael Haneke Collection, which also saw the re-releases of *The Seventh Continent* (Haneke, 1989b), *Benny’s Video* (Haneke, 1992b), and *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (Haneke, 1994b). As a singular part of a broader release strategy, the cover depicts a large header that reads ‘the Michael Haneke Collection’, exposing the strength of authorial branding. This commercialisation of the auteur is confounded through a repetition of his name under the film’s title, and indicates that since the
initial release of the text the economic validity of Haneke has increased, allowing the branding of his name to come to the fore. Thus, while the image conforms to certain trends within the horror genre, the centralisation of the auteur offsets a completely horrific reading. This act of counterbalancing horrific tones is supplemented by the blue colour pallet which rejects the traditional use of dark blues, reds, greys, greens and blacks seen throughout horror paratexts.

This distancing from a genre reading is reinforced by the film’s blurb. Whereas Tartan Video promoted notions of threat on the front cover and then coded the film as horror through the blurb, the Artificial Eye release firmly entrenches the film within the discourse of art cinema. While the sole quote on the back of the box reads “a master-class in psychological horror” (Haneke, 1997c), supporting the image of captive terror on the jacket, the blurb aims to debase the comprehension that the film is merely violent exploitation. Stating that Funny Games is uncompromising and uncomfortable, the blurb secures the film within a cultural remit of validity by calling it a “compelling experience” (Haneke, 1997c). Furthermore, the film is elevated to the status of authorial allegory as the passage describes the narrative as “Michael Haneke’s classic exploration of screen violence” (Haneke, 1997c). Though the second of the three paragraphs reads that the two men subject the family to a “twisted and horrifying ordeal of terror” (Haneke, 1997c), employing an unmistakably hyperbolic phrase, this is counteracted by a return to authorial branding and allegorical awareness. The third and final paragraph claims the film is directed with “characteristic mastery” (Haneke, 1997c), before again foregrounding the film’s message at the expense of its generic coding: “Haneke turns the conventions of the thriller genre upside down and directly challenges the expectations of his audience, forcing viewers to question the complacency with
which they receive images of casual violence in contemporary cinema” (Haneke, 1997c).

Consequently, the horror frame established through the front cover is removed in order to assert the film’s artistic importance and allegorical depth. Within a historical framework, this infers that Haneke, since the first release of the film via Tartan Video, has become a larger commercial draw than the conventions of the horror genre. However, it is wrong to assume that the transgressive nature of the cover image does not blur the cultural identity of the film. Thus, *Funny Games*, within this most recent mediation, still relies on a form of generic hybridity, wherein it is both horror and art film. This ultimately affects the film’s potency to perform as a film about violence, as it is made commercially attractive through the semiotic dressings of the films it aims to critique.

This aspect of the marketing, in which the film is sold through a non-representational narrative image, is reflected upon by Haneke in an interview with Serge Toubinana (Haneke, 1997c). The interview, which is an extra feature on the Artificial Eye release, discusses *Funny Games*, its meaning, and its critical reception. The interview considers the film’s role as a commercial product, with Haneke stating “I told my producer, ‘if the film is a hit, it’ll be a hit alongside a misunderstanding.’ Because today the film, especially in English-speaking countries [...] The DVD is extremely popular, and I’m a bit afraid of that” (Haneke, 1997c). Here, Haneke recognises that the film’s success is dependent on it being framed as the type of narrative it aims to condemn. In relation to this comment, both releases, in differing ways, effectively partake in this process, placing the text within the consumption space that it endeavours to challenge. While the Artificial Eye release overturns the explicitly horrific narrative image present upon the Tartan Video paratext, the
presentation of a captive youth still relies on populist genre tradition, and invokes the pleasures of the horror genre. Consequently, populist horror cinema, in regards to the film’s cultural triangulation, influences the paratext, and forms part of its identity as it supports the ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural signifiers present across both covers. This notion of transformation and rebranding extends the history of slippage addressed throughout this study, and is crucial to the second case study within this chapter.

**Artificial Eye’s Michael Haneke Trilogy**

The Michael Haneke Trilogy boxset (Haneke 1989-1994), released at the same time as the re-mediated *Funny Games* by Artificial Eye in February 2009, is comprised of Haneke’s three debut features, *The Seventh Continent* (Haneke, 1989a), *Benny’s Video*, and *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (Haneke, 1994a); all of which form a loose trilogy widely recognised as the Glaciation Trilogy. The films are linked through their depiction of a cold and alienating society, and therefore do not feature a progressive story arc or reoccurring characters. The release serves as a prime example of a DVD artefact exhibiting a conflict between narrative image and narrative reality, and, as will be asserted throughout this section, functions on several differing levels of cinematic and cultural understanding simultaneously, supporting the earlier exploration of *Funny Games*.

Before considering the paratextual characteristics of this release, it is necessary to evaluate the three films that are encased within this edition. *The Seventh Continent*, Haneke’s debut feature, is based on actual events, which Grundmann argues were used to facilitate an examination of modern society’s hopelessness (2007, p.9). Within the film, a typical nuclear family commit collective suicide via overdose after
destroying all their material belongings. As such, the narrative acts as the starting point for the discussions that continues to typify Haneke’s career. *Benny’s Video*, the second film within the trilogy, moves on from *The Seventh Continent’s* preoccupation with suicide to focus on an exploration of an adolescence’s fascination with media violence. The narrative follows Benny, a teenager who murders a young female friend due to his obsession with violent imagery and disconnection from society. The crime is hastily covered up by his affluent bourgeois parents to protect their careers and lifestyle. Significantly, *Benny’s Video* is the most extreme of the trilogy due to the death of a live pig and the murder of a young girl, however is distinctly less transgressive than *Funny Games, The Piano Teacher, and the majority of contemporary extreme art films.*

The final text is *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*. The most formally extreme film within the trilogy, the narrative is presented in an unconventional structure that rejects the relatively traditional story arcs of *The Seventh Continent* and *Benny’s Video*. *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* is made up of seventy-one sequences, telling several stories that intertwine during the film’s violent climax. The narrative follows a lonely pensioner who has been alienated by his daughter; a young Romanian’s illegal journey to Austria; a bourgeois couple’s struggles with adoption; a family void of intimacy; a soldier stealing guns from the army’s weapon bank; and a student who in the film’s conclusion breaks under societal pressure and fires a hand gun randomly into a crowded bank before committing suicide. *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* sees a combination of the social estrangement and negative impact of media violence present within the first two parts of the trilogy, and works to fortify Haneke’s role as a social commentator. Although the shooting sequence suggests a sense of extremity, the transgressions occur outside of
the frame, allowing the social message optimum space. Thus, while the trilogy deals with themes that can either be considered extreme or would allow for moments of extreme imagery, the films collectively deny the audience the pleasure of violence and the thrill of the transgressive spectacle.

This subtleness and centralisation of allegorical meaning is significant when it is compared to the narrative image the release projects. The cover of the boxset rejects the traditional Artificial Eye design aesthetic, and is predominantly a lurid yellow; scratched and etched with black to give the same worn ‘punk’ aesthetic seen on the Artificial Eye *Funny Games* release (see figure 28 [p.248]) (Haneke 1989-1994). The sole image of a large pig head, complete with bleeding head wound, seeping snout and closed eyes, is an originally created illustration, and has no narrative reference point unlike the stills and poster details used for the rest of Artificial Eye’s catalogue (Haneke, 1989-1994). The image of the pig head is clearly violent, abrasive and marginal, and this section will endeavour to investigate it in several key contexts: its cinematic meaning, the ramifications it has upon the films in the boxset, and finally how its impacts the cultural comprehension of Haneke’s authorial identity.
The image of the dead pig is placed at the centre of the jacket, and acts as the focal point of the design. The body of the pig is not shown; rather the skin surrounding the skull is blurred, suggesting but not confirming decapitation, as the closed eyes allude to death. Underneath this stand-alone image is the title “The Michael Haneke Trilogy” (Haneke 1989-1994), written in a scratchy typeface, while the bottom right houses the titles of each film. It is clear that Artificial Eye is using the branding of the auteur in order to attract a traditional art film demographic, as they shun the widely used Glaciation Trilogy moniker. Consequently, we can locate a ‘highbrow’, scholarly capital, based within the widely circulated and established brand of Haneke. However, this branding is positioned in close proximity to the horrific image of the dead pig and hence a cultural exchange between the two takes place. Although one could argue that the authorial status of Haneke aids the legitimisation
of the pig image, the sheer emotive transgression of the deceased animal creates an overpowering image of violence. As will be proposed throughout the remainder this section, the cultural image of Artificial Eye and the auteur status of Haneke are challenged through its association with the deliberately provocative image.

Importantly, it would be wrong to assume that the deceased pig is completely gratuitous, as the head does reference the opening sequence of *Benny’s Video*, in which amateur footage of a pig’s slaughter via a bolt gun is watched obsessively by Benny. His early interaction with this footage confirms his fixation with violent imagery, and the tape is later shown to a young female friend. After screening the recording, Benny murders the girl with the bolt gun, confirming the pig’s relevance to the narrative and justifying, to an extent, its centralisation here. Nonetheless, *Benny’s Video* is more concerned with the moral ambiguity of the bourgeoisie than the actual footage Benny consumes, and therefore the recording of the pig being slain and the murder of Benny’s female visitor is the catalyst for a traditional art film exploration of ethical duty.

Significantly, as an extension of this dialogue, the paratextual image of the pig misrepresents the other films contained within the boxset in a more problematic manner. Neither the death of livestock nor any act of overtly extreme violence is seen within *The Seventh Continent* nor *71 Fragments of a Chorology of Chance*, as both narratives are far more subtle in their transgressions, achieving a 15 and 12 rating respectively (Haneke 1989-1994). Consequently *Benny’s Video* is the only text that can support artwork which promotes such transparently aggressive and controversial cultural iconography. The visual shock and cultural ramifications of using a graphic which is indicative of only a small part of a much larger trilogy creates a conflicting dialogue between the three films, as their individual narrative
images become homogenised under the violence of a single text. As such, the three films are bestowed with an exploitation currency, which despite failing to accurately illustrate the narratives, is a potent commodity within an alternative horror demographic.

This homogenisation can only occur due to the offensiveness and cultural trace of the dead pig, which acts as a symbol of violence and horror. Within the following section, this chapter will present a rationale in which the image of the pig can be approached as an iconographical image of horror. Immediately, it can be suggested that the pig, as a living animal, can be seen as an embodiment of Julia Kristeva’s theory of the abject. Through its relationship to dirt, muck and waste, the pig lives a life opposed to our own, a defining factor within finding the abject within an object (Kristeva, 1982, p.1). As Kristeva states, the body turns and thrusts into retching through the repugnance of sewage and filth (1982, p.2), substances stereotypically associated with the pig’s existence. Consequently, the image of the pig here recalls their life of squalor and this process of abjection, exemplifying an image of disgust which has a sensorial impact on the consumer. In addition to this, and as a consequence of this existence, the pig meat is forbidden within Judaism and Islam, enhancing its abject and abnormal qualities.

To further extend the image’s abject qualities, and encase it within the discourses of horror and the horrific, the pig appears to be dead. As Kristeva states, “the corpse [. . .], that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it” (1982, p.3). As such, the image of death, centralised and front-facing, shocks the viewer as it presents them with the ultimate representation of transgression. This feeling of abjection is heightened as the pig seeps and oozes bodily fluids, increasing the image’s ability to defile the consumer.
Indeed, the pig, both through its life and its actualisation here as a deceased cadaver, bespeaks a moment of abjection that recalls the horror of disgust and repugnance. Consequently, the image immediately becomes marginal, exploitative and transgressive, as it forces the audience into both an emotive and physical reaction, and thus reflects the key attributes of extreme art cinema.

However, this intrinsic relationship to abjection also makes it straightforward to suggest that the pig, as a living or dead entity, exists as a fundamental part of the horror genre’s cinematic language, therein complicating the rejectionist status of the image. This has been flagged up elsewhere, notably within Barbara Creed’s fundamental essay *Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection* (1986). Here Creed notes how within seminal horror narrative *Carrie* (De Palmer, 1976) “women's blood and pig's blood flow together, signifying horror, shame and humiliation” (1986, p.52). Within this Creed neatly articulates the way in which the pig, and its by-products such as blood (but as stated earlier also faeces and muck), are intrinsically related to notions of abjection and horror (both cultural and filmic). Within its role as the climatic act of substantial abuse, the pig becomes a symbol of disgust, abjection or fear, irreversibly attaching it to the iconography of the genre.

Although *Carrie* was not the first horror narrative to use pig imagery, its unquestionable relationship to the genre, its thematic representation of telekinesis, and its source material (the film is adapted from a Stephen King novel, a writer entrenched within the cultural understanding of horror), makes it a vital text within establishing the pig as part of the horror genres cinematic language. Crucially other narratives play key roles in grounding the pig likeness within the filmic register of the genre. *Deliverance* (Boorman, 1972), albeit not a traditional horror narrative,
features a rape sequence which firmly roots the pig within discourses of fear and terror. During the rape, Bobby, an urban man visiting the rural space for a canoeing trip, is told to squeal like a pig. Within this, the cries of pain become linked to the natural noise of the animal, sexualising the creature within a framework of forced sodomy. Later, within the exploitation horror film *Motel Hell* (Conner, 1980a); the homicidal farmer wears a decapitated pig’s head as a mask during the final stand-off. Notably, within the film’s recent re-mediation via Arrow Video, the killer’s pig mask is centralised on the DVD cover (Conner, 1980b), further strengthening the links between the genre and the animal.

The pig’s relationship to horror and the abject stretches beyond marginal exploitation horror narratives. Within *Hannibal* (Scott, 2001), the high concept sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs*, a scene features flesh eating pigs. During the sequence, a group of large pigs, covered in muck and sewage, gruesomely devour two victims. This use of the pig is vital, as the film, through its director, cast, and position as sequel to the highly successful *The Silence of the Lambs*, can be considered a mainstream release. Furthermore, within this particular sequence the pigs are not merely symbols of fear and the abject, but actively partake in moments of extremity, breaking through notions of representation into embodiment. This relationship between horror and the pig image is an ongoing trend. Recent films such as *Pig Hunt* (Isaac, 2008), *Pig* (Mason, 2010), *Pork chop* (Hardiman, 2010), *Madison County* (England, 2011) and *Piggy* (Hawkes, 2012), all foreground the pig as a symbol of horror, further entrenching the animal within the cinematic signifiers of the genre. Although these films were released after the boxset, and therefore it cannot be claimed to have influenced the aesthetic decisions of Artificial Eye, their circulation within the DVD sphere still affects the shelf life of The Michael Haneke boxset.
Even within the contexts of contemporary Euro horror, the pig motif is an ever present trope that further confirms its importance as a signifier for generic readings. Within Fabrice du Welz’s *The Ordeal*, Marc Stevens witnesses the village locals indulging in sexual intercourse with a pig, which is used as a semiotic warning of their ‘backwardness’. Furthermore *Taxiderma* (Pálfi, 2006), a Hungarian extreme Euro horror narrative, features a child born from a sexual relationship between a man and a pig. Finally, *Frontier[s]* uses a farm setting in which various pig carcasses are visible throughout the victims’ struggles to escape their neo-Nazi capturers. Yet, within the modern era, the principal and most potent use of the pig head likeness is contained within the *Saw* franchise. *Saw* is a prime example of a modern exploitation film, as it was made quickly with an estimated $1,200,000 budget, before achieving a worldwide gross of $103,096,345, with the United Kingdom being the most profitable territory outside of the United States. Since its debut in 2004, *Saw* has had six sequels, released every year on Halloween until 2010. The series is a forerunner in the ‘torture porn’ sub-genre, which, despite being roundly dismissed by the critical discourse for being overtly excessive and drawing problematic links between sex and violence ([Edelstein, 2006], [Weitzman, 2007]), has been commercially successful.

The seven *Saw* films all follow narrative formulas that allow for elaborate trap-based sequences of corporeal disintegration. The image of a pig head has become intrinsically linked to the franchise due to the lead antagonist’s pig costume, which is comprised of a long hooded robe, dark black wig, and pig mask. From its placement within the narrative, it has become an important part of *Saw’s* ability to crossover into the mainstream, as it performs a pivotal role within the film’s merchandising directive. Replica pig masks and full adult size Halloween costumes have been made in the ‘pig face’ likeness, whilst NECA (National Entertainment Collectables
Association), a leading American action figure and collectable manufacturer, have produced *Saw* action figures that portray Jigsaw, the film’s anti-hero, in the pig costume.

Moreover, aside from collectable cultural items aimed at the fan community, the pig mask costume was a major component of the marketing for the series’ fourth instalment. The poster for *Saw IV* is set against a dark background which has a similar scratchy effect to that seen on the Michael Haneke Trilogy boxset (see figure 29 [p.255]). The poster portrays a person, in side profile, dressed in the red robe and pig mask. The film’s title appears in the middle of this image in the traditional *Saw* typeface in red letters, with the tagline ‘It’s a Trap’ in block white capitals below. No director’s or actor’s name is present, illustrating the power of the *Saw* brand as a motivator for consumption and the lack of authorial branding present within modern mainstream horror cinema. The pig mask, while not the only focus of the poster, is still unmistakable as it is lit from below, making it stand out from its surroundings. Although it is not the full frontal exposure of the pig face that is portrayed upon the Michael Haneke Trilogy boxset, the half profile shot works to confirm the level of recognition pig iconography retains within the cultural understanding of the *Saw* saga. These similarities are vital as the Michael Haneke Trilogy boxset, released 2 years after *Saw IV*, clearly invokes the horrific connotations of the severed pig’s head.
Therefore, the use of the pig head actively invokes a trace memory embedded within horror cinema, and thus normalises the initially rejectionist image within the framework of popular horror cinema. However, it would be wrong to ignore the simultaneous ‘high’ cultural heritage linked to the pig head. Grounded within a particular literature tradition, the pig image has been a reoccurring motif in several seminal texts, and this secondary identity must be surveyed to appropriately understanding how the paratextual artefact manages and projects meaning. The two key uses of the pig image that prove most useful to consider within this line of investigation are that of *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945) and *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954). Both pivotal pieces of contemporary literature, the two books prominently feature pigs or their likeness in narratives that neatly reflect the key issues of Haneke’s cinematic canon.
Beginning chronologically, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* places the pig at the centre of strictly constructed political metaphor. Using the farm setting and its inhabitants as an allegory for the political climate Orwell was writing within, the story locates the pigs as dictatorial leaders of a fascist state. Herein, the pig serves as the novels antagonists, physically and politically undermining the rest of the farm’s population. If the pigs head present on the cover of the Artificial Eye release is read within this Orwellian lens, than its decapitation becomes the embodiment of a liberal stance, and a victory over the far right. Therefore, the anti-bourgeoisie message that defines the trilogy becomes supported within the paratextual image, which no longer represents mainstream violence but becomes a politically motivated standpoint. Clearly, due to the cultural validation of both Orwell and *Animal Farm*, this reading enables the cover to locate the film within the legitimised space of ‘high’ culture.

Similar findings can be located through an assessment of *Lord of the Flies*. The book follows a group of young school boys who become stranded on an island. The young boys are forced to fend for themselves; building shelters, hunting for food, exploring their surroundings, whilst ultimately creating an allegorical micro-society. Over time, they split into two definable groups, with the book becoming a symbolic examination of political leadership and the inborn nature of violence. Eventually the defined social structures collapses and violence consumes the boys, as Jack’s ‘hunters’, charged with slaughtering a wild pig for food, overpower Ralph’s more democratic leadership. Before superstition and fear can engulf the island, the boys are found by a nearby boat.

Within the story the pig, both a living creature and decapitated trophy, operates as a central motif within the formation of Golding’s metaphorical message. As a living indigenous creature, the pig is both a key source of food and an artefact in which the
boys can measure and declare their masculinity and power, whilst in its decapitated form it encapsulates the children’s irrationality, foregrounding their innocence. However, despite the fact that the pig itself is clearly important, *Lord of the Flies* as a whole relates neatly to the overriding messages of Haneke’s cinema, especially this early trilogy. The narrative is predominantly concerned with the manner civilisation breakdowns when children are left unguided. Within *Lord of the Flies*, the children are quickly consumed by violence in a similar manner to Benny in *Benny’s Video*. Again, within this application of trace memory, the pig head harbours an allegorical meaning which opposes the ‘low’ cultural memories of horror cinema.

Fundamental to noting the importance of these ‘high’ cultural traces is the manner in which the narrative significance of the pigs has come to inform the paratextual artefacts of the novels. Images of pigs have dominated the covers of both *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* (see figure 30[p.258] and figure 31 [p.259]), a practice that has grounded its likeness within the discourses of legitimised literature and cultural worth. Therefore in a manner concurrent to the reproduction of horrific pig imagery, the consistent republication of both novels, alongside their status within culture, suggests that the image of the pig retains a ‘high’ cultural trace. This indicates that Artificial Eye’s use of it decapitated cranium invokes the validation of these novels, and thus does not simply exploit a current horror tradition.
Figure 30: An example of the centralisation of the pig image within the paratextual identity of *Animal Farm* (Go South Online, 2014)
Figure 31: An example of the centralisation of the pig image within the paratextual identity of *Lord of the Flies* (Amazon, n.d)

However, it is clear that while these ‘high’ cultural readings are present, they require a more advanced level of cultural decoding than the horrific reading. In order to correctly decipher the image and read it within the rubric of this literature tradition, a consumer would have to retain a solid understanding of both books and their complex allegorical meanings. Furthermore, these links would have to be supported by a comprehension of Haneke’s core cinematic concerns. Therefore, to refer back to Pierre Bourdieu’s work of class distinctions (1984), only those of a ‘high’ or educated social class will be able to interpret and realise these connotations. It is more likely, due to the emotive power of the dead pig image, the saturation of the *Saw* franchise prior to the editions release, and the proximity this DVD will share
with other horror narratives within retail space that the horrific connotations of the pig head will dominate audiences’ comprehension of the Artificial Eye product.

Hence, despite having a slippiness, it becomes clear that the Artificial Eye Michael Haneke Trilogy works to imply a narrative image related to horror cinema and more specifically the ‘torture porn’ sub-branch, manifesting certain expectations regarding the visualisation of gore, sexuality and extremity. Therein, to the majority of the demographic, notably those who do not place the pig head image within the traces of *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm*, the paratextual image and its cine-cultural meaning comes to contradict the authorial message of the films, and grafts a series of inaccurate promises relating pre-conceived expectation held within the consumer base. While this allows the film to transcend filmic and market barriers, enabling it to connect with horror and art film demographics due to the authorial branding it retains, it creates a major conflict between the narrative expectation and narrative reality. The trilogy is, to most, is sold as a violent product which actively promotes the propagation of extreme imagery rather than a critique of violent cultural artefacts. This not only negates the implications of a deeper allegorical message, but alters the cultural and commercial meanings of the narratives. Thus, the paratextual product quarantines itself within a discourse of extremity, and even if it implies a secondary reading, employs a deliberately emotive image so to capitalise on the commercial identity and success of a prevalent mainstream horror trend.

Within this example Artificial Eye re-dress Haneke and his brand to fit into the recent trend of violent cinema, partly circumventing the traditional art film demographic in order to situate the film within the growing commonality of extremity. While this image suits part of Haneke’s image due to his use of transgression, the manner in which its recalls generic patterns suggests that this is a
commercial decision which further supports the notion that extremity serves a finical purpose in the market sphere. Using the cultural triangulation model, it becomes clear that despite having both a ‘high’ cultural reading due to the use of a literature trace, and a rejectionist ‘low’ cultural reading relating to the use of abject imagery, the cover retains a ‘middlebrow’ identity. The pig images connections to popular horror cinema means that at the apex of the triangle rests a populist imprint, which codes the film under the rubrics of conventional horror cinema. Herein the film slips between three cultural sites, making it a fluid cultural item capable of changing subtly extreme narratives into scandalous products of the European film industry.

Conclusion

The commercial identity of Haneke is a prime example of the tradition mapped in the initial chapters, as his films are marketed using the cultural and filmic dressings of exploitation and horror cinema while harbouring a ‘high’ cultural meaning, allowing them to shift between several consumption spaces, increasing profitably yet ultimately recoding the film’s cultural implications. That being said, within his most recent releases, the extremity of his past is ignored and underplayed. The releases of *The White Ribbon* (Haneke, 2009b) and *Amour* (Haneke, 2012b) seek to establish Haneke as a bastion of artistic tradition. While within the Artificial Eye release of *The White Ribbon* Haneke is credited as the director of *Funny Games*, invoking the trace of his more violent narratives; the cover asserts a strong sense of cultural legitimacy. Next to the sole image of a tearful youth, the box illustrates that the film was nominated for two Oscars, and won both a Golden Globe and the Palme d’Or (Haneke, 2009b). Furthermore, the front and back cover are adorned with five
different 5 star ratings and a quote from *The Mail on Sunday* which reads “Haneke is probably the best in the world at his craft” (Haneke, 2009b).

A similar strategy is employed on the cover of *Amour*, which is also released by Artificial Eye. A single quote on the cover from *Time Out* reads “a masterpiece” (Haneke, 2012b), and a large gold band, made reflective to heighten its sense of prestige and its relationship to the precious metal, lists the film’s BAFTA wins and Oscar nominations. Again, the Palme d’Or win is centralised as the image focuses on the faces of the film’s lead protagonists. The blurb on the back cover looks to confirm the film’s status, stating “the second film to win Michael Haneke [. . .] the converted Palme d’Or award and hailed as his finest work to date, *Amour* has secured its place as a modern classic and amongst the greatest films ever made” (Haneke, 2012b). Consequently, the dualism that defined the releases considered within this chapter is rejected in favour of a conventional art film marketing strategy. As such, when mapping the paratextual life of Haneke, it can be assumed that notions of his extremity, within his most modern releases, are being suppressed in favour of a more traditional art film commercial image. Therefore, it can be deduced that auteurism still retains a commercial appeal within the current filmic context, and even within an increasingly extreme mainstream, traditional art film signifiers are still applied to a director that can, and has, been associated with transgression.

In conclusion, the paratextual image of Haneke is less homogenised and harmonious than the critical identity of the director. Within the scholarly sphere, the director is roundly celebrated, removed from discussion of extremity and championed as a modern auteur. Yet within the commercial space, Haneke’s image is confused, unstable and open to interpretation as distributors look to shun his official capital in favour of more commercially viable characteristics which trade off the visual
pleasures of the horror genre. Consequently, the director’s image, and that of his filmic catalogue, is oppositional to the critical sphere, mirroring the commercial identity of many of the extreme art directors he is often elevated above.
Chapter Seven

Lars von Trier

The final case study within this thesis will explore Lars von Trier, with the commercial identity of *Antichrist* being the main focus. Akin to the Michael Haneke case study, the chapter will start by positioning von Trier within the extreme art history that has been a focus throughout this work. By examining his use of sexual explicitness and violence alongside his deliberately provocative persona, the chapter will draw relationships between his cinema and those that are common within the prevailing extreme cinema dialogues.

Thereafter, the chapter will examine various mediations of a single film, looking at the initial Chelsea Films’ release, the later Artificial Eye edition and finally the film’s involvement within the Film4 Extreme Season. This staggered exploration will allow for further exploration of the shifting landscape of cinematic extremity. Similar to the previous case studies, this chapter will look to investigate how the paratextual identity draws from and relates to the semiotics of art cinema, horror cinema and contemporary extremity film, in order to map the prevailing taste and classificatory convergences that have underpinned this thesis. Within the final section of this chapter, which surveys *Antichrist’s* role within the British Film4 Extreme Season, the chapter will look to investigate not only von Trier’s position within that specialised programme, but also the commercial construction of extremity in a more general sense.
Lars von Trier

Alongside Michael Haneke, Lars von Trier is regarded as one of the definitive European auteurs still actively producing films within the contemporary climate, with Stig Bjorkman, author of *Trier on von Trier* (2004), describing him as a “breaker of new ground” (2009, p.16). This auteur status, which is related to discourses surrounding art cinema and its pre-established values, has been constructed through the director’s reliance on the key iconographies of the canon. Narratives such as *The Idiots*, *Dogville* (von Trier, 2003), *The Five Obstructions* (Leth & von Trier, 2003) and *Nymphomaniac* use experimental forms which foreground the control and artistry of von Trier, while neatly illustrating the art film iconographies mapped in the Introduction. Furthermore, as explored in Chapter Five, von Trier was involved in the creation of the Dogme 95 movement, an achievement which further sanctions his authorial legitimacy. Additionally, von Trier has won multiple awards at Cannes, claiming the Palme d’Or with *Dancer in the Dark* (von Trier, 2000), the Grand Jury Prize with *Breaking the Waves* (von Trier, 1996), the Jury Prize for *Europa* (von Trier, 1991) and the Technical Grand Prize for *The Element of Crime* (von Trier, 1984). These accolades, due to the pre-circulating capital of the festival, further endorse von Trier’s position within the ‘high’ cultural environ.

However, von Trier’s presence within the legitimised space is unstable. Unlike the conceptual fields that were repeatedly applied to the work of Haneke, the critical discourse that surrounds the work of von Trier is less secure. This can be seen to be a symptom of the public and cinematic identity the director projects. Von Trier has been ascribed the role as art provocateur, a label that sees him rest neatly within the discourse of extreme art cinema due to its connotations regarding the combination of
transgression and intellectualism, but one which leads to an uneasiness within the art film space.

The sustained presence of transgressive themes, which combines with the artistic experimentation of his features, makes von Trier a fundamental part of the extreme art canon. As established in the earlier contextual chapter, the orgy sequence within *The Idiots* provided one of the earliest adoptions of hard-core pornography within a non-pornographic production, a technique that is repeated in this chapter’s focus text, *Antichrist*. Within *Antichrist* a full penetration shot appears during the film’s black-and-white prologue, and the image of an erect penis, another taboo within non-pornographic cinema, is present during the later torture sequence. More recently, *Nymphomaniac*, a story of sexual addiction, features multiple sequences of hard-core sex, actively using and reframing many key pornographic motifs such as sadomasochism, bondage, threesomes and fetish. Furthermore, whereas the sexual scenes present within both *Breaking the Waves* and *Dogville* are void of hard-core images, the explicitness of the themes, including sexual degradation and rape, still work to transgress normative cinematic barriers. Additionally, the emotional extremity of *Dancer in the Dark*, the taboo subject matter of *Manderlay* (von Trier, 2005) and the multiple transgressions of *Antichrist* (which will be assessed in more detail throughout this chapter) allow von Trier’s work to be read as analogous to the iconographies that define the extreme art continuum, and therefore his placement within the continuum is both justified and useful. However, due perhaps to his work with established stars, his use of the English language and tendency to operate outside of his national framework, he, like Haneke, has rarely been considered within the extreme critical paradigm.
Von Trier’s public performances further add to his cinematic dualism, as they act to disrupt his position within the art discourse. Von Trier has continuously constructed a cultural identity based around provocation, using public events as opportunities to promote a certain rebellious image. As these events operate outside of the cinematic frame, they will be approached here as epitexts, which influence and become attached to both the his films and their surrounding paratexts. His co-creation of the Dogme 95 manifesto can be approached as a prime example of his vociferous public displays, due to the theatrics which accompanied it. However, more recently, von Trier’s public projections have become intrinsically linked to his performances at Cannes, the undisputed figurehead of the festival network (de Valck, 2007, p.120), and the most important festival space (Broe, 2011, pp.33-34). As established in Chapter One, film festivals are at the epicentre of legitimate filmic activity, and hence exist as a closed, ‘high’ cultural space; a micro-society which is playing an increasingly large role in the creation and sustainment of an international art cinema scene (de Valck, 2012, p.35) and a stage in which certain films and personalities can become validated (Maule, 2008, p.168). Consequently, the festival space is framed within the rubrics of ‘high’ cultural tradition, and is imperative to the history of approaching cinema as an art form (Ruoff, 2012, p.1). Indeed, it is easy to establish that the collective mores of the attendees are entrenched within the customs of art film culture; a mindset that carries certain expectations and habits.

These expectations can manifest themselves in various ways. The attendees, mainly journalists and film critics (and cinephiles), can legitimise the exhibited film, bestowing it with a capital that helps it achieve an elevated status. Conversely, the film could be rejected by the audience, a process common within the hostile environment of Cannes (Turan, 2002, p.25), and thus become imparted with a poor
reputation that limits its ability to attract audiences outside the festival network. Thirdly a film can, through the employment of transgressive and extreme narrative tropes, instigate a controversy which is in turn made into a scandal by the attending media (de Valck, 2007, p.155). This is evident within the festival performances of many key extreme art texts, and rests at the centre of this project’s exploration of extreme art cinema’s relationship to commercial imperatives. Hampus Hagman, in his article *Every Cannes needs its Scandal: Between Art and Exploitation in Contemporary French* (2007), suggests that many French extreme narratives are branded through a ‘gross out’ or ‘walk out’ factor (2007, p.37). This is clear within the festival exhibition of *Irreversible* at Cannes, which, as David Sterritt notes, induced nausea and sickness within the attendees (2007, p.307), and therein become a controversial, yet widely covered and commercial property.

Marijke de Valck terms this festival cycle the ‘value adding process’, and states it occurs “in pre-planned occasions and ritualised ceremonies [. . .] [or] attained in the elusive process of selection for mediation and guerrilla endeavours of various actors” (2007, p.133). The value gained from these events evolves into ‘news worthiness’, which consequently translates into economic value and distribution deals outside of the festival network (de Valck, 2007, p.128). Although the controversial capital gathered through notoriety is often entrenched within the stigma of transgressive cinematic representations, it still has a distinct value. As de Valck efficiently states:

> The positive or negative nature of media exposure [is] not that important. Media coverage can always be valuable because it puts films on the agenda. Film critics [. . .] have the power to establish favourites on the media agenda, which are independent of competition results, and thus contribute to the buzz that will help the film travel the festival circuit successfully (2007, p.161).

Thus, while within official competitions only a select number of films are able to compete for awards, every film has the chance to gain symbolic value through media
attention (de Valck, 2007, p.128). The accumulation of notoriety works to ensure the film’s coverage outside the closed sphere, whilst the commencement of scandalous activity within these pre-organised live environs mark the event as a whole as a culturally relevant experience (Ruoff, 2012, p.17).

This section will look to use de Valck’s notion of value addition, and in particular the manner in which scandal and controversy can affix extra capital to a certain film, within an exploration of von Trier’s recent performances at Cannes. It can be claimed that the director intentionally goads the media, which despite resulting in a certain amount of critical condemnation, simultaneously ensures maximum coverage for his films inside and outside the festival space. This is apparent within the Cannes press conference for *Antichrist*. Prior to addressing the press, the film had already caused controversy. As the following statements by Peter Brunette, Todd McCarthy, and Owen Gleiberman suggest: “with his latest offering, *Antichrist*, Danish bad-boy director Lars von Trier is in no danger of jeopardizing his reign as the most controversial major filmmaker working today” (Brunette, 2009, p.94); “Lars von Trier cuts a big fat art-film fart with "Antichrist.". As if deliberately courting critical abuse” (McCarthy, 2009); and finally, “Lars von Trier, once a gravelly exciting artist [. . .] latest fake outrage, is an art-house couples-therapy torture-porn horror film” (Gleiberman, 2009, para.1), the film already had grounds to instigate, and gain additional value through, scandalous transgression. These comments, appearing across both populist and academic epitexts (ranging from *Entertainment Weekly* [Gleiberman], *Variety* [McCarthy], and *Film Journal International* [Brunette]), neatly illustrate the reach and coverage the film received, again reasserting the value of notoriety and disgust.
However, this controversial value was supplemented by von Trier’s performance during the standardised Cannes press conference. Following a question that demanded *Antichrist* be justified, von Trier replied that his work was the hand of God, and that his the best film director in the world. This retort made the conference a ‘happening’ within the larger festival space, making it instantly newsworthy, therein aiding its transition to a greater audience. This idea of additional coverage is clear within the article *CANNES 2009: Stupid, Adjective* (Peranson, 2009), as author Mark Peranson never mentions the Palme d’Or winning *The White Ribbon* (Haneke, 2009a), yet discusses *Antichrist* and von Trier at length. Furthermore, two articles which consider the following year’s festival ([Lawrenson, 2010, p.56], [Lightning, 2010, p.68]), mention the lack of *Antichrist*-style controversy at the 2010 edition, illustrating the film’s permanence and the importance of scandal within the general construction of the festival event. Therefore, through the combination of filmic extremity and public transgression, *Antichrist* achieved a heightened value which elevated its status outside of the festival network, and ensured a level of commercial visibility.

In this instance, it is clear that “the local performances during the Cannes Film Festival acquire[d] global value by means of media exposure” (de Valck, 20007, p.118). However, more significant within von Trier’s role as a promoter is his performance at the press conference for the less controversial *Melancholia* (von Trier, 2011). Vitally, the film, due to its lack of transgressive thematic content, would not have been unable to achieve the level of scandal obtained by *Antichrist*. Furthermore, *Melancholia*, although celebrated by critics within the festival space, with Foundas Scott claiming that it to be most warmly greeted von Trier film since *Breaking the Waves* (2011, p.62), was unlikely to win the Palme d’Or. *Melancholia,*
unlike *Antichrist*, was not branded by its ‘walk out’ credentials or celebrated as a potential winner of the top prizes, and subsequently endured a less sensationalist and therefore widespread critical reception.

However, during the press conference von Trier turned the localised festival event into a global news story through the performance of a self-knowingly controversial monologue. During the event, von Trier made several comments regarding Adolf Hitler, Judaism and his own Nazi beliefs, stating:

> I really wanted to be a Jew, but then I found out I was really a Nazi [...] what can I say, I understand Hitler. But I think he did some wrong things, yes, absolutely, but I can see him sitting in his bunker in the end [...] I sympathise with him a little bit yes. But not, come on, I’m not for the Second World War, and I’m not against Jews, [...] I am of course very for Jews... no not too much because Israel is a pain in the ass [...]. Ok I’m a Nazi (The Telegraph, 2011).

These comments, as Sara Vilkomerson states, came to overshadow all other aspects of the film (2011). More significantly, the performance, which, due to the taboos attached to the discussion of Hitler and Nazism, resulted in an oppositional yet linked process: von Trier was banned from Cannes while *Melancholia* gained notoriety and exposure outside of the festival space.

This supplemental exposure can be analysed through an investigation of YouTube. The press conference has been uploaded onto the streaming site by telegraphtv, the *Daily Telegraph*’s official YouTube channel, on the 18th May 2011 under the title *Lars Von Trier's 'Nazi' gaffe at Cannes Film Festival as he jokes about Adolf Hitler* (The Telegraph, 2011). The video has been viewed 1,052,209 times, and received 1,626 ‘likes’ and 526 ‘dislikes’ (The Telegraph, 2011) (information gathered on 17/09/2014). Furthermore, when a search of ‘Cannes Film Festival Press Conference’ is undertaken with the search filter set to order the videos by number of
views, the video is the first listed (Cannes Film Festival Press Conference, 2014) (information gathered on 17/09/2014). It is clear by these figures that the press conference was transformed from a local event, happening in front of a small selection of privileged attendees, into a global incident accessed by an international audience. As such, this moment becomes simultaneously separate from and attached to the commercial identity of Melancholia. Though the director’s intentions cannot be known, it is clear that the comments created a marketable scandal which engulfed a film lacking the natural ingredients to instigate a scandal. Importantly, this process, in which von Trier exploits the memory of Europe’s greatest contemporary tragedy, is entrenched within a particular hyperbolic tradition, and affixes a non-extreme narrative with a transgressive reputation.

Even as von Trier’s comments worked to attract attention to Melancholia through the channels of infamy, they also damage his credibility as a director of ‘value’. While being banned from the Cannes Film Festival attaches a hyperbolic label to the director which brands him as ‘too extreme’ for the festival space, it also denies the director the ‘high’ cultural credence affixed to an exhibition slot within the festival’s programme. Through an inability to show future films within Cannes, von Trier is instantly ousted from that ‘high’ cultural space. Whilst it could be inferred that extreme art cinema, due to the nature of the transgressive texts, do not require additional coverage or capital, the trace memory of the festival is important to the positioning of the narratives. As Tina Kendall usefully notes, the prestige of the festival is vital to the audience as it ensures the transgressions are housed within the rubrics of auteur-driven, culturally relevant cinema (2012, p.43). Consequently, through his banishment, von Trier is unable to safe-guard his cinema within the existing legitimacy the Cannes Film Festival, and therefore is incapable of
penetrating part of the art film demographic. Furthermore, as a response to the media outcry which followed these events, von Trier has taken a vow of silence, an act in itself that works to garner a certain level of hyperbolic attention, yet further limits his authorial presence.

Hence, von Trier merges an auteur image an extreme identity, a combination which allows the director to drift between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. Through the conflicting readings of condemnation, celebration and attention seeking, the cinematic profile of von Trier neatly summarises the cultural image of extreme art film. In an extension of this concept, *Antichrist* acts as a principal example of the aesthetic model outlined in the Introduction, as it blends beauty and tropes of ‘high’ culture, despite “oscillat[ing] between realism and surrealism, interspersed with occasional horror-film segments” (Grønstad, 2011, p.199). Within this combination, the narrative problematises the process of spectatorship and pleasure (Grønstad, 2011, p.194), becoming what Asbjørn Grønstad terms an unwatchable film. Accordingly, *Antichrist* can be approached as a cipher for the whole continuum, thus allowing this final case study to comprehend the broader paratextual discourses that envelope extreme art cinema.

*Antichrist: Chelsea Films and Artificial Eye*

With *Antichrist* acting as a synecdoche for extreme cinema, its paratextual presentation is essential. In order to explore it, the film’s meditation through both Chelsea Films (von Trier, 2009b) and Artificial Eye (von Trier, 2009c) will be assessed, allowing for an examination of the temporal shifts which affect the economy of extreme cinema within the commercial space.
Chelsea Films, who released *Antichrist* on 11\textsuperscript{th} of January 2010, are the smallest part of the larger Curzon Artificial Eye conglomerate, wherein they are a subordinate component to both Artificial Eye and the Curzon exhibition branch. This is proven on the Curzon World website, wherein the description of Artificial Eye (Artificial Eye, Curzon World, 2014) is far longer than the single line afforded Chelsea Films (Chelsea Films, Curzon World, 2014). This minor position is confirmed by the type of films released under its branding. Titles such as *Sand Sharks* (Atkins, 2009), *Airborne* (Burns, 2012), *Dragon Wasps* (Knee, 2012), and *Piranhaconda* (Wynorski, 2012) exist as key texts within Chelsea Films’ library, and due to their straight to DVD or TV movie status, lack the prestige to legitimise the company in any cultural sector. These ‘mockbuster’ narratives, which aim to replicate the American ‘blockbuster tradition’, essentially target a casual market demographic, wherein a lower price-point sees them consumed alongside more popular titles. The company was developed in order to, as Philip Knatchball, CEO of Curzon Artificial Eye states, "protect the legacy and core value of Artificial Eye” (Macnab, 2007, para.8). In this sense, Chelsea Films are a purely financial and commercial distributor, set up in order to allow for the release of economically driven genre films while safeguarding the cultural capital of other parts of the of company. Knatchball confirms this further by stating that Curzon Artificial Eye needs “mid-level locomotives” (Macnab, 2007, para.7), such as those released by Chelsea Films, to stay economically viable in a changing market sector. However, although Chelsea Films, due to the commercial imperative attached to is formation, acts within the rubrics of an exploitation distributor, they retain little sub-cultural credence. Unlike the other currently active exploitation distributors mapped throughout this study, Chelsea Films do not release
seminal genre films which retain a pre-existing capital, and as a result are unable to partake in complex exchange of capital discussed throughout this thesis.

The notion that Chelsea Films has minimal brand power is clear when its market reach and brand aesthetics are evaluated. Unlike the majority of distributors, the company does not have a website, and instead advertise through free social networking sites such as Twitter. Instantly, this illustrates the size of the distribution company, an argument supported by the primary evidence available through a consideration of their activity on this platform. Chelsea Films’ Twitter page, @ChelseaFilmsDis, has posted 178 tweets and has 338 followers up until 17/09/2014 (Chelsea Films, 2014). When these figures are compared to Artificial Eye @ArtificialEye, we can see that Chelsea Films represent a far smaller company. Posting 3,731 tweets and retaining 24.4K followers in accordance to 17/09/2014 (Artificial Eye, 2014), Artificial Eye’s reach and frequency, a key aspect of marketing (Freidman, 2006, p.291), eclipses its sister label. This is perhaps to be expected, however, even when we compare Chelsea Films to Arrow Video, an art and exploitation label which in terms of size and workforce is a more equivalent company, the former’s reach and frequency is still marginal. Arrow Video, tweeting from @ArrowFilmsVideo, has posted 10.2K tweets, boasting 10.8K followers as of 17/09/2014 (Arrow Video, 2014).

This information is fundamental to the paratextual comprehension of Antichrist, as the lack of capital in either ‘high’ or ‘low’ taste economies leaves the film with no additional cultural understanding or market guidance, whilst the straight to DVD format which dominates the majority of Chelsea Films’ catalogue juxtaposes the festival prestige of Antichrist. Furthermore, though the majority of Chelsea Films
releases work within a horror genre template, they feature none of the allegorical depth or visual extremity present within von Trier’s narrative. Nonetheless, although the texts are dissimilar, Antichrist’s proximity to them within the banner of Chelsea Films bestows von Trier’s film with a conventional, casual horror film identity which masks the complexities of the film. Vitally, what this begins to imply is that Antichrist, due to its extremity and infamous cultural status, is being denied entrance to the ‘high’ cultural market space via the dressings of populist horror cinema.

The DVD design aesthetic employed by Chelsea Films confirms this market directive. The Chelsea Films DVD cover portrays a pair of rusty, bloody scissors against a white background, an image replicated for the Blu Ray release (see figure 32 [p.277]). Blood splatters appear prominently on the bottom of the sleeve, with several sporadically positioned in the midsection of the cover. The title, matching the typography used throughout the film, is the largest text visible on the sleeve and is split into ‘Anti’ and ‘Christ’ by the scissors, with the names of Willem Dafoe (He) and Charlotte Gainsbourg (She) appearing in black either side of the handles. Von Trier’s name, slightly larger than that of Gainsbourg’s and Dafoe’s, is written in deeper red than the title. The prominence of his name is indicative of the art/exploitation fusion that typifies the film’s narrative, as the authorial status of the director is often missing from the marketing presence of contemporary horror paratexts. However, the mass of horror semiotics dilutes this authorial potency, and thus the auteur trace is heavily disguised among more conventional horror signifiers.
The reasons the cover works so efficiently in attaching recognisable genre semiotics to the film are numerous. Firstly, the scissors are essential in placing Antichrist within a definable yet uncomfortable market position that creates a tension between the promotion of violence and the film’s narrative complexities. The scissors invoke Antichrist's most infamous sequence of extremity, She’s genital self-mutilation, instigating a set of pre-conceived expectations. Although the sequence of genital mutilation was condemned by many critical circles as being gratuitous, misogynistic and needlessly violent, the Chelsea Films’ cover design endeavours to capitalise on this negative press. Consequently, the distributor adapts the scandal, making it into the film’s most potent selling point, and consequently exploits its notoriety. Indeed, within the isolation and promotion of the implement of suggestive violence, Chelsea Films are able to capitalise on a wealth of critical coverage and an existing reputation, encompassing the film’s critical identity and the surrounding epitexts into
its marketing campaign and narrative image. Vitally, through the centralisation of the scissors and the incorporation of an established cultural hyperbole, the commercial persona of the film is distinctly exploitative, as it amplifies the film’s most violent image as a symbolic representation of extremity and explicitness. This in turn dares the consumer to partake in a viewing exercise which carries a series of pre-circulating expectations relating to excess, coding the film as a forbidden spectacle.

Additionally, the scissors invoke the market imagery which dominates the paratextual presentation of the ‘slasher’ sub-genre. As claimed within Chapter Five, the ability to isolate a weapon and promote it as the symbol of the franchise was imperative to the success of the sub-genre within the commercial marketplace. Jonathan Gray discusses this within his work on paratext, and states that there is a relatively standardised formula for horror film posters, with the majority often depicting the implement of murder (2010, p.53). Clearly, the Chelsea Films’ release fits neatly within this marketing tradition, and their centralisation of the weaponised object grafts a set of implications to Antichrist due to the commonalities it shares with the promotional images of ‘slasher’ cinema.

To examine this further, and reinforce the paratextual aesthetic being discussed, it is constructive to isolate one of the foremost examples of the ‘slasher’ sub-genre. The most accomplished series, in regards to sustainability (amount of sequels/remakes/reboots) and the surrounding paratexts that come to solidify the weapon’s relationship to the film such as action figures and replica costumes is Friday the 13th (Miner, 1981a, 1982a; Zito, 1984a; Steinmann, 1985a; McLoughlin, 1986a; Buechler, 1988a; Hedden, 1989a; Marcus, 1993; Issac, 2001; Nispel, 2009). In terms of the isolation of a weapon, the franchise’s reoccurring antagonist Jason
Voorhees has become synonymous with the machete, however part of the film’s pleasure is derived from the ability to incorporate a vast variety of tools and objects into the sequences of slaughter.

Through an assessment of Paramount Home Entertainment’s DVD release of the series, this section can confirm the notion that a singular, isolated tool is a traditional horror film marketing tactic. By doing this, this section can claim that the Chelsea Films’ release promotes a populist horror reading over any other, and homogenises its other cultural signifiers (such as auteur branding) under the iconographical patterns of horror cinema. Notably, the DVD of Antichrist entered the marketplace 11 months after these re-released Friday the 13th titles, and therefore, in a chronological context, they can be seen to hold influence on the paratextual design selected by Chelsea Films. The editions of Friday the 13th under consideration here are Part II to VIII, as the series’ first instalment was distributed in a standalone edition by Warner Home Video in 2003 (Cunningham, 1980b), while the later sequels and remakes are not part of the original 80s franchise.

The designs of the Paramount Home Entertainment Friday the 13th follows and reaffirms a traditional horror genre paratextual aesthetic, balancing the familiarity of the concept with a level of curiosity relating to the objects depicted. A single object is centralised on the cover of each release, which shapes the audience’s expectations and excitement for acts of violent transgression due to the blood splatters that accompany them (see figure 33 [p.280]). The implement differs on each title, and references a particular scene of extremity within the narrative, most commonly a moment in which Voorhees slays a victim with the advertised object. The cover of Friday the 13th part II shows a pick axe (Miner, 1981b), Part III a pitchfork (Miner, 1982b), Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter a corkscrew (Zito, 1984b), A New
Beginning garden shears (Steinmann, 1985b), *Jason Lives: Friday the 13th part VI* portrays the traditional machete (McLoughlin, 1986b), *Part VII* a meat cleaver (Buechler, 1988b) and the final instalment, *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* centralises an axe (Hedden, 1989b). The title of the film is written in a red typeface that has become synonymous with the series and is unchanged across the seven covers, giving the collection a uniformity which secures the aesthetic template within the generic coding of the series and its surrounding cultural values.

![Image of Friday the 13th DVD](image)

Figure 33: An example of the *Friday the 13th* design aesthetic (Amazon, n.d)

Essentially, the *Antichrist* release, despite retaining no narrative correlation to the ‘slasher’ genre, borrows from this established iconography. Therefore, the scissors are transformed into a ‘franchise weapon’, whereby they act as a loaded symbol connotative of a certain type of pleasurable violence. This facilitates a generic
reading of the paratext which places the narrative within the vastly popular ‘slasher’ genre. Importantly, the centralisation of the weapon and the distinct similarities of the colour scheme, which is also used for the covers of mainstream horror narratives such as *Texas Chain Saw Massacre 2* (Hooper, 1986), *Hit and Run* (McCallion, 2009) and *Harpoon: Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre* (Kemp, 2009), works to further reduce the complexities of von Trier’s narrative through the adoption of a stereotypical narrative image (see figure 34).

Moreover, the cover continues to appropriate a mainstream horror marketing aesthetic through its catalogue number and use quotations. The film’s catalogue number, which is habitually selected at random as an industrial process relating to
the manufacturer’s library index, is constructed here as an additional paratextual feature. The number reads ART666DVD (von Trier, 2009b), creating a coequal reference to the narrative’s comments on religion and von Trier’s relationship to art film. However, this kind of micro-detailing is more common within fan orientated discourses due to the importance of sub-cultural capital within those filmic communities, and further enables the film’s migration into the horror cultural arena. Furthermore the quote on the front cover reads “the most original horror movie of the year” (von Trier, 2009b). This remark works on several levels to support the generic reading of the cover image, as the quotation undeniably brands the film as horror. Moreover, its author, Kim Newman, maintains a significant level of sub-cultural capital within horror film discourses through his constant presence as a reviewer of the genre within a variety of film publications. His involvement in this release of Antichrist, and prominent placement on the front of the paratext, enables his cultural legacy to be grafted onto the release, and provides further evidence of Chelsea Films’ ambition to situate the film within a genre environ.

This concept of placing a horrific reading at the forefront of its cultural triangulation and manipulating the image of Antichrist to fit a pre-existing understanding of horror cinema is continued on the jacket’s reverse. The film is described as “a terrifying journey into violence and chaos” (von Trier, 2009b), a statement which trades off the conventions of horror film plot structures. Furthermore, the film is claimed to be “one of the most shocking, controversial and unforgettable horror films ever made” (von Trier, 2009b). Again, this statement underplays the complexities of the narrative and its relationship to art cinema in favour of a more standardised approach to generic coding. Finally the film is said to be “from the extreme imagination of acclaimed director Lars von Trier” (von Trier, 2009b). Whilst the word ‘acclaimed’
indicates a level of legitimisation, the expression ‘extreme imagination’ not only implies transgression, but casts von Trier as a horror film auteur rather than a director who works within the spaces of art cinema.

Finally, all the quotations which appear on the covers reverse are hyperbolic, constructing dares and promises grounded within the cultural practices of horror film consumption. A quotation from The Sun, which carries its own ‘low’ cultural status and is suggestive of the demographic the release is aiming to attract, states Antichrist presents “the most shocking scenes ever to be seen in mainstream cinema”. Important here is not only the hyperbolic ‘ever to be seen’ statement, but also the way in which the quote places Antichrist as a piece of ‘mainstream’ cinema. Here, Antichrist is removed from both the art film and the extreme cinema sphere, which, as established throughout this thesis exists on the margins of film culture, and is placed within a strictly commercial environment. Within that re-positioning, the connotations of the film change, as it becomes burdened with the expectations which determine normalised viewing experiences. The remaining quotations use a similar address, stating the film is both “Terrifying” (von Trier, 2009b) and “Gruellingly violent…” (von Trier, 2009b). Within these quotations, there is no mention of the film’s art house credentials, its performance at Cannes or the authorial status of von Trier, aspects which would provide ‘high’ cultural validity and enable it to circulate more comfortably within an art film demographic.

Clearly, Antichrist’s packaging via Chelsea Films has the ability to alter the film’s public and cinematic image. Antichrist, which it could be argued straddles art film, mainstream horror and extreme cinema despite being comfortable in neither category, is shaped into a mainstream horror film through this particular paratext. The cover dilutes or rejects forms of art house marketing while manipulating a
successful and profitable system of symbolic recognition. Overall, the narrative image the release provides is capable of undermining the film’s formal and narrative experimentation and complexities as they become filtered through a well-known and largely accepted semiotic register.

Through this paratextual exploration, we can examine the way Curzon Artificial Eye, owners of Chelsea Films perceive Antichrist. By deciding to place the film on a label defined by its relationship to genre cinema, it is apparent that the conglomerate sees von Trier’s narrative as a product that may contradict the core values of their larger brand. Accordingly, through its Chelsea Films residency, the extremity synonymous with the narrative is unable to affect the cultural standing of Artificial Eye and Curzon. However, in 2011, the film was re-released by Artificial Eye, and hence, was seemingly re-positioned within the rubrics of art cinema through the brand semiotics of its ‘high’ cultural distributor. This raises interesting questions regarding the cultural and commercial perception of the film. Is this re-mediation via Artificial Eye an attempt to rebrand the film as a piece of art cinema, and welcome it back into the ‘high’ cultural sector, or is it merely an attempt by the Curzon Artificial Eye to repackage and resell the same film to a different marketing sector? The following exploration will aim to explore this question through an investigation of the film’s paratextual formation.

Initially, the remediation of Antichrist suggests that Artificial Eye is attempting to rebrand the film within the trace memory of its own identity, therein eradicating its reputation as a genre narrative. This idea is related to temporal shifts, as since the first release via Chelsea Films, von Trier has directed Melancholia, a film which whilst caught up in the furore of the Cannes press conference, was far less explicit and extreme than Antichrist. As a consequence of this, Melancholia was distributed
by Artificial Eye, and was entrenched within the branding of the company throughout its paratextual presentations. This release seemingly ushered in a more widespread re-acceptance of von Trier and his work, and Artificial Eye uses the trace of *Melancholia* on their remediated *Antichrist* release. The cover features the larger heading “from the director of MELANCHOLIA” (von Trier, 2009c), allowing the transgressive nature of *Antichrist* to be thinned by its relationship to non-extreme text and a promotion of authorial legitimacy. In regards to cultural triangulation, this shows a shift in emphasis from the Chelsea Films’ release, as *Antichrist* becomes read through notions of authorial legitimacy rather than horror symbolism.

However, this reacceptance is complicated through the cover image used; which is identical to the one employed during the film’s brief theatrical run (see figure 35 [p.286] and figure 36 [p.286]). It is useful to explore how this image was received at this earlier stage, as it provides insight into how it is understood by Artificial Eye, retailers, the public and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA hereafter). The image sees He and She nude at the base of a large tree, with hands protruding from the roots. The positioning of the characters implies they are having intercourse, an implication that resulted in several public complaints about the poster when it ran in *The Times, The Guardian* and *The Independent*. According to the ASA website, the complaints said “the ad's imagery was pornographic, thought the depiction of a naked couple having sex was offensive and inappropriate for publication in a newspaper where it might be seen by children” (ASA, 2009, para.2). Consequently, the image can be read as offensive, placing it within an exploitation marketing trajectory.
Figure 35: Artificial Eye *Antichrist* sleeve. DVD Artwork (von Trier, 2009c).

Figure 36: Artificial Eye poster (The Freak, 2012)

However, in an interview given to *Vice Magazine*, Debbie Rowland, marketing manager at Artificial Eye, addresses this reading of the poster. She states that “we
felt the image was extreme in nature, but so is the film and it really did reflect that. We didn't want to kid anybody into thinking it was a romantic comedy or a gruesome horror. And the image does have a shock factor” (Godfrey, 2009, para.6). Thus, Artificial Eye justifies the portrayal of extremity within the advertising campaign by claiming it provides a truthful depiction of the narrative, and subsequently does not mislead the consumer or misrepresent the product. The justification of the image through this notion of honest representation resulted in the ASA pressing no further action against the campaign, with the independent standards company stating that the ad “was unlikely to cause sexual excitement and was therefore not pornographic” (ASA, 2009, para.8).

The ASA report does state that “[Artificial Eye Film Company] […] as a result of the complaints, [said] they would ensure that the image of the naked couple was not used in any advertising for the DVD release of the film” (ASA, 2009, para.4). This evidence can be used to explain the image that adorns the Chelsea Films release, yet it also indicates that the re-application of an already controversial image on the remediation deliberately invokes a pre-established level of infamy. Although the idea that the image honestly depicts the extremity contained within the narrative still exists, its past status as a contentious design illustrates a hyperbolic marketing directive. This is increased as the image, due to its replication on DVDs, will have its reach and frequency dramatically amplified. This consequently complicates the ability of the release to rebrand the film within the framework of art cinema, as the existing extremity of the picture obscures the traditional modes of art film address in a similar fashion to that of the Chelsea Films’ release.

Nonetheless, while the unchanged image is able to retain the controversial status it held on its previous exposure within the public sphere, the traditional Artificial Eye
branding is far clearer on the DVD cover than it was on the poster (or the advertisement based upon it) and as a result the sexual content is somewhat diluted by a cultural understanding of the brand’s identity. This, coupled with the trace of *Melancholia* and the authorial status this signifies further softens the image of nudity, and helps to circumvent some of the stigma the image retains. Furthermore, the quotation by Newman is removed, distancing the release from the horror genre. However, its replacement, and the only quotation on the front of the cover, accredited to Sukdhev Sanflu of *The Daily Telegraph*, still relies upon a ballyhoo dare, stating “this is cinema at its most extreme” (von Trier, 2009c). Even though this could be read, to recall the above evaluation of the cover, within the framework of truthful representation, and connotes the confrontational qualities of the narrative rather than the pleasurable nature of horror cinema, it is also presents the film as a spectacle of violence.

This is supported by the aesthetic design of the back cover, which seeks to further promote the film’s transgressive credentials. On the sleeve’s reverse, another image of semi-nudity is presented. In the lower part of the sleeve, Gainsbourg is visible lying on the floor of the cabin, nude from the waist down. While her buttocks are covered by shadowing, the image still implies nakedness. Notably, the design used on the front of the box, despite being defended as a fair demonstration of the film’s content, was further justified due to its relationship to the fantastical. The ASA claimed the hands in the roots gave the image a dream-like quality which removed it from reality, thus diluting its explicitness (ASA, 2009, para.5). However, although the back image shows three animals (a doe, a fox and a crow) sitting in close proximity to Gainbourg’s character, no clear dream-like context can be located.
Thus, the image of nudity, despite being semi-obscured, actively engages with the semiotics of pornography and sexual explicitness.

Essential when claiming the film is being sold through its infamy is the fact that the blurb and plot synopsis used on the Artificial Eye jacket is identical to the one that adorns the Chelsea Films’ release. As explored above, this passage firmly coded the film within the confines of the horror genre through the employment of hyperbolic terms such as ‘extreme’, ‘violence’, ‘chaos’, ‘shocking’ and ‘horror’. This in turn is supported by the quotations given, which while different to those that used on the Chelsea Films’ version, compose a similar reading. A statement from John Carr at Sky Movies, a source that again holds a little of the academic credence associated with Artificial Eye, reads “nothing can prepare you for the experience of Antichrist. Nothing” (von Trier, 2009c). The repetition of ‘nothing’ is traditional within the circus address of exploitation, as it guarantees an unrivalled experience entrenched within fascination. This quotation is supported by another statement, provided by Metro, a comparably populist publication, which simply reads “Brutal” (von Trier, 2009c). Again, the film’s association to horror and extremity is promoted, whilst its relationship to ‘high’ cultural discourses is ignored or suppressed.

Therefore it becomes clear that Artificial Eye do little to legitimise the image of extremity used on the front cover, and instead, in a comparable fashion to that present in the Chelsea Film release, look to promote the film’s relationship to horror through an advertising strategy steeped in sexploitation. Consequently, although Artificial Eye’s brand identity is entrenched within the culture of art cinema, they still look to exploit the film’s notoriety and infamy. Indeed, this again sees the cultural triangulation of Antichrist result in a foregrounding of its relationship to normative horror cinema. Again, memories of art cinema can be found (Artificial
Eyes existing branding and von Trier’s authorial trace), and whilst a certain level of rejection can be located (the centralisation of sexuality), the colour scheme and replication of a horror themed blurb emphasises the films horrific undertones above all other cultural structures.

In order to explore this further, and conclude the investigation of Antichrist’s DVD identity, this chapter will briefly assess a selection of the release’s special features, which are identical across both editions. What this final exploration will endeavour to evaluate is whether these additional features seek to provide context for the extremity of both the film and the marketing images, subsequently enabling it to be considered within the remit of art cinema, or look to further entrench it within the discourse of horror cinema. There are nine featurettes in total; entitled Behind the Test (von Trier, 2009b/c), The Evil of Woman (von Trier, 2009b/c), The Visual Style of Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), Eden: The Production Design of Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), The Three Beggars: The Animals of Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), Confessions about Anxiety (von Trier, 2009b/c), The Make-up Effects and Props of Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), The Sound and Music of Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), and Chaos Reigns at the Cannes Film Festival (von Trier, 2009b/c).

The volume of features is atypical of many art film products, which often have a select few paratextual features centring on auteur dialogues such as interviews and commentaries. By having numerous special features, both releases are channelling a mainstream DVD composition, which use copious special features to explain the production process. This is evident on the Blu ray release of The Dark Knight Rises (Nolan, 2012), which on the sleeve announces has “over three hours of bonus features” (Nolan, 2012). A similar concept can be seen on the Blu ray releases of The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (Jackson, 2012), which has “over 2 hours of bonus
features” (Jackson, 2012) including 10 production features which allow the consumer to “embark on your own journey behind the camera with director Peter Jackson as he personally guides you through the adventure of creating The Hobbit” (Jackson, 2012). Nonetheless, in keeping with the notion of providing a unique viewing experience within the home entertainment sphere, the nine paratexts do elevate the status of the film by proving it is worthy of paratextual embellishment.

The first feature, entitled Behind the Test, can be seen to fit comfortably within a traditional art film convention, as it presents von Trier as the authorial director. Throughout the short documentary, von Trier is shown directing several test sequences for Antichrist, therein establishing his level of control, vision and personal investment. This also typifies the features The Visual Style of Antichrist, The Sound and Music of Antichrist and Confessions About Anxiety. While the latter confirms the film as von Trier’s personal vision through foregrounding of his much publicised depression, both The Visual Style of Antichrist and The Sound and Music of Antichrist underpin notions of authorial presence and technological advancement.

Yet, the feature The Make-up Effects and Props of Antichrist comes to foreground the film’s most controversial aspects, and therein beings to support the controversial images used throughout both jacket designs. Herein Morten Jacobsen and Thomas Foldberg explain the process behind the narrative’s special effects, discussing how they created Willem Dafoe’s fake leg, the still-born deer foetus and the replica vagina which was used as a prop during the clitoris mutilation sequence. Importantly, the explanation of the special effects process mirrors that of many populist horror titles. For instance, the DVD release of Hatchet (Green, 2006), a retro-inspired modern horror franchise, contains a bonus feature entitled Guts and Gore (Green, 2006), in which the narrative’s various scenes of bodily destruction,
and the visual effects that made them possible, are outlined by the cast members. Herein parity between the two releases can be found, furthering *Antichrist’s* relationship to modern horror marketing modes.

The final featurette, *Chaos Reigns at the Cannes Film Festival*, is pivotal within concluding this exploration. The title is instantly hyperbolic, and though the feature draws attention to the importance of Cannes in understanding the film, the whole item is based around the aforementioned press conference and moment of controversy. Even as notions of glamour are present, the reproduction of the most infamous moment within the film’s cultural existence again foregrounds the importance of notoriety within the release. Subsequently, the feature’s promotion of an infamous live event merges with the centralisation of taboo imagery used throughout the paratext, firmly coding the film within discourses of scandal rather than art.

Therefore, within the case of both the Chelsea Films and later Artificial Eye release, *Antichrist* is cast in a suspended space, slipping between taste economies through a hybrid marketing style. Whilst the cover and paratextual featurettes at times recalled an authorial brand identity, the dominant market point is the film’s potency as a horror text. Through the generic coding of the cover and the prevailing views of infamy present within the special features, *Antichrist* is manipulated to fit an economically viable, yet simplistically problematic, commercial image. Indeed, the film’s position within the art discourse (both traditional and the rejectionist history mapped throughout this work) is at times readily and deliberately repressed in order to capitalise on the film’s most populist attributes, and make the film attractive to a middling demographic. With this conclusion in place, the final part of this chapter, which explores *Antichrist’s* mediation on television, becomes vital to
comprehending if this commercial image remains, and whether it has irreversibly influenced the cultural understanding of the text.

**Film4 Extreme Season and *Antichrist***

The Film4 Extreme Season, curated and introduced by Mark Kermode, was screened between March 22nd and 29th 2012. The season was composed of 8 titles from Europe, Japan and the US; cumulating in the uncut television premier of *Antichrist*. Here, it will be used as a platform to evaluate how von Trier’s text was branded and placed within a culturally instigated impression of extreme cinema. To facilitate this investigation, the following section will assess both the season’s general introduction (Film4 Extreme Season, 2012), which preceded its opening film *Benny’s Video*, and the specific talk which contextualised the exhibition of *Antichrist* (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012). This section will look to assess the ways in which the channel constructs an identity for extremity, and how this image not only fits into the history of taste slippage and convergence that has been mapped throughout this thesis, but reframes *Antichrist*.

The other films screened as part of the season were *Benny’s Video* (Haneke, 1992a); *Love Exposure* (Sono, 2008), a four hour long Japanese production about religion, love, and voyeurism; *Bug* (Friedkin, 2006), an American production directed by William Friedkin; *Naked* (Leigh, 1993), the story of a rapist drifter; *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999), a high budget adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk’s novel of the same name; *Import/Export* (Seidl, 2007a), an Austrian production which details two people’s movement across Eastern Europe and *Dogtooth*, which was analysed in Chapter Five. This scheduling demonstrates a distancing from the Franco-centric
canonisation of extreme cinema which dominates many critical dialogues, and thus supports one of the fundamental claims of this thesis. Moreover, the season as a whole suggests that a re-examination of extreme cinema is taking place, as the mass availability of the channel portrays a level of acceptance and approval. Finally, it houses Antichrist alongside a series of extreme art narrative rather than horror texts, and thus counteracts the positioning of the Chelsea Films’ release and the horrific overtones present on the Artificial Eye edition.

Before addressing the season specifically, it proves valuable to briefly assess the role Film4 plays within the exhibition of extreme cinema. Between 1997 and 2005, the channel featured a separate strand entitled FilmFour Extreme, which, as the title infers, focused upon the screening of transgressive cinema. In contrast, the channel is a continued sponsor of Film4 FrightFest, Britain’s premier horror film festival. The festival has exhibited important Euro horror titles such as Switchblade Romance and Martyrs, and is therefore an important platform for the exhibition of horrific extremism. The channel’s involvement, both past and present, with notions of cinematic transgression lends both legitimacy to this season, instantly validating it within certain demographics, and exposes a relationship to horror cinema which complicates the channels framing of extreme art cinema.

Prior to the general introduction a short montage of images from the films involved within the season appears. The first sight of extremity is a still from Love Exposure, which depicts a young girl in a blood-stained room (see figure 37 [p.295]). The placement of this image early within the montage allows the season to trade off a pre-existing idea of extreme cinema, as through the centralisation of an image that the spectator can clearly code as Asian, the montage invokes the memory of contemporary East Asian extreme. As alluded to in the previous case study, East
Asian cinema, through the huge success of Tartan Video’s Asia Extreme sub-label, has become the hegemonic representative of extreme cinema within the UK. This image uses a semiotic symbol to instantly achieve a level of cultural familiarity. The most referenced film within the montage is *Antichrist*, which reinforces its position as the pinnacle of the season. Finally the word ‘Extreme with Mark Kermode’ appears within a cell like room (see figure 38 [p.296]).

Figure 37: Still from opening montage (areoharewhyy, 2012).
The prominence of Kermode’s name creates an exchange between his capital, the cultural image of extreme cinema and the season itself. Consequently, Kermode’s role within this season is crucial to the concepts of legitimisation that have been under constant investigation throughout this thesis. As established during Chapter Four, Kermode is a dualistic character within British film criticism due to his combination of academic legitimisation, mainstream authentication and sub-cultural capital. Through his introductions, and his prominent placement within the season’s repeating montage, Kermode authenticates the films, therein placing them within a scholarly context, a mainstream schema and paracinematic framework. Importantly this suggests that Film4’s conceptualisation of extremity is founded upon a balance of paracinematic rebellion, artistic legitimacy and commercial appeal, mirroring parts of fluid taxonomy established throughout this project.
This overlapping discourse is present throughout Kermode’s performance as the season’s curator, as his language and delivery is a combination of academic reasoning and ‘low’ cultural ballyhoo. Kermode states that the films “explore strange ideas in radical new forms” (Film4 Extreme Season, 2012) adding that the season features “directors with a unique distinctive style following no rules but their own” (Film4 Extreme Season, 2012). This readily employs an auteur stance which validates the use of extremity within the confines of ‘high’ cultural practice. However, akin to the presentation of extremity seen throughout the cultural, commercial and critical discourse, notions of legitimisation are offset by the introduction of more hyperbolic language. When talking about Film4’s historic adoption and exhibition of _The Evil Dead_, Kermode states “and of course it was the Film4 extreme team who finally got Sam Raimi’s notorious splatter comedy _The Evil Dead_ through the censors intact in all its limp lopping gut chomping glory” (Film4 Extreme Season, 2012). The final part of the statement employs a populist register which promotes the transgressions of the film, casting the season within the verbal pattern of genre cinema.

This is continued within the description of _Antichrist_. Kermode describes von Trier’s text as “one of the most controversial movies in years” and an “arthouse horror film” (Film4 Extreme Season, 2012). Although the former quote neatly operates within the mores of hyperbole, the latter is harder to assess. Whereas the mention of genre is suggestive of the narrative image promoted throughout the film’s DVD profile, the addition of ‘arthouse’ changes the expectations of the viewer. Within the film’s DVD identity, the promotion of horror iconography was rarely grounded within the discourse of art cinema, and hence the film was more comfortably transitioned into a generic commercial space. However here, Kermode usefully highlights the hybridity
that exists at the core of the extreme art continuum, whereby many films use, invert and revise generic conventions through certain art film traditions. Consequently, an elastic definition is created which encompasses both a colloquial approach and an academic lens, and more appropriately reflects the complicated nature of extreme art cinema.

As stated, *Antichrist* was the climax of the season, and therefore the scheduling works to verify the film’s transgressive market image. This position is immediately justified by Kermode’s opening description of the film during its individual introduction: “we bring you one of the most controversial, confrontational [. . .] films of recent years, Lars von Trier’s headline-grabbing magnum opus *Antichrist*” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012). Kermode’s register elevates the film within the remit of extremity by employing a typically hyperbolic sentence structure to exaggerate and promote the film’s transgressive nature. This is furthered by Kermode’s description of von Trier as a, “misogynist, Nazi, visionary, pornographer” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012). Again, though Kermode states von Trier is a ‘visionary’, the other three terms used are far more emotive and powerful, and thus the cultural image of the director is cast outside of the environs of art film.

Kermode then proceeds to openly judge the film and von Trier. Despite stating “his films divide audiences, people love them and loathe them often at the same time, but they rarely ignore them” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012), Kermode goes on to claim that he personally hated “the critically lauded *Breaking the Waves*” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012) and recounts how he got thrown out of the Cannes screening of *The Idiots* for heckling. While he states that he liked both *Dancer in the Dark* and *Dogville*, the removal of the academic frame is important in regards to the
season’s ability to legitimise the film, and the extreme art film canon as a whole. By passing personal judgement, Kermode makes it more difficult to cast the film within the traditions of art cinema, which are linked to the academic discourse’s values of personal distance.

This is continued with further accounts of the film, as Kermode, states that “Antichrist is an unholy amalgam of pseudo-intellectual melodrama, angst ridden arthouse invention, guilty religious psycho-sexual chiller and full on spam-in-a-cabin splatterfest shocker” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012). The list’s hyperbolic structure and delivery emphasises Antichrist’s relationship to genre cinema. However, the comment also draws attention to the convergence of art and exploitation that has been a constant theme within this study. By referencing the film’s generic qualities, the season brings to the fore the union between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cinematic forms which is fundamental to the thematic, aesthetic, and marketing practices of the extreme art continuum. Again, this gives a fuller picture of the fluid nature of extreme art cinema, reframing Antichrist as a complex text rather than the simplistic horror narrative it was promoted as in the DVD sector.

There is further evidence of this reciprocal relationship as Kermode states the film shares a thematic affiliation to The Evil Dead. While this comparison is problematic, as the pleasure of Raimi’s narrative is derived from the thematic depiction of gory bodily deconstruction, it serves to highlight a deeper lineage between the differing cinematic forms. Furthermore, certain links between the narratives, and more usefully the genre, are clear, as Antichrist deliberately invokes the ‘cabin in the woods’ setting in order to imply a witchcraft sub-plot. Kermode's stance has been supported in the academic environ, with Gronstad stating that film can be approached as an art horror fusion (2011, p.198). Furthermore, the shaky handheld
camera employed throughout the torture sequences, while reminiscent of von Trier’s earlier Dogme works, is also indicative of many low budget exploitation features. As such, while the comparison made by Kermode simplifies the film’s complexities, it does bring to the fore the important history of exchange and crossover apparent between art and exploitation filmic forms.

Significantly, the feature goes on to critique a purely generic reading of the film. Kermode states “inevitably press coverage focused on the most shocking aspects of the film, most notably the now notorious scenes of genital mutilation” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012), claiming that through a fixation of the film’s violence, the critical sphere ignore the film’s densities. Although this claim is weakened by Kermode’s statement that the film offers “plenty of the ‘oh Lars for heaven sake’ moments that have made the director such a fabulous irritant over the years” (Extreme with Mark Kermode, 2012), the introduction, and the season as a whole, works to establish the films as an important hybrid text worthy of reconsideration and critical attention. Through the mixture of hyperbole, theoretical concepts and generic lineage, the season neatly provides a workable perspective of the film which highlights its complexities and ability to slip between established categories. As such, the paratextual presentation of Antichrist given here is more flexible, and therefore accurate than the one presented throughout the DVD arena.

**Conclusion**

The elasticity of Film4’s conceptualisation of extremity illustrates the non-conformist nature of the text. Hence it is useful to return to the generic templates discussed within the Introduction in order to more conclusively comprehend the
narrative. Vitally, as the market presentation indicates, the film combines the iconographies of art and exploitation genres, creating a shifting and divisive experience which neatly conforms to the arguments regarding audience passivity. Within the narrative, an unsimulated penetration shot occurs within slow-motion black and white cinematography, juxtaposing the established registers of both cinemas. Furthermore, while She tortures He, the realist mode prevalent within art cinema, illustrated by the shaky, unsteady shooting and natural lighting, is infused with shocking sexual violence that culminates in an instance rooted in the realm of exploitation cinema. The film moves between cinematic languages, illustrating notions of slow cinema, ‘high’ cultural intellectual allegory, explicit sex and brutal violence, as it actively engages with and challenges audiences’ understanding of generic expectations. Within this, art and exploitation become actively interchangeable and fluid, while purely generic readings fail to comprehend the fluidity.

However, regardless of this shifting visual register, the DVD paratextual entity of Antichrist seems to remain constant. The film is packaged within the cultural and cinematic image of horror cinema, whereby its relationship to art cinema and the extreme mores of confrontation are suppressed in favour of a commercialisation of traditional genre registers. Significantly, unlike many of the extreme art films considered throughout this work, the commercial image of Antichrist is not confused or conflicted, but firmly generic. Although it can be suggested that this conceptualisation of the film is fitting, as Antichrist deliberately invokes several typical horror genre concepts, and therefore is closely related to the established comprehension of that genre, it is, as we have seen, overtly simplistic. Moreover, what is vital is the manner in which this unwavering paratextual characterisation
affects the image of von Trier within the public and market sphere. Due to his inseparable relationship to the film, von Trier is cast within the environs of generic excess rather than the ‘high’ cultural space of artistic transgression. As a result, *Antichrist*, through its various paratextual mediations has affected the cultural image of the director as a whole.

What this case study has also exposed is the way in which the commercial sector brands extremity. Seemingly, within the contemporary age, extremity is more attractive than traditional art film marketing mores. While, as stated, a generic reading of *Antichrist* is not completely alien, neither is an art film conceptualisation. The film is directed by an established auteur, received the best actress award at Cannes and features several formal and visual experimentations. However, these notions are readily dismissed in favour of the promotion of violence and sexuality. In this sense, the film fits neatly within the history of taste slippage mapped throughout this thesis, and suggests that the process of industrial crossover still significantly informs audience’s conceptualisations of hybrid narratives.
Conclusion

This thesis has a twofold purpose: to survey a larger and more comprehensive extreme art continuum, and adopt a paratextual approach to investigate the manner in which DVDs and other commercial products influence extreme art film’s cultural performance. This conclusion seeks to reflect on the discoveries of this analysis, and therein evaluate their success in examining how extreme art cinema is presented within filmic culture. Once these conclusions have been drawn, this final section looks to explore future research areas. The chapter will briefly examine the increasing visibility of Anglo-American extreme cinema and its impact on the general perceptions of transgressive cinematic imagery in the contemporary cultural climate. In doing this, the chapter will propose the notion of a global extreme art canon, with the hope that it more readily reflects the commercial environment in which films are produced and consumed. Thereafter, an examination into how the rapid growth of internet streaming websites has altered the position of the DVD as the predominant paratext will take place. Evaluating the differing paratextual forms that construct meaning within the streaming environ, this conclusion will ultimately propose that the paratextual methodology used within this work can be developed and extended to address the new exhibition technologies that are changing cinematic consumption. Here, this conclusion will contemplate the usefulness of paratextual study as a whole, and explore how it can be relevant in a society dominated by the non-tangible digital product.
Findings and Outcomes

Extreme art film, as has been discussed throughout this project, has at times been placed within conceptual fields which restrict its access to the broader art histories. The propagation of terms such as “new brutalism” (Austin, 2008, p.114) and “the French New Extremity” (Quandt, 2004, p.127; Hagman, 2007, p.37), limit the ways in which scholars approach and read contemporary and historical examples of cinematic transgression, resulting in a narrow canon of films and fields of research. This thesis, through the implementation of the four interlinking approaches outlined in the Introduction, has aimed to address this issue and instigate a more historically pronounced lens through which cultural borders are positioned as permeable sites of exchange. By using this as a basis for a broader paratextual study, the project has been able to draw together a series of films from different historical and national contexts. Herein, many understated extreme texts have read as part of an ongoing mode of cinematic rejection due to their mutual use of extremity and experimentation.

Further areas of exploration can be developed as a result of this historical approach. For example, the work of German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, which has not been considered so far due to the nature of the orientation chapters and their exclusive examination of directors, would prove an interesting area of further study. The director, like so many of the extreme art filmmakers evaluated throughout this study, centralises the body (Chirico, 2010, p.40), both within the narrative frame and within the experience of the spectator. His films were designed to provoke and challenge the viewer’s capacity to respond (Chirico, 2010, p.38); a notion fundamental to the definition of cinematic extremity outlined in the Introduction. This process of confrontation, fundamental to all modes of extreme art address, is
clearest within Fassbinder’s *In a Year of Thirteen Moons* (Fassbinder, 1978), in which the director records the industrial slaughter of animals and challenges the audience to witness the hidden aspects of society. By forcing the audience to consume images of real death, Fassbinder, akin to Pier Paolo Pasolini, Michael Haneke and Gaspar Noé, eliminates discourses of passivity through the portrayal of extreme, biologically factual violence, actively collapsing the barriers between fiction and reality in a similar manner to the portrayal of unsimulated sex. Thus the study of Fassbinder within the framework established here may prove crucial in further realising the historic nature of extreme art cinema, and the scope of the continuum as a whole. Therefore, the historical contextualisation present within Chapter Two and Chapter Five can be expanded in future works in order to supplement the understanding provided here, and further interrogate the margins of extreme art cinema.

Significantly, the historical approach was supported, and ran concurrently to, the pan-European lens which endeavoured to free the foci of extreme art assessment from the Franco-centric critical tradition mapped in the Introduction and Chapter Five, and further position the seminal French narratives within a larger filmic history. Through the utilisation of this expansive scope, the thesis has been able to read cinematic extremity as a transnational aesthetic, capable of transcending geographic borders across disparate production sites. This method afforded Chapter Five the ability to address *The Idiots*, a film ensconced within notions of national production, as part of the extreme art canon. In doing so, the formal extremity of the narrative and the use of unsimulated sexual intercourse were read as part of a progressive shared aesthetic rather than purely existing within the closed space of either the Dogme movement or Danish cinema. Herein, a previously underplayed
association, which supports the existing readings of national production, is highlighted, enabling both a more comprehensive understanding of the extreme art canon and a re-examination of von Trier and the Dogme movement.

Like the historical approach, the pan-European lens has room for development in a variety of further projects. Most pressingly the European focus itself could be extended in future studies, wherein the films mapped within the confines of this thesis could be compared to similar productions happening across a trans-global spectrum, most notably East Asia. Touched upon throughout this work, East Asian extremity, defined by the distribution practices of Tartan Video, compares to the European narrative examined in this work through their combination of authorial vision and bodily corporality. An analysis of these Asian narratives would remove predominant Euro-centric lens often applied to the analysis of art cinema modes, allowing connections to be drawn between European and Asian forms of extremity on both an aesthetic and paratextual level. Additionally, extreme narratives from Latin America, such as the recent Post Tenebras Lux (Reygadas, 2012) and other films by Carlos Reygadas, could formulate a trans-global extreme film continuum alongside both Asian and European examples (this notion of a globally expansive continuum, along with its benefits and pitfalls, will be explored in more detail later during the consideration of Anglo-American extremity).

It was through the combination of these methodologies that this thesis was able to create its extreme art canon. The category created, as alluded to above, was more historically and geographically pronounced than many of the accounts of extreme cinema detailed throughout this work, and looked to widen the lens in which critical scholars can approach and research extreme art cinema. An essential part of creating this more expansive canon was to look beyond traditional taste structures and the
distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, and rather draw attention to the fluidity of both environs and the slippage and commonalties between them. The most important of these slippages was the centralisation of a sexualised or violently deconstructed body, and the implementation (either intentionally or accidentally) of an experimental visual format which challenged the audience and impeded modes of pleasure.

In this sense, the extreme art canon surveyed here, as has been prominent throughout this work, draws from both ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures, and both art and exploitation film traditions. However, as is perhaps obvious, certain parts of both categories fall outside of this canon, and therefore it is not this work’s wish to suggest that all art films portray extreme violence or sexual content, or that all exploitation narratives illustrate the self-reflexivity and intellectual engagement highlighted throughout this work. Thus, art texts such as the aforementioned works of Almodóvar and the visually excessive texts of the Cinéma du Look, while having artistic and experimental qualities, lack the visceral extremity of extreme art cinema. Similarly, populist art features such as Amélie (Jeunet, 2001), although retaining a non-conventionalism in regards to narrative structure and use of colour, fails to discourage the audience and allows them to enjoy the pleasure of the visuals. Likewise, Joe D’Amato’s exploitation narrative Love Goddess of the Cannibals (D’Amato, 1978a), while portraying extremity, does so in manner which encourages audience stimulation and engages the body through the depiction of sexual excess rather than engrossing the intellect in the manner of Argento and Franju. There are many other narratives like D’Amato’s feature which fail to retain the hybridity between ‘high’ and ‘low’ cinematic registers. These texts do not slip between taste
cultures and therefore become a composite of only a single environ, and are thus not part of this thesis’s canon.

The canon established here consequently aimed to be selective, and looked to draw attention to cultural crossover whilst being cautious not to insinuate that no divide exists. Hence, there are art films that are not transgressive and exploitation narratives which are not artistic. However, as the canon here has suggested, there are points of collision and hybridity, in which a film can be both art and exploitation, ‘high’ and ‘low’. It is these fluid narratives that have formed the basis of this work’s canon, and in the process of including them within it, certain art and exploitation directors have been rebranded as extreme art auteurs who deliberately invert genre templates in order to produce challenging and confrontational narratives.

Akin to the above approaches, the paratextual methodology, mapped in detail within the Introduction and Chapter One, was influenced by the critical tendency to draw a relationship between the transgressive nature of extreme art cinema and the economic validity of the narratives. In response to this, this study undertook principal research into how artefacts such as DVD art sleeves, special features and supplemental booklets, managed meanings and identities, and coded the films under particular guises in order to place them within specific consumer demographics. Through the application of this methodology, the thesis was able to appropriately gauge the manner in which extreme art cinema communicates with its audience, and thus examine how the transgressive material which defines the canon is fashioned into a commercial model.

In order to reflect upon how this approach enabled a greater understanding of the narratives and their market and cultural implications, it is useful to reiterate some of
the main commonalities present throughout the case studies. This will allow us to judge whether a standardised narrative image dominates the paratextual presentation of extreme art cinema, or if a variable set of aesthetic patterns are employed irrespective of other paratextual trends. In order to facilitate this, two key areas within the DVD's economic characteristics - the images used and the type of language employed - will be evaluated.

In regards to the primary images used, all bar Weekend (Godard, 1967b) became typified by a representation of extremity. The centralisation of sex, in regards to Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom (Pasolini, 1975b) and Isla the Wicked Warden (Franco, 1977b); or violence, in reference to Cannibal Holocaust (Deodato, 1980b), Antichrist (von Trier, 2009b/c), Funny Games (Haneke, 1997b/c) and the ‘Michael Haneke Trilogy’ (Haneke, 1989-1994), defined the public identity and marketability of the films. Significantly, as implied throughout this project, these graphics carry a pre-established meanings embedded within a recognised cultural history, which through placement on remediated objects of commerce evoke a series of memories within the consumer. Through a process of cultural borrowing these extreme art narratives transitioned from the traditional art film market space into an environment dominated by ‘low’ genre artefacts. Herein, the products were able to attract a greater demographic, amplifying their commercial prospects by broadening their generic appeal.

This was not exclusive to the paratexts investigated within this thesis. For example, sexual and violent imagery defines many French extremity DVD releases. Baise Moi, distributed by Universal UK, features an image of the female lead in her underwear pointing a gun towards the consumer (Despentes & Trinh Thi, 2000b). The combination of sex and violence reflects the prevailing aesthetic of extreme art
cover designs assessed within this thesis, suggesting a correlation throughout the canon. Additionally, *Trouble Every Day*, distributed by Tartan Video, recalls the genre imagery of horror by showing Beatrice Dalle covered in blood (Denis, 2001b). Indeed, this promotion of transgression is also prevalent beyond the marketing of French extremity, as the Austrian narrative *Import/Export* centralises female sexuality on its DVD sleeve (Seidl, 2007b). The image, in which a nude woman is seen partaking in a pornographic webcam chat, reflects the sexual explicitness of the *Salo, Or the 120 Days of Sodom* and *Ilsa the Wicked Warden* covers studied in Chapter Four, and therein, like those texts, becomes housed under the visual rubrics of exploitation. Thus, a reoccurring pattern of sexual and violent imagery homogenises the paratextual design of European extreme art film. Accordingly, the extreme transgressions of the narratives perform an economic purpose within the market space. This consequently validates the critical suggestion that transgression works as a commercially exploitable gimmick due to the prominence it retains in the commercialisation of the products.

In terms of the written passages present upon the DVD jackets examined, a less stringent concentration of transgression is presented. Whilst at times a verbal hyperbole promoted the violence and sexual extremity of the advertised text, the phrasing was often diluted by a promotion of traditional art cinema elements. Therein ballyhoo techniques were balanced against the branding of the auteur, recognition of festival status, external critical legitimisation or a promotion of national capital. This was clear within all the case studies; however is further present beyond this thesis’s selected foci. For instance, *Anatomy of Hell*, again released by Tartan Video, has a quotation from *The Guardian* which states “Breillat’s best film” (Breillat, 2004b). Herein, the centralisation of the auteur enables a level of
legitimacy, born out of both the source of the quote and the instigation of auteur theory, to complement the image of nudity present on the cover. In a similar way, Import/Export has a quotation which reads “Astonishing... An outstanding artistic achievement” (Seidl, 2007b). This quotation prompts a process of external validation, whereby the epitext enables the image of the sexualised woman to become safely housed within the discourse of artistic worth.

Through the exploration of both Cannibal Holocaust and Ilsa the Wicked Warden, it became apparent that exploitation features, despite foregrounding the conventions of hyperbole, also employed traditional artistic furnishings. This exposed the taste slippage as a two way process, an important finding that can further illuminate the intersections between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. Again this process was not limited to those case studies present here. The Anchor Bay Entertainment release of Dario Argento’s Suspiria not only sees the film receive a two disc special edition, therein validating it as a product of cultural and commercial worth, but also has the heading “Dario Argento’s Masterpiece Horror” (Argento, 1977). This clearly establishes an authorial identity, while the term ‘masterpiece’ encourages associations with artistic prestige. This elevates Argento to a level of legitimacy rarely afforded exploitation directors, and enables the text itself to transcend the liminal space of Euro-exploitation. Importantly, it also supports this work’s prevailing logic, whereby certain exploitation narratives, due to their visual experimentation, have been re-asserted within the parameters of cultural validation.

To return to the prevailing critical rationality, this practice of centralising a film’s extremity supports the notion that the extreme art texts are being sold on the promise of transgression, thus certifying the existing scholarly opinion. Therefore, the concept that transgressions act as a response to the financially instability of the
contemporary climate retains validity. However, as made known in Chapter One, the work of Mark Betz (2003), Kevin Heffernan (2004) and Joan Hawkins (2000) illustrated the longevity of this industrial crossover, suggesting that the hybrid marketing approach used within the contemporary climate is part of a longstanding tradition. It is this finding that complicates the current opinion of extreme art film, and suggests that although the commercialisation of transgression is clear, its placement within a purely contemporary climate ignores important historical conventions. Therefore, it is troublesome to simply define contemporary paratexts as products of their economic period and far more useful to indicate that the commercial constructs seen throughout the market sphere are partaking in a tradition which has historically hybridised the marketing images of transgressive art texts.

Notably, through this exploration, it can be seen that the market identity which characterises extreme art film is a multi-layered symbolic register, which neatly recalls the triangulation of the taste continuum assessed throughout this work. As discussed at various points throughout this study, Betz argued that rather than position the cultural sites of ‘high’, ‘middle’ and ‘low’ as opposing forces, one should triangulate the spaces, whereby a film could be predominantly one cultural site at its apex, while being supported by secondary readings depending on which taste economy is prioritised (2013, p.507). This model is helpful within the comprehension of the paratextual case studies explored throughout this work, and can further help to understand the marketing tradition as a whole. To recall the examples used within this study, it was clear that the Weekend DVD placed the authorial brand of Godard and the critical legitimisation of the narrative at the triangles apex. However, this was supplemented by certain instances of hyperbolic language which hinted at the extremity of the narrative. Therefore, the DVD enabled
the film to perform as an authorially motivated, subtly transgressive art text. Conversely, both DVDs of *Antichrist*, a narrative which shares a similar filmic lineage to that of Godard’s film, saw a suppression of its artistic heritage and promoted its extreme content. Herein, exploitation traits inhabited the apex of the cultural triangle, however the presence of certain distributor branding (in the case of the Artificial Eye release) and von Trier’s authorial imprinting saw part of the advertised extremity diluted by the presence of legitimised signifiers. Here, the triangulation of cultural taste allows us to more appropriately map the slippage and fluidity that not only characterises the narratives aesthetic and thematic concerns, but also their market identities.

Due to the prominence of this malleable cultural triangle, it is clear that despite the presence of a pattern across a collection of extreme art products, it adapts and changes depending on the film, the ambitions of the distributor and pre-circulating cultural history of the narrative ingredients. Consequently, taste distinctions in the modern era, perhaps due to the ever increasing availability of filmic information and the changing status of cinematic extremity, can be read as porous, enabling the sharing of certain visual and textual tropes across cultures, eras and geographical territories.

**New Movements in Extreme Cinema: Beyond Europe**

It has been suggested at various points throughout this thesis that the landscape of extreme cinema is one fraught with change. In the current era, as put forward earlier within this conclusion, extremity has become an increasingly prevalent part of the American independent film lexicon. While difficult to define due to the vast
meanings of the term ‘independent’ (a notion mapped in Yannis Tzioumakis’s *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction* [2006]) and the issues surrounding the national identities of filmic productions in a globalised and transnational economy, it can be concluded that American independent narratives provide an alternative product in a similar manner to the art films assessed throughout this work, and allow greater freedom for experimentation due to their low production costs. Although Geoff King (2014, 2009) usefully maps the intersections between American independent cinema and Hollywood and the greater influence the mainstream is having over these marginal spaces, the independent environ is still defined by the production of ‘personal’ projects.

Recent American independent narratives such as *Shame* (McQueen, 2011a), *The Killer Inside Me* (Winterbottom, 2010a), *Only God Forgives* (Winding Refn, 2013a), and *Killer Joe* (Friedkin, 2011), along with earlier releases such as *Happiness* (Solondz, 1998), *Crash* (Cronenberg, 1996) and *Secretary* (Shainberg, 2002), share the key aesthetic and thematic traits of the European extreme art film canon covered throughout this study. Displaying sequences of de-erotised sex and extreme violence whilst tackling issues such as rape, domestic abuse and paedophilia, these films represent the most important examples of what can be termed Anglo-American extreme cinema. A much ignored yet increasingly visible sub-category of the global extreme continuum touched upon earlier within this chapter, these narratives - which splice European and American cinematic traditions within a series of production, aesthetic, and distribution concerns - are vital in navigating the future of extreme film.

This hybridised mode typifies *Shame*, a chief example of Anglo-American extremity. Directed by Englishman Steve McQueen, *Shame* stars German/Irish actor Michael
Fassbinder and English actress Carey Mulligan, yet is set in a New York. The trace of the city, due to its overwhelming prevalence within American independent cinema, helps the film to adopt an American identity; however the production company, See-Saw Films, is London based. The influence of Europe, and especially European art films’ treatment of the body, is further evident within the subject matter; whereby Fassbinder’s Brandon is a sex addict who indulges in sexual acts devoid of eroticism (Gilbey, 2012, p.52). The lack of titillation draws important thematic associations between *Shame* and the work of Catherine Breillat, Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier, and further supports the earlier claims that extreme cinema needs to be positioned within a larger geographic context.

This translation between Europe and America is also key to the comprehension of *The Killer Inside Me*. Based on an American book and set in Texas, the film is composed of an American cast (most notably Casey Affleck, Jessica Alba and Kate Hudson), yet is directed by Englishman Michael Winterbottom. Once again, the film displays forms of violence typical within European extreme cinema, as Affleck’s Lou Ford beats his lovers in a manner comparable to the realist, graphic extremity that underpinned Gaspar Noé’s *Irreversible* (McGill, 2010, p.40). Further instances of cross-cultural fertilisation can be found within *Only God Forgives*. Set in Bangkok, the film is directed by the Danish Nicholas Winding Refn and stars Canadian Ryan Gosling and Englishwomen Kristen Scott Thomas. Once more, through the combination of extreme violence, a predominantly English speaking cast and a centralisation of taboo themes such as rape, incest and paedophilia, the film borrows from and splices together extreme art cinema and American independent film traditions.
The evaluation of the actors’ cultural trace and their paratextual presentation more thoroughly illuminates the duality (Euro/American) and complexities of Anglo-American extreme narratives. The three examples discussed thus far all feature actors who carry a trace embedded within the historical composition of American mainstream cinema. Fassbinder, while having Irish German heritage and a past within independent cinematic environs, has also starred in American blockbusters such as 300 (Synder, 2006) and X-men: First Class (Vaughn, 2011). The cast of The Killer Inside Me have been defined as ‘celebrity’ actors (McGill, 2010, pp.40-42) due to their position within the strictures of the mainstream, and thus carry a particular reading protocol which rejects the marginal understanding of both extreme art cinema and American independent film. Indeed the notion of the ‘celebrity’ actor is further prevalent within Only God Forgives, wherein the narrative acts as star vehicle for Ryan Gosling, who, prior to this release had appeared in mainstream narratives such as The Notebook (Cassavetes, 2004) and The Ides of March (Clooney, 2011).

As suggested throughout this work, paratextual zones present loaded signifiers which manifest meaning through a comprehension of their historical significance. Importantly, within the distribution of Anglo-American extremity, the actors are placed as the foci of the narrative image, a notion clearly seen on the DVD jackets of Shame (McQueen, 2011b) (see figure 39 [p.317]), The Killer Inside Me (Winterbottom, 2010b) and Only God Forgives (Winding Refn, 2013b). This centralisation of the ‘celebrity’ actor within the paratextual composition of Anglo-American extremity has large ramifications upon the ways audiences engage, comprehend and consume contemporary forms of filmic extremity. Through the monopolisation of the actors entrenched within a mainstream discourse, the
European and American independent heritage of the narratives becomes suppressed alongside the nullification of extremity. Consequently, the transgressive nature of the narratives becomes stabilised within the symbolic register of star culture and its frameworks of value. This differs from many of the images that have come to define extreme art cinema, which, as seen throughout this study, feature an amalgamation of ‘high’ and ‘low’ symbols. Even though further work must be undertaken in order to more thoroughly examine the impact of these changes, it is clear that when presented through the filter of star culture, extreme cinema becomes laboured with additional layers of understanding which vastly alter its cultural comprehension.

Figure 33: An example of an Anglo-American extreme cinema paratext. DVD Artwork (McQueen, 2011b).

However, it must be noted the distinctions between Anglo-American extreme cinema and extreme art film are unclear. Narratives such as Twentynine Palms, Trouble Every Day, Antichrist and Nymphomaniac, akin to these Anglo-American extreme texts, use English speaking actors yet throughout this thesis have been defined as
European modes of extreme art cinema. This is perhaps a result of a more encompassing logic intrinsically related to academic scholarship. The processes and requirements of scholarly interaction demand demarcations across geographical lines, yet, in the world outside of academic writing – in regards to production and consumption - these distinctions are not as clean and definitive as we would like. The intersection between Europe and America are blurred, and geographic definitions, such as European extreme cinema and American independent film, fail to truly reflect the contemporary filmic landscape. While useful in flagging up an area which in the most part has been underexplored, Anglo-American extremity and European extreme art cinema is perhaps more usefully defined as a part of the trans-global extreme aesthetic alluded to earlier. A trans-global approach would reflect the consumption habits of modern consumers, in which streaming websites such as Netflix move beyond national boundaries and rather produce generic patterns which cut through geographic barriers, therein positioning European extreme art film, Anglo-American extreme cinema and Asian extremity in categorical divisions sorted by thematic and aesthetic similarities. Whilst perhaps problematising certain areas due to the wealth of narratives the continuum would encompass, it is, as we have seen, equally difficult to justify drawing too many national boundaries between narratives in a cultural climate where these same distinctions are continually collapsed.

Paratextual Shifts and the Changing Environments of Home Viewing

As the landscape of extreme cinema changes, an equally apparent and rapid shift is transforming the manner in which audiences engage, understand and consume
paratextual entities. Since the commencement of this thesis, the way audiences interact with film in the private sphere has changed drastically. The growth of film streaming websites such as Netflix (Netflix.co.uk) and Amazon Prime Instant (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Prime-Instant-Video) has impacted the popularity of tangible viewing formats such as DVD and Blu ray. This shift, evidenced within a British context through the administration of HMV, and further in an American and British circumstance with the closure of brick-and-mortar rental chain Blockbuster, is vastly changing the way audiences interrelate with paratextual artefacts. Winston Wheeler Dixon argues that these internet based platforms have now become the dominant mode of visual delivery (2013, p.2). Dixon’s proclamation is not unfounded, as the Financial Times reported that in January 2014 Netflix had 44 million subscribers in America, and is responsible for around 30% of American downstream traffic during peak periods (Garrahan, 2014). These figures illustrate the dominance of the format, a notion which leads Dixon to claim the DVD now exists as a niche product (2013, pp.1-3). As a result of this, it could be suggested that many of the findings housed within this study are only applicable to historical format, yet, as detailed below; many of the key methods can be translated to comprehend the new viewing technologies.

Foremost, while Dixon’s comments regarding the demise of DVD and Blu ray platforms are important, the paratextual principles of the tangible product remain. Netflix’s commercial interface is constructed around a grid of cover art which advertises the films’ narrative image (see figure 40 [p.321]). This composition means the approach used during this work retains its relevance as it can be easily adapted to analyse this new paratextual plane. Moreover, each thumbnail image is coupled with a brief blurb, which describes the feature and provides key cast information such as
director and actors (see figure 41 [p.321]). These images are then categorised in genre spaces and coupled with comparable narratives, thus replicating the categorisation system used throughout brick-and-mortar stores. Thus, while the DVD as a physical artefact may be secondary to this newly arising platform, the principles that defined its public identity are still crucial to the consumption of films in the digital sphere. This notion is supported by the work of Amanda Hess, who, in her assessment of contemporary B-movie studio The Asylum, interviews the company’s co-founder David Michael Latt. Latt states that “the important thing is that someone watched it - or, at least, clicked on the movie-poster thumbnail. When it comes to a title like *Sharknado* [. . .] sometimes the poster is actually superior to the film” (Hess, 2013, p.23). Within these findings this thesis’s centralisation of the paratextual narrative image and the pictorial aesthetics of DVD covers still prove a functional approach in understanding a film’s cultural performance in the newly digitalised environ.
Figure 34: Netflix's interface displaying paratextual images resembling DVD covers (Netflix.co.uk)

Figure 35: An example of the blurb like captions available on Netflix (Netflix.co.uk)
However, while these similarities are vital in asserting the continued relevance of paratextual exploration, the move to digital has, at the time of writing, reduced the space necessary for special features. Whilst, as asserted in Chapter One, the DVD flourished due to its capacity to supplement the main feature with various additional materials, sites such as Netflix fail to deliver these add-ons. Although in a commercial sense this suggests that the tangible disc retains relevance within a digitalised society (yet one that is perhaps limited to academics and cinephiles), and thus will not become a completely obsolete object in the manner Dixon seems to imply, it raises more pressing concerns regarding the presentation of extreme art film. As seen throughout this work, many special features have provided an academic anchoring to the transgressions seen in the main feature, and offered an externally validated framework of understanding. Seen particularly throughout the release of *Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom* and *Cannibal Holocaust*, the additional paratextual items enabled a greater comprehension of the transgressive material, and helped the consumer allegorise the extremity of the images. Without the availability of these paratextual forms, extreme art films could lack legitimising contexts, affecting the manner in which the images, both textual and paratextual, are rendered and read.

This returns us to an examination of the films’ extremity, and the manner in which they are understood by both critical and popular readers. The exclusivity of transgressive material has been a point of consideration throughout not only this thesis, but the surrounding scholarly discourse. Within the shift to the digital platform, the exclusivity of violent filmic material raises interesting questions surrounding the future of extreme art cinema. Crucially, there are differing opinions on how the newly forming digital platforms will impact the presentation and
consumption of marginal filmic material. Dixon argues that the digitalisation of the cinematic form will result in further marginalisation of the niche cinematic cultures, stating that classic narratives, including canonical art titles, will cease to exist. Dixon claims that the larger streaming platforms believe the modern consumer retains little interest in film history, while smaller titles do not retain the popularity needed to justify digitalisation (2013, pp.5-6). Moreover, he states that Hollywood retains an almost hegemonic grip on the international image discourse (Dixon, 2013, p.1), leaving little space for features such as extreme art cinema due to their inherent exclusivity. Consequently, within the context of Dixon’s findings, the shifting paratextual environ has a large influence on the production and consumption of extreme art film, suggesting that they will remain on the aging tangible format.

However, Dina Iordanova and Hess counter this argument, and claim that film streaming provides various opportunities for marginal filmic cultures. Iordanova declares that, rather than limiting the availability of niche products, the newly digitised world increases access, especially within the consideration of art cinema. She claims “previously obscure rarities are now within easy reach; unseen treasures of the celluloid era and distant images rooted in the cultures of faraway lands are only a click away” (Iordanova, 2013, p.46). She further maintains that this heightened level of contact is getting richer by the day (Iordanova, 2013, p.46), alluding to both a historical and contemporary wealth of niche filmic material present across both paid and free (such as YouTube) streaming platforms. Moreover, Iordanova directly opposes Dixon by declaring that the DVD is a more investment orientated commercial enterprise and therefore presents more limitations than streaming (2013, p.47), suggesting that digitalisation is a cheaper and less risky
These findings suggest that the growth of digital steaming channels increases the opportunities available for marginal film distribution.

This is apparent in the current streaming market as popular art texts, both of past eras and present day, such as *Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1948), *Cinema Paradiso*, *Melancholia*, *The Hunt* (Vinterberg, 2012) and *Amour* are available on the UK version of Netflix. With the commerciality of extreme art film, and the fact that the majority of features have received DVD distribution, it can be proposed that the canon would be able to flourish within the digitised world. Again, evidence of this can be found within an exploration of the British Netflix. Asian Extreme narratives such as *Oldboy* and *Battle Royale* are accessible, while the seminal extreme art text *Funny Games* is also available. Within its presentation on the site, *Funny Games* uses the Artificial Eye DVD cover examined in Chapter Six (Haneke, 1997c), and further illustrates the slippage that defined the DVD discourse through its accompanying description, which states “an affluent family is terrorized by a pair of sadistic creeps” (see figure 42 [p.325]). Indeed, this shows that both traditional art and extreme art cinema retains a distribution channel in the digital era, further exposing the relevance of this thesis’s methodological approach.
A similar trend can be found within the exploitation realm. This is not surprising, as the exploitation industry, as claimed throughout this study but predominantly within Chapter One, operates as an inherently commercial business. This notion forms the foundation for Hess’s exploration of the aforementioned studio The Asylum, and her work neatly uncovers an interesting relationship between marginal industries and the digital platform. Hess states that The Asylum makes various low budget features, but concentrates on the production of ‘mockbuster’ narratives (2013, p.20). ‘Mockbusters’ endeavour to replicate the aesthetic and thematic style of high budget blockbusters, often using similar names or paratextual designs, however work within far stricter economic restrictions. Within this production model, The Asylum, whose titles include Sharknado (Ferrante, 2013), Transmophers (Scott, 2007) and Pirates of Treasure Island (Scott, 2006), make 25 films a year (Hess, 2013, p.21). Crucially, The Asylum’s cofounder Latt states that the films produced by the studio are made at
the behest of streaming websites, which subsequently dictate content and direction (2013, p.21). As a result, the B-movie, and contemporary exploitation industry, becomes shaped by the new technological platform. Importantly, this indicates that the low budget industry will thrive within the digitised world wherein content, and a perceived sense of new material, is essential to the viewing experience and success of the format (Hess, 2013, p.22).

Again, like the art cinema’s migration to the digital plane, there is evidence to support Hess’s findings regarding The Asylum. European extreme horror narratives such as *The Human Centipede II (Full Sequence)* (Six, 2011) and French zombie-horror *La Horde* (Dahan & Rocher 2009), which share the marginal demographic of traditional exploitation features, have found distribution on Netflix, an issue that further problematises Dixon’s assessment of the future of non-Hollywood productions. Notably, the distribution of these ‘low’ cultural texts on streaming websites furthers this thesis’s exploration of taste slippage and the permeability of cultural sectors. Mirroring the work of Joan Hawkins, who examined the way mail order video catalogues did little to differentiate between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of cinema (2000, pp.3-4), Hess states that within the construction of streaming websites, exploitive B-movies share the same space as Hollywood blockbusters (2013, p.22). Herein, the boundaries between taste economies are further collapsed, equalising the consumption sphere, whilst confirming how this new paratextual format is irrevocably affecting the manner in which audiences understand and consume cinema. Thus, the paratextual approach used throughout this study can be developed to consider the streaming platform as it continues its dominance over filmic consumption within the private sphere.
Therefore, with these final findings in place, it is the concluding view of this thesis that there is an intimate relationship between filmic texts and paratexts. This work has aimed to demonstrate how this connection shapes the way cinema is read and consumed in contemporary culture, and the ability it has to alter cinematic perceptions and cultural readings. In regards to the consideration of extreme art film, this relationship is fundamental to understanding the application of extremity within both the narratives and marketing sphere. Whist it is clear that the transgressions contained within the narratives become commercialised throughout various paratextual items, and therefore retained a level of gimmickry, the broader context mapped throughout this work illuminates several underexplored areas of this discussion. Through the rigorous investigation provided here, it became clear that both the employment of extremity within the art cinema environs and its promotion within the marketing sphere is part of a longstanding tradition that defines audience engagement with a range of art cinema products while simultaneously creating a hybridised and fluid cinematic canon. Accordingly, it is this thesis’ final assertion that extreme art cinema must not be comprehended independent of these thematic and paratextual histories, as they help audiences navigate the vast cinematic space, and enable cultural commentators’ greater insight into cinemas’ various identities.
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**MARTYRS**

**MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

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**Background**

- Martyrs is a new horror film that has caused a stir worldwide due to its extreme and boundary-pushing nature
- Directed by Pascal Laugier, hotly tipped to direct the high profile Hellraiser remake and starring the beautiful Mylène Jampanoi, who will be starring in the upcoming biopic of
legend Serge Gainsbourg, due to be released in 2010

- **Switchblade Romance** (34K to date), **Frontières** (DTV with 1 screen theatrical platform, 5K Wk 1) and **À l'intérieur** (this yet to be released in the UK but from festivals, the US release through Dimension Extreme and the Frightfest all nighter it has garnered widespread notoriety and praise among horror fans and it the current benchmark for extreme horror...until now!) has have cemented France’s current reputation for button pushing viscera

- Will have the benefit of a limited theatrical and festival platform which the DVD will closely follow to ensure the most benefit for the release – It will be showing on one screen at the ICA for two weeks from 27th – 10th with our DVD released two weeks later on the 24th so we will benefit from the PR and controversy around the limited run

- Lucie, a little girl, disappears and is discovered a year later wandering along the side of a road. The reason for her abduction remains a mystery. Traumatized and mute, she is put in a hospital where she is befriended by Anna, a girl of her own age. 15 years later and the doorbell of an ordinary family home rings. A man opens the door to find Lucie standing there with a shotgun. Convinced she has found her tormentor, she pulls the trigger.

- Critically acclaimed with a massive online buzz and growing notoriety, partly due to its ‘X’ certificate in France, which has never before been given to a horror movie.

| Positioning Statements | • This year’s must see extreme horror  
|                        | • One of the most highly acclaimed and controversial horror films ever made  
|                        | • “This is truly a landmark film and not to be missed.” – Twitch  
|                        | • “ Martyrs tears up the envelope, burns it, mixes the ashes with blood and hands it back to you as a cocktail.” – Ain’t It Cool News |

| Comparable titles | Feast | DTV | 8075 | 16978 | 20373 |
|                   | Them (French) | £118K | 8427 | 17437 | 59918 |
|                   | Jack Brooks – Monster Slayer | DTV | 8502 | 15938 | 18878 |
|                   | Frontiers (French) | £5K | 4820 | 10315 | 21082 |
|                   | Rec (Spanish) | £227K | 15784 | 34469 | 66157 |

| Competitive titles | Week before release: Defiance, Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist, Death Defying Acts, Machine Girl, The Grudge 3  
|                   | Week of release: Seven Pounds, Mirrors, Tokyo Sonata, |

| Key Selling Points | • The limited theatrical platform at the ICA will help to raise awareness of the film  
|                   | • The horror genre lends itself well to DVD, attracting a male |
|DVD buying audience|• Widely acclaimed and where not acclaimed talked about anyway due to the extreme and unusual content.  
• A strong sleeve and the film’s notoriety will help to propel the release beyond the traditional foreign film buying audience  
• The director and cast are up and coming international talent  
• Stronger extras than the US release will attract people to the R2  
• French extreme horror is currently known as the best in the world among horror fans|
|Weaknesses|• Foreign language would usually be a weakness but within the horror audience this is less and less of a factor as the strongest titles are consistently foreign language. Could be a problem when it comes to broadening it out but it will not be obviously foreign language in the campaign, with media clips and rich media content avoiding obvious foreign language aspects. 
• The extreme nature of the film could put people off, but the success of titles like Saw, Hostel, Wolf Creek et al proves that there is a large, blood thirsty audience for extremely violent horror|
|Target Audience|Primary: 18+ years C1+C2 80:20 male/female – Impulse purchasers, casual horror and film fans 
Secondary: 18 yrs +, ABC1, 80:20 male/female- fans of left field cinema 
Regionality: London skew followed by major conurbations especially student cities|
|Pricing|DVD £12.99  
Blu-ray £19.99|
|Format|Single disc release. Extras include:  
The Making of  
Pascal Laugier Interview  
Benoit Lestang Interview|
|Marketing Strategy and Objectives|• To position and effectively communicate to the target audience that Martyrs is released to own on DVD and Blu-ray on 24/05/2009 
• To undertake extensive online PR campaign using trailer to break out to a new audience and to broaden the release as far as possible 
• Use online advertising to raise awareness among the target audience, focusing the campaign on general film and lifestyle as well as horror sites 
• To run brand endorsed promotions with Bizarre or Nuts to create awareness 
• Use PR to drive feature led coverage using cast and director Q&As as well as blanket review coverage, promotions and competitions
across all targeted media
- To package the release to achieve recognition on shelf, using striking imagery and a competitive price point to encourage impulse purchase
- To effectively launch the DVD instore with top chart positions (aim for top 10) and off shelf support where possible using co-op funding
- To ensure maximum availability and instore visibility by shipping XXK units into the trade

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**TOTAL COOP SPEND**
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**TOTAL MARKETING SPEND**
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## RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

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Please complete this form and return to the Research Section, Quality Management Division, Academic Registry, University House, with your thesis prior to examination.

(* Delete as appropriate)

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study.

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s):

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):

FO/07/12-0062

Signed (PGRDS / PD Student) [Signature] Date: 19/09/2014

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<td>2) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</td>
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<td>5) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?</td>
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Ethical Issue Statement

If you have not submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions 1 to 5, please explain why this is so:

*UKIRO checklist. If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental ethics committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/resources/UKIRO%20Recommended%20Checklist%20for%20Researchers.pdf