Chaste Cinematics

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Logos (λόγος)

Ob scene: 1590s, “offensive to the senses, or to taste and refinement,” from M.Fr. obscène, from L. obscenus “offensive,” especially to modesty, originally “boding ill, inauspicious,” perhaps from ob “onto” (see ob-) + caenum “filth.” Meaning “offensive to modesty or decency” is attested from 1590s.

*Online Etymology Dictionary*

When we read, it is not ours to absorb all that is written. Our thoughts are jealous and they constantly blank out the thoughts of others, for there is not room enough in us for two scents at one time.

Milorad Pavić, *Dictionary of the Khazars*

As historians are well aware . . . the passage from promiscuity to modesty cannot occur without a refinement of the sense of smell that entails a lowering of the threshold of tolerance for certain odors.

Dominique Laporte, *Histoire de la merdre (Prologue)*
The Obtuse Sense of the Scene
(the writer’s attempts and expectations)

This book—based on an imagined DVD list of extras (i.e., supplements) rather than a traditional book’s table of contents (i.e., discontents)—is composed of a series of beginnings.\(^1\) Transversally arranged. Both vertically and horizontally. But obtusely. At different angles. The general theme is cinema (cinematics) and sexual violence (rape).\(^2\) And yet, the theme—a general economy of a theme—is to

\(^1\) This work is a sequel, if not also a prequel, to Sexual Violence in Western Thought and Writing: Chaste Rape (Palgrave, 2011).

\(^2\) On the matter of “cinema (cinematics),” I have in mind a number of citations, but especially Weiss’ Cinematics. As Harry Rand points out, Weiss’s novelistic discussion with “virtual co-authors” makes the “conversation . . . strange” (349). Rand interrupts much of his discussion with statements made by five of his colleague-friends (at times as many as three on a page) without even bothering to counter-argue the charges against him. I admire this approach. Rand, however, writes: “One wonders what pangs of intellectual integrity or masochism moved Weiss to include this remark, without acting to rectify the lacunae that prompted it” (349; cf. Berleant). Additionally, see Steigler, Technics and Time, 3; Doane; Shaviro, Cinematic Body. As for Post Cinematics (without or with a hyphen), I have in mind Shaviro’s Post Cinematic Affect. Also, see “Roundtable Discussion. The Post-Cinematic in Paranormal Activity and Paranormal Activity 2. With Julia Leyda, Nicholas Rombes, Steven Shaviro, and Therese Grisham (moderator)” at <http://www.lafuriaumana.it/index.php/locchio-che-uccide/385-roundtable-discussion-about-post-cinematic>. Kittler, “Man as a Drunken Town-Musician,” discusses various national and methodical senses on the word “cinematics.” Also, there is its opposite: “acinematic” (Lyotard, “Acinema”; e.g., see James Cahill; Ramdas).

On the matter of “sexual violence (rape),” I work, here, with Monique Plaza’s “Our Damages.” (Cf. Hengehold’s “Immodest” and Žižek’s Violence 1–8; cf. Ann Cahill, 15–49.) My approach, therefore, is a wide scope, including harassment, assault, rape, and most assuredly torture. My understanding of rape and torture as sexual violence is informed not only by Plaza but even more so by Kate Millett’s thinking in The Basement, which I discuss at length in the introduction and in chapter two in Sexual Violence.
begin again with a remix of such assemblages as *Chaste Rape / Divine Filth*, as well as Sacred / Profane. All folded and wrapped up in the name of *Chaste Cinematics*. These are paradoxes that are exceptionally perverse, when described in detail.

Intermittently, I have imagined this book as a *shooting script with voluminous production notes and imaginary storyboards* toward a film that is, in fact, produced and yet

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3 Which are not binaries. Alone. For they remix together. Yet, traditional philosophy would keep these proximities widely separate. Simply recall the basic principles of traditional philosophy: identification, not-contradiction, and the excluded third. As Henry Miller writes, however, “I love everything that flows” together (*Tropic* 257-58).

To begin again: *Chaste Rape* refers to a book by Stephanie Jed, titled *Chaste Thinking*, which is about Humanists and their Chaste Thinking about rape. (*Chaste Thinking*, consequently, becomes *Chaste Rape* as the subtitle of my most recent book *Sexual Violence*.) *Divine Filth* is the title of a book by Bataille (a collection of notes, introduced and translated by Mark Sptizer). In “‘The Old Mole’,” Bataille adds to the dichotomy the “eagle” and the “mole” (see *Visions* 32-44). Within each title, as well as in other dichotomies, there is a dialectical tension. However, this tension is not merely “dialectical” with its vertical drive but also “diatactical” with a horizontal drive bringing about reflexive thinking (see White, *Tropics* 4). The diatactical resists any third toward a synthesis or transcendence. As for the Sacred and Profane, I have in mind Mircea Eliade, but also Emile Durkheim’s earlier work, *Elementary Forms*, and Giorgio Agamben’s later works, *Homo Sacer* and *Profanations*.

Wonderfully complicating what is generally said here, however, is Nancy, who writes: “The sacred . . . signifies the separate, what is set aside, removed, cut off. In one sense, then, religion and the sacred are opposed, as the bond is opposed to the cut. In another sense, religions can no doubt be represented as securing a bond with the separated sacred. But in yet another sense, the sacred is what it is only through its separation, and there is no bond with it. There is then, strictly speaking, no religion of the sacred. The sacred is what, of itself, remains set apart, at a distance, and with which one forms no bond (or only a very paradoxical one). It is what one cannot touch (or only by a touch without contact) . . . . One attempt to form a bond with the sacred occurs in sacrifice . . . . Where sacrifice ceases, so does religion” (*Ground* 1; cf. 3-4).

never released in any form for public or private viewing.\footnote{The exemplary, suppressed film that I have in mind is \textit{The Day the Clown Cried}, which was produced (1972), yet never released. Jerry Lewis plays Helmut Doork, a clown in the Holocaust and finally in a Nazi concentration camp, leading children to their death. According to lore, Lewis is the only one who has a copy. View, however, a discussion about the film \texttt{<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UznUgPvgO18>}. And the shooting script \texttt{<http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/the_day_the_clown_cried.html>}.} In its absence, however, I think that the film is nonetheless imagined and meditated on and casuistically sketched into the form of a fugue in constant flux. After all, my imagined task here is meditation through remediation. I say “imagined” as in images—film images—a third sense of filmic images. Present, yet k/not (see Barthes, “Third”).

This book implicitly deals with my attempts, therefore, to understand further how I might rethink what has been thought and disseminated on sexual violence, this time around, in cinema. Previously, I have interrogated why Western thinkers have continued to embrace the myths of pagan gods, raping mortal women, as founding representative anecdotes for the establishment of city states, nations, and eventually psychoanalysis.\footnote{E.g., as stated in the Preface to \textit{Sexual Violence}, I have in mind: The rape of Korê and the wandering of Demeter, leading to the founding of Athens; the rape of Leda, giving us Helen and Clytemnestra; the rape of Helen, giving us Aeneas and Livy’s histories; the rape of the Vestal (Rhea Silvia), issuing the twins, Romulus and Remus, and Rome; the rape, or abduction, of the Sabine Women, bringing forth the Roman people; the rape of Lucretia, bringing forth the Republic; the rapes in the Hebrew Bible (Yamada); the Chaste Rape of Mary, ending the Roman Empire and issuing Christ; and the rape of women, as well as of men and children, up to and including yesterday’s newspaper, which is taking place everywhere, now. In other words, what is established (as a point of stasis), by way of rape narratives, is community.} With all based on a series of templates for an original trauma. Apparently, the dis-
ease creates its own spin-off cure, becoming an immunology. Such is *the work of the negative* (see Green). Rape in some incipient, pathological way contributes to legitimacy.\(^7\)

Methodos (μέθοδος)

My intention is to turn Aristotle’s methodology, specifically, Aristotle’s tripartite division of knowing (theory), doing (practice, pedagogy), and making (euretics), into reversible arts.\(^8\) Polymorphous-perverse arts.\(^9\) I begin again, here and hereafter, therefore, with Vilem Flusser, who states: “Narrative is no longer the model for historical events. That is film. From this point on, one can speed up events, watch them in slow motion, and work them into flashbacks. Most important, however, one can cut the tape of Western history and splice it back together. I propose cutting out the twelve hundred years between. . . .”\(^{10}\)

Hence, some production notes: I would cut the tape of narrative history founded on rape narratives. Disrupt its chronological flow. Even more so. I would accept the chronology of water.\(^{11}\) Accept the chronology of chance.\(^{12}\) I would work with a temporality of too early and too late. In doing so, let us recall and apply the rhetoric of Sig-

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\(^8\) That is, unknowing, undoing, and unmaking. For Aristotle, see *Metaphysics*, Bk E (VI, 1025b-). For “reversible arts,” see Pavić, “Beginning.”

\(^9\) Are we having fun yet? Are you getting dizzy yet?

\(^{10}\) (132; cf. 24-25, 133-37, 145-46). In cinema there is nothing but the cut. Cinema is made by way of cuts. Of course. But there is *Cut . . . The Unseen Cinema*. (A pharmakonic cut.) See Baxter Philips.

\(^{11}\) This is the title of Lidia Yuknavitch’s memoir, which is associated with film throughout the short cuts among the memories captured by Yukavitch. Towards the end, as a new beginning, of the memoir, she says: “If this is the story of my life, no wonder it’s in fragments. It’s got a messed chronology because that’s how I feel about life—it’s not linear. It moves in fits and starts, doubles back, repeats or extends an image. I thought if my life has a chronology, it’s the chronology of water—the way water carved the earth, the way water carries us into the world, the way that we are made of water, the way that water retreats or returns. I had . . . found my central metaphor” (300).

mund Freud’s *Nachträglichkeit*. But without a necessity of an originary trauma. But without a necessity of an originary trauma. I would view and experience the tensions of cinematic long shots with the camera too close and too far, as found in Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet’s *Too Early, Too Late.*

But let us also get real! After all, once the mythic gods and the God are found dead, it is rape by other means. By human beings, *as it has always been.* Or by *Ancient Aliens,* as is touted on the History Channel. And yet, our sense of thinking, nonetheless, continues in a connection with the gods and especially the God. If only in terms of nihilism. What has always been narrated is the everydayness (the banality) of rape that informs our canonical pedagogies.

What is known about history and its mistakes is that this, our history, founded on rape narratives is hysterically-obsessively repeated. Let us, therefore, rethink Ockham’s razor and the law of parsimony with a perverse razor (Flusser 132). Let us, even more so, contrary to George Santayana, *add* and *insert* the contradictory notion

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13 Is such even possible? It is a challenge I would take. Cf. LaCapra.

14 For *Nachträglichkeit* (variously translated as deferred action, belatedness, afterwardness), see Freud (SE I, 353-54; SE XVII, 7-122); cf., Nägele, *Reading* 3-5, 169-201, 215-17. For a discussion of Huillet-Straub’s *Too Early, Too Late,* see Rosenbaum’s “Intense Materialism.”

15 The PBS show *Ancient Aliens* on The History Channel originally ran for three seasons. In popular culture there is the notion that aliens (i.e., extraterrestrial creatures) rape human beings. As a popular case in point, Daniel Thomas (“Dan”) O’Bannon and Ronald Shusett, who scripted the early storyline of *Alien* (1979), speak of alien rapes. O’Bannon in the documentary *Alien Evolution* (2001) says: “This is a movie about alien interspecies rape.” For popular culture discussions, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078748/faq>.

of the necessity of having to forget a narrative history of rapes so that we do not repeat its mistakes. Remembering is repetition with subtle permutations and recombinations. And let us realize that it is time (in an untimely time) to cut, cut, cut, scramble, etc., the rape narratives. To destroy the templates. By any means compossible. And, thereafter, call for George Bataille’s (Immanuel Kant’s) sovereign laughter.

17 This logic of compossibility is initially put forth by Leibniz (allowing for one best possible world) and thereafter reconsidered by Borges and Deleuze as a paralogic of compossibility (allowing for countless inco-possible, i.e., co-extensive, worlds). Hence, I will tarry with the negative on my own terms (see Hegel, Phenomenology on “determinate negation” and “absolute negation” (e.g., 50-51, 58-66, 111-19). Cf. Žižek, Tarrying.

18 For the linkage between Kant and Bataille (via laughter), see Nancy, Discourse (130-39).
A Background Check

In this, my second effort at writing about sexual violence, I am situating myself, as in a standpoint, within Christopher J. Koch’s novel (1978) and within Peter Weir’s film based on that novel (1982). Yes, I am alluding to *A Year of Living Dangerously*. (Are you still with me? Would you alternately follow a ventriloquist? With a puppet?19) I am placing myself in that novel/film, so as to think and to write from both works (or rather, *ways*20), which are significantly different. I am placing myself in that mix to think and to write about sexual violence in cinema, though this novel and film only touch on the topic. I am taking as my persona *Guy Hamilton*, who has his *first assignment*, as a foreign correspondent in Indonesia (1965), and who is befriended by the dwarf Billy Kwan.

The theme of *Living Dangerously* pivots on betrayals, in the land of insurrection. Hamilton is played by Mel Gibson. Kwan, played by Linda Hunt. I cannot forget how Kwan is sacrificed for the story. For community. It is near impossible to determine between Hamilton and Kwan who is the puppet (the Western view), who the shadows (the Eastern view), for they are imminently reversible. For me, there is a Bataillean economy and a Kantian syncopation at work in the novel/film (confusing, mixing, repurposing the two into a non-synthetic third). As Kwan recalls: “all is clouded by desire” (Koch 75), which brings to our Western mind, the paradoxical sacred shadow play, the *Wayang Kulit* (see Campbell).

This background check is confronted with even more concerns, given my approach through a string of paradoxes: divinity and filth, sacred and profane. In Koch’s

19 Cf. Žižek, *A Year of Dreaming Dangerously*.
novel, there is such a paradoxical scene, virtually one among many. Kwan explains what is another paradox for Westerners—“we worship shadows, we worship foulness”—but Hamilton does not know what to make of the mix (222). My own thoughts, however, as Hamilton, focus on a remix. A repurposing. Of shadows and foulness. My own thoughts, specifically, focus on what we can hope for in rethinking and rewriting such paradoxes, driven by desire. My own thoughts focus on coherent contradictions.21

My assignment is to find ways into this subject (of abjection)—namely, unorthodox ways that are at best eccentric. To reintroduce the topic in scattered ways. Each a separate turn. On the wheel of meditations. The writing of this book is, in so many ways, another Test Drive (Ronell). And yet, I am attempting all this without a hammer or a tuning fork (Nietzsche, Twilight 21-22). I am turning and refolding the problem of rape over and over against itself, by way of unlikely perspectives. In hopes of discovering less the cause (the philosophical precept of negation itself, which is known), but more so remedies (the sophistic exception of denegation itself, which is unknown).

I cannot accomplish this end, for a new beginning, however, by myself. In writing this book—a novelistic book, or rather a shooting script—I am attempting to bring the readers, you, also into the writing and thinking of the book. I provoke and invoke the readers, you, in terms of self-reflective questions as well as assignments in hopes of an eventual life-enhancing assignation. All of this is

21 Again, a mix of coherence/contradiction. For Flusser, such is a “sophistic paradox” (143-49). While the precepts of reason must resolve paradoxes and exclude contradictions, desire is driven to include them. My concern is what can we make of them (through euretics)? For examples, see Derrida who speaks of a “coherent contradiction,” in “Structure, Sign, and Play” (279); Ulmer, “The Euretics of Alice’s Valise.”
attempted throughout the book but most self-reflexively in the “Excursus: The Assessment-Test Event.”

Which is to say: This is not just one more film- or cinema-studies book, but an “extras” book.\textsuperscript{22} To supplement films and videos that I refer to in our discussions. And those that you, too, I presume, have questions/concerns about.

To add to this impossible stumbling—syncopating—giggling—book, to the broken syntax, causing the leaps, of destabilizing thoughts, I will work from a grounding of base materialism—yes, Bataille’s materialism—which can bring us again back to the paradox of Divine Filth.\textsuperscript{23} And ask, namely, how is it that rape-abjection (filth, excluded thirds) gets associated with the Divine in film, in a community, making for a Chaste Cinematics?

In an improper-proper name, I will begin, again in the background—unworking in the foreground—with Bataille’s notions for grounding, or rather ungrounding (\textit{Abgrund}).\textsuperscript{24} Why? Because it is Bataille’s post-philosoph-

\textsuperscript{22} I am alluding to \textit{extras} in a DVD and in a film itself, along with everything else in between. It is an experiment in establishing personae to think and write from.

\textsuperscript{23} Stoekl in his introduction to Bataille’s \textit{Visions of Excess} describes Bataille’s paradox, or un-resolvable tension, as situated “in an impossible neutral space, between absolute knowledge and its implacably hostile double…Bataille is not simply privileging a new object (excrement, flies, ruptured eyes, the rotten sun, etc.) over the old one (the head, the king, spirit, mind, vision, the sun of reason, etc.)” (xiii). Cf. Nikolopoudou.

\textsuperscript{24} Lest I give the impression that Bataille originates, so to speak, this whole theme of grounding ungrounding itself, especially as a creeping base materialism, we must keep in mind Immanuel Kant’s role in recognizing a \textit{syncopation} at work in unworking an equilibrium as well as a decidability in philosophical thinking. Many others, far too many to list and discuss here, have noted this linkage between Kant and Bataille. But I would at least cite Nancy’s \textit{The Discourse of the Syncope} (1976, trans. 2008). Cf. Catherine Clément, \textit{La Syncope}. The \textit{syncopation} in history (time/space) or syncope parallels references to event (\textit{Ereignis}), caesura, finitude,
ical notion of a base materialism that destabilizes binaries, fixedness, and brings forth excluded thirds.\(^{25}\) That brings about the syncopation in history. That brings forth wild heterologies.\(^{26}\) The other of the other. Again, base matter. Which I would now refer to as a scene of writing images\(^{27}\) that would turn all into potential ob scenes. About these, heretofore, excluded thirds (turds). In flesh and blood, in thinking, and in writing. The very topic itself remains forever to haunt. Hence, living dangerously in this haunt that can only remain unknowable.\(^{28}\) Hence, perhaps—that is, through chance—we will have eventually come to grasp the necessity to study the unknowable, the haunt, or as Bataille writes: The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge. 

About sexual violence. As if, capable of ever being finished (see Nikolopoudou).

Perhaps, all that we can accomplish is the question itself: unnamely, why is it that a repressed third, or a third etc. Therefore, in this preamble, when I am disgusting [Sic] Bataille, I am also discussing Kant. Both bring an irrepressible laughter to the table. Under no circumstances, however, is this to think the end of philosophy.

25 My reference to a “post-philosophy” is not, again, the end of philosophy. On the contrary, “post-” is perpetually the beginning of philosophy. (See Nancy, Discourse 15-16.) For Bataille’s own discussion of base materialism, to start with, see Visions of Excess, Encyclopaedia Acephalica, Unfinished System, Absence of Myth, and Divine Filth. For commentators, see Noys, Hollier and Allred, Grindon, Stoekl’s Politics as well as Sweedler’s Dismembered Community. And Gross on Bataille and others. Venture out on your own. In the neighborhood. Bataille is often considered under the rubrics of mysticism, surrealism, and de Sade. See, e.g., for mysticism, Hollywood, “Bataille and Myticism” and Sensible Ecstasy; Hussey. For surrealism and de Sade, see Bataille, Absence of Myth; Weiss, Aesthetics of Excess.

26 See Pefanis, Heterology (chaps. 3 and 4).

27 The notion of a scene of writing images is best understood by reading and studying D. N. Rodowick’s expansive and thorough discussion of the search for filmic thinking and writing (Reading the Figural, 76-106).

28 See Chamberlain (100), for the haunt as “unknowable.”
figure, returns repeatedly, most specifically and strangely as a “product” of rape and torture? Returns as shadows. A product that Jean-Paul Sartre and Page duBois suggest as becoming a new “species.” This, too, is our primary concern.

Note: If you, the reader, continue reading, it will take more than your reading. This is a writing for activism. About this matter (base matter), nothing more will be said. This foreground will now become the background. Yet, manifesting itself in the shadows. With their own shadows. Which again bring to mind, “the sacred shadow play.”

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29 I have documented this phenomenon of thirds in Sexual Violence. See in the index to that book the term “third figures.” Especially important is the beginning of Chapter 2, in which I stress how Kate Millett is most concerned with the question of the “product” being made through rape and torture in The Basement. Additionally, see Page duBois and Simone de Beauvoir in the index. These thirds continue in this book, Chaste Cinematics.

30 For Sartre, see “Victory” in The Question (xxxii, xlii), and for DuBois, Torture (153).

31 Leonard, in his dissertation (August 2003) and later in his book, The Cinematic Mystical Gaze, points to Ventura’s LA Weekly discussion of Weir’s film A Year of Living Dangerously. I quote Leonard’s quote and insertions in Ventura’s insights in terms of his discussion of shadows within his own quotes of Weir. Leonard quotes: “Rarely has a director so clearly stated his aesthetic: ‘The shadows are souls and the screen is heaven’, and ‘You must watch their shadows, not the puppets.’ In the West we want answers to everything, but in the Way-Yang no such final answers exist.’ Instead, it teaches us that ‘the forces of light and dark’ are forever in furious ‘balance.’ . . . [Weir states], ‘I don’t care about the pictures, I care about the content’. . . Billy Kwan is a holy man. He seeks ‘the unmet friend.’ He believes that you must ‘add your light to the sum of light’. ‘The unseen is all around us’, he says, and then firmly suggests, to the likes of you and I, that ‘we must give love to whomever God has placed in our path.’ Billy actually lives these things and, as Jesus long ago proved, there is nothing more dangerous. Billy also makes mistakes, and there is absolutely nothing more dangerous than making mistakes on this level of being” (Dissertation, 27; Ventura, 5)
A Program without a Program:

The chapters (as extras) are presented as an unfolding of Chaste Cinema I? II? III+? But they can be reshuffled, remixed, repurposed, and read in any dis/order. Before all, they are less an argument and more a contestation—each in its own way (wave) a meditation. In no certain order. The first that is listed takes an unsettled look at rape with a remix of divinity and filth, sacred and profane, eschatology and scatology. Toward a community without a community. An inoperative community (Nancy). Or rather a “Cavalcade of Perversions” (Waters). It is this so-called first section that is indebted to Bataille’s thinking and unthinking. The second takes again an unsettled look and a reading of one documentary film and a scholarly discussion, in a roundtable, concerning the film. The third+ takes still more of an unsettled look at rape, memory, revenge—a non-linear narrative: one video of rape interrupted by a film of memento mori.

The so-called chapters—rather extras, read out of this numerical sequence—can bring about an intensity. To spur and stir our readings. Thinkings. Meditating. Writings. From desert (sand) to waves (ocean); vice versa. Or from oasis to mirage; mirage to oasis. Perpetually unsettled. To remain open.

A reminder: The extras are written for test drives. Each extra has its own introduction. Do not buy into any one of the extras; rather, continue testing the drives (cf. Lyotard, “Acinema”). Searching and following a path for three+ scents at a time. At kairotic times. As (Abbas) Kiarostami would have it.

Now, forget everything that I have written in the preamble! And begin again, reading the “extras” up and down and transversally.
Dedication to

The Inoperative, Unavowable, Coming Filmic
Community/Cavalcade
Acknowledgments

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