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# A Terrifying Spectatorship: Jean-François Lyotard's *Dispositif* and the Expenditure of Intensities in Steven Kastrissios's *The Horseman*

In lighting the match the child enjoys this diversion (*détournement*, a word dear to Klossowski) that misspends energy.<sup>1</sup>

WHEN JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD DISCOVERED THE kind of misspending of energy that he writes of in “Acinema,” the essay from which I take my epigraph, he observed how such a misspending is visible in a diverse array of texts and events: it appeared, Lyotard noted, in John G. Avildsen’s film *Joe* (1970); in the experimental and abstract cinema of Hans Richter, Gianfranco Baruchello, and Viking Eggeling; in the pyrotechnics of fireworks; and even in the practice of “Swedish posing.” The last of these sites of misspending, Lyotard observed, involved a situation in which women would pose for their almost invariably male clients: men who were prevented from touching the immobile poser before them and—perhaps precisely because they are prevented from touching—were soon “overtaken by the liveliest agitation.”<sup>2</sup> By way of supplementing these examples of misspent energy, this article will propose another site in which Lyotard’s conception of this kind of wasteful disbursement can be identified: namely, exploitation cinema. More specifically, the following pages will focus on an Australian exploitation film directed by Steven Kastrissios, *The Horseman*

(2008), which I want to posit as an exemplary proof both of the genre of exploitation film and of Lyotard's notion.

Kastrissios's film demonstrates continuity editing systems interspersed with affective "splatter" shots.<sup>3</sup> And so even while the real life situations of these "splatter" shots might place the film in the category of a "snuff" film, I want to more closely interrogate the spectatorial effects of this work by suggesting that, faced with these "splatter" shots, the spectator undergoes an expenditure of intensity that renders them "overtaken by the liveliest agitation" at the level of the micro-movements of their body.<sup>4</sup> While other commentators have analysed *The Horseman* in terms of the film's thematics of identity, family, and survival or responsibility, this study will adopt Lyotard's particular formulation of the *dispositif* to highlight the ways in which cinema, and particularly exploitation cinema, functions as an artful and energetic arrangement whose purpose is to produce the sensations and affects to be "felt" by the spectators of these films.<sup>5</sup>

Lyotard's formulation of the *dispositif* can be used as an axiom through which his articulation of "misspending"—and what this implies for the cinematic spectator—can be elaborated on and more clearly understood. What Lyotard calls the *dispositif* describes a channelling and subsequent exploitation of intensities in an arrangement that allows those same intensities or affects to circulate. However, as I argue, the libidinal economy of the *dispositif*—which is to say the superstructure within which these libidinal dispositions and expulsions arise—must also generate a range of "uncompensated losses."<sup>6</sup> That is, while the *dispositif* is energetic, it also constitutes intensities that cannot be—or simply are not—channelled into energetic exchanges of the kind that can be exploited by that *dispositif*. The *dispositif*, in this sense, both witnesses and facilitates a "misspending" of energy.

In addition to the above described Lyotardian conceptualisation, this paper will also pay close attention to three of Lyotard's essays: first, "Fis-course Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," originally published in French in 1971, and second—as I have already indicated—an essay titled "Acinema," which Lyotard first published in French in 1973, together with, thirdly, his "Prescription," published in English in 1999. My primary aim is to analyse the force of ecstasy or *jouissance*, which I shall identify both in the body of the spectator and in the cinematic image. In short, this article asks the following: What are the expenditures that are channelled and exploited by the *dispositif*, and how does this ramify in terms of the spectator's *enjoyment* of exploitation film, including "splatter"

or “snuff” cinema? In an attempt to better understand what Lyotard means when he describes a kind of cinema—or rather a sort of “acinema”—that engages in expenditure in such a way as to constitute a “misspending” of energy, I will attend not only to how the *dispositif* results in “uncompensated losses” but to the way these losses promulgate the emergence of movement and pleasure in the *dispositif*. Thus, I argue that we may readily identify a distinction between “propagative” movements on the one hand, and “sterility,” or expenditure as an uncompensated loss, on the other. I shall also propose that this distinction signals the difference between commercial cinema and acinema and that, within this dichotomy, exploitation cinema may be understood as an example of the latter.

### Jean-François Lyotard's *Dispositif*: Towards a Libidinal Economy

*The Horseman* is about a father figure, Christian Forteski (Peter Marshall), who, following the death of his daughter, Jessica (Hannah Levien), receives a copy of a sex tape in the mail. The sex tape captures three men—or “four men” according to the police—having sex with Forteski’s very drugged daughter only moments before her death. Forteski hunts down the adult film company that produced the tape—the morosely yet aptly named “Bloodsports”—and purchases every copy of the video before murdering the director of the production company. As the narrative develops, it is revealed that Jesse had turned to pornography to satiate her heroin addiction. But Forteski, unperturbed, continues on a bloody rampage to avenge his daughter’s death, tracking down, torturing, and finally killing the men involved, using such gruesome instruments as a crowbar, a handheld pneumatic pump, a hammer, and fish hooks. Forteski “finishes off” his victims with a small knife on whose blade are engraved the words “love Jesse.” As Forteski tracks down each of the men whom he sees as responsible for his daughter’s death—discovering the name of the next man from the last—he encounters a hitchhiker named Alice (Caroline Marohasy). A kind of surrogate for his deceased daughter, Alice, Forteski learns, is travelling to Rockhampton to discuss with the father of her unborn child her wish to terminate her pregnancy. As the pair travel between Brisbane and Rockhampton, they form an intimate father/daughter bond and, as Forteski comes ever closer to locating and killing the last of the men on his list, Alice becomes caught in the crossfire and is captured by Forteski’s

final victim and his accomplices. These men then threaten to repeat the events that led to Jesse's death.

How are we to understand *The Horseman* in terms of what Lyotard calls the "misspending" of energy? The economy of cinema is an energetic one, and it is on the basis of this first observation that we can define the *dispositif* as primarily an energetic arrangement. But the economy of cinema is also complex in that it inaugurates a combination of two economies: that of the mechanical apparatus of the screen and image itself and that of the spectatorial body. Yet to name these two economies separately is also too simplistic a formulation—and one that is not generally accepted in film theory. Based on my reading of Gilles Deleuze's theoretical formulation in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983), such a simplistic distinction fails because it envisions the image of cinema as a kind of suspended midpoint between the mechanical efforts of the cinematic apparatus (the production and reproduction of the image) and the biomechanical efforts of the spectator (the perception of the image). But cinema, I assert, represents no such midpoint; it is rather an inseparable imbrication of the image and the spectator in a homogeneous unfolding Deleuze names the "movement-image."<sup>7</sup> To accept this Deleuzian formulation—one that Deleuze notes preceded cinema itself when it first appeared in Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), a book that arose "before the official birth of cinema"—is to conceive of cinema not as an object in the realm of the spectator's "natural perception," but as a movement towards an "Opening" to the whole of the world.<sup>8</sup> For just as the world is infinitely "Open" and in this way unconquerable for the beholder—and thus always productive of "something new"—"the movement-image," as Deleuze writes, is also "beyond the conditions of natural perception."<sup>9</sup> The image of cinema is thus Open insofar as it is constituted by the "matter-flux" in which a range of forms are actualised, the space in which these forms become mobile and thus "transition from one form to another." Here each of these forms become a "mobile section of duration"—a series of "concrete duration[s]" or *durées*.<sup>10</sup> But, following Deleuze, I describe cinema not only as "Open" but as "the Open," because cinema refers to a *particular* space or matter-flux, one whose parameters are defined not by the biomechanical movement of the spectators's bodies, but by the space in which there arises this coiled imbrication of the spectator and image.

The point at which drawing this distinction between the mechanical economy and the biomechanical economy for cinema might be constructive, however, is where it enables us to understand cinema's economy as one that transcends Marx's *political* economy—the model in which "liv-

ing labour” is defined most simply as that which can be exploited. Tania Modleski has demonstrated the constructiveness of comparing these economies, for instance, in her study of horror films, where she relates the economy of human labour to the mechanical apparatus. It is Marx, Modleski writes, who describes the capitalist as having a “werewolf hunger” or “insatiable appetite” that “drives him to replace ‘living labor’ with ‘dead labor’ (that is, human beings with machines).”<sup>11</sup> For Marx, as Modleski observes, the mechanical apparatuses that replace human labour should create a state of affairs in which, because “dead labor” cannot be exploited to the same degree as “living labor,” the rate of profit will eventually come to fall in a “dead labor” economy, leading to the consequent downfall of capitalism.<sup>12</sup> That is, in Marx’s analysis, only “living labor” can produce the surplus value that can be exploited to the sufficient degree that is required to sustain the capitalistic system. The “dead labor” of the machine cannot be exploited in this way, for it can neither produce nor attain a value greater than that value for which it has been designed: the machine always gives, that is, only the same value—but also never anything less than the value—for which it can be exchanged for profit. Despite Marx’s conclusions, machines also represent the “liberation from burdensome toil.”<sup>13</sup> And even while this is a dream supplied by capitalism, it is in consequence of this faithfulness in machines that the mechanical apparatus of cinema stands for another form of liberation.

To clarify, if cinema does not yield this kind of capitalist liberation, it can also be understood to produce another kind of liberation: the liberation of affect. That is, cinema may be understood to enter into the economy of surplus value because, while it produces a kind of “living labor,” it entails nothing of the kind of liberation from exploitation that this procedure normally entails. Cinema, rather, has a stranger relation to the economy than do other mechanical or machinic apparatuses. The cinematic-mechanical apparatus demonstrates that the “dead labor” of the machine (at least in the hands of an auteur or director) *can* produce surplus value in the form of affect—one that can be sensed by the spectator—and thus produces a form of surplus value that can be exploited. By contrast, however, it is only because Lyotard describes all mechanical apparatuses (and among them we may count the cinematic apparatus) as objects that are invested with *libidinality* that the kinds of “exorbitant” intensities—those that I have just referred to as the surplus value of spectatorial affect—are possible at all.<sup>14</sup>

Along these lines, Pierre Klossowski writes that these kinds of intensities have no “equivalent” in the political economy.<sup>15</sup> But if this is so, then

Lyotard shows us how the broader libidinal economy might *invest* the political economy, even if (or perhaps precisely because) the latter offers none of the intensities that we may find in the former.<sup>16</sup> No longer simply “dead labor,” the economy of the mechanical apparatus of cinema, imbued as it is with libidinal energies, may thus be defined as a libidinal economy that *invests* the political one. Of course, the cinematic libidinal economy is not free of the setups, arrangements or *dispositifs* that channel and exploit libidinal energies in a way that is ultimately political. In other words, to theorise the cinematic apparatus in terms of a *dispositif* does not stop us also conceiving of that apparatus as an Open energetic arrangement or setup—even as libidinal energies may be channelled or exploited by this *dispositif* in a way that makes the apparatus also appear, at one level, to be a political instrument.

If we may put to one side the investment of libidinal energy by the cinematic mechanical apparatus in the political economy, we may conceive of cinema as a *dispositif* and, in the process, demonstrate the way in which cinema cannot generally be divided so that it consists simply of the economy of the mechanical apparatus and that of the biomechanical apparatus. Cinema is a particular kind of setup/apparatus/*dispositif*: it is an energetic apparatus that is not *inorganic*. The *dispositif* describes an energetic arrangement that is invested with libidinal energies: it thus contains the organic elements that the spectator him- or herself invests in it (that they, as per the French, “dis-place” to or “dispose” of in it), but also of many other organic elements, some of them not the product of the spectator.<sup>17</sup> As Lisa Trahair writes, “In the *dispositif*, the thetic subject is only a partial and momentary component of a more fundamental flow of cathetic energy.”<sup>18</sup> The economy of cinema is thus an energetic one in which the subject-spectator is an important component, but only one component among the many that give rise to the *dispositif*’s overall “flow” or matter-flux of libidinal and cathetic energy.

The *dispositif* is, moreover, different from the mechanical apparatus, because—even though the *dispositif* can be invested with energy in a way that indicates a stable structure—it is also open to change, or to the creation of new potentials. That is, although the word *dispositif* can be translated from the French to mean “apparatus”—a fact that Iain Hamilton Grant notes in his glossary of Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy*—Lyotard’s *dispositif* does not actually refer to the *mechanical* aspects of the apparatus. Rather, it can be defined as an energetic arrangement that exhibits both a “disposition to invest” in external agents or events and to be “invested in” by these agents or events.<sup>19</sup> Thus, as I have already indicated, the *dispositif* is a setup

or arrangement that channels and exploits energy, even as it may become “subject to economic movements and displacements.”<sup>20</sup>

In this way the economy of the mechanical apparatus is different from the economy of the *dispositif*: the economy of the former produces, as Lyotard notes, a “material memory.” It thus allows for the “accumulation” or “stock-piling” of historical or diachronic “remains”—a procedure that suggests not only the apparatus’s “past activity” and its potential exchange for capital, but indicates the way in which the apparatus’s history accumulates in both directions.<sup>21</sup> The economy of the *dispositif*, by contrast, is an energetic “disposition to invest,” one that, while it also allows for the channelling and exploitation of libidinal energies, neither fabricates nor constitutes a “place” as such. It is by these means that the *dispositif* may be described as the energetic “disposition to invest” and to be invested of the libidinal band or “skin.” In other words, the *dispositif* is an ephemeral and heterogeneous event whose parameters remain unamenable to material collection or accumulation despite the named “skin.”<sup>22</sup> Libidinal intensities, then, are affects or feelings that find expression in the events that take place in the world but are themselves “structured” or exploited by *dispositifs*. The *dispositif* thus works with an “idea of an intensity” that, “far from setting itself up on a producer-body,” actually “determines it.”<sup>23</sup> The difference between the economy of the mechanical apparatus and the economy of the *dispositif* is therefore a difference of production—or, rather, a difference between these apparatus’s conceptions of the *time* of production (where “production” refers to the creation of either a product or of intensities). To put it differently again, the difference obtains between, for the mechanical apparatus, a mode of production or “accumulation” that allows for capital exchange(s) and, for the *dispositif*, a mode of production by which intensities arise that are not determined by their exploitation, but by the extent to which their ephemeral and heterogeneous “passage” (even duration) produces a new *space* of production (constitutive of the *dispositif* itself).

In “Acinema,” Lyotard describes two different kinds of movement. The first is the cinematographic inscription of movement—a movement that facilitates a “potential return and profit,” one that may be then recorded on the “ledger book” that is at once the recorder of the film’s economic “value” and “is the film” itself.<sup>24</sup> The second kind of movement, which consists of two poles—namely, “immobility and excessive movement”—incites an expenditure that has no such reproductive “return” or propagative function.<sup>25</sup> I want to suggest that it is this second kind of movement that is more crucially important to the *dispositif*, for it is

this movement that generates the “uncompensated losses” in consumption that are central to the notion of misspent energy. More than this, however, I want to propose that it is this latter kind of movement that enacts the particular form of spectatorship engendered by exploitation cinema, one that comprises, as Lyotard notes, “intense enjoyment and sexual pleasure (*la jouissance*).”<sup>26</sup>

A comparable description of this arrangement or *dispositif* of intensities appears in Lyotard’s “Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy,” the essay in which Lyotard undertakes to read Freud’s phantasy, “A Child Is Being Beaten,” which Freud recorded in 1919. The relationship between the victim who is beaten (that is, the child or children) and the agent who does the beating (the father or adult), and the place of the subject who functions as an onlooker to the beating (the analysand), constitutes the arrangement or *dispositif* in which, as Lyotard posits, an array of intensities flourish. Victim-spectator, anal-genital, sadism-masochism, are blocked together in a strict beat that itself beats to the possibility of interruption in “A Child Is Being Beaten.” That is, the beating of the child constitutes a beat that beats to “bad form” because, as Lyotard suggests, this beating is not seen but rather lies behind the repression of the phantasy, derived as it is from desire—as well as from desire’s tendency not to delineate between those things that it desires, but to invest incomparably in all regions.<sup>27</sup> Here the “block” of desire is the phantasmatic *matrix-figure*: the transgressive element of the beat that “blocks” together contradictory—or what Lyotard calls “logically impossible”—desires.<sup>28</sup>

Important for this reading of Freud’s phantasy is that one of the phantasy’s components is the onlooker/analysand/subject in whom a perverse kind of pleasure—one comprising ecstasy and shame—is always generated.<sup>29</sup> The precise and similar action of *ecstasy* (another perverse form of pleasure) in the *dispositif* will become apparent later in this paper, where I will explain its effect on and position with regard to the onlooker/subject/spectator. The point of rearticulating the Lyotardian view of Freud, however, is to point to the ways in which Lyotard evidences his essential claim that the *dispositif* channels and exploits intensities, and particularly to show how distinct Lyotard’s formulation is from the psychoanalytic one. But I also want to suggest that cinema can exploit and channel the kinds of intensities of which Lyotard writes. The profound extent to which these intensities are produced and exploited in exploitation films in the form of horror images—or what might be simply called “splatter”—is already apparent in the genre’s name; but what is there to say regarding the intensities that are outside *all* forms of exchange?

Despite the limiting structures of the mechanical apparatus (what Lyotard calls the “this” and “not-this”), the energetic and functioning systems of such apparatuses are also Open to the investment of libidinal energies. The mechanical apparatus is itself a stable and thetic structure; however, in the case of the *cinematic* mechanical apparatus, the *instability* of the image allows the whole apparatus to transmute into an “Open” entity—a structure that is open, that is, to the investment of libidinal energies, as well as to the structuring *dispositifs* through each of which the spectator component may, or *must*, channel and exploit an intensity, like so many portals inviting entry. Thus, a profusion of libidinal intensities invest all *dispositifs*, affording them the energetic potentials that they require to effect such changes as are needed to allow them to flow into new *dispositifs*.<sup>30</sup> It is in this way that *dispositifs* channel and exploit intensities, but remain open to new intensities too.

In such a theorisation of the libidinal economy, it is hard to determine whether libidinal intensities bring the *dispositif* into existence (when certain intensities invest regions of the libidinal band or skin so as to form an intensive arrangement), or the *dispositif* is an already extant arrangement of energies, one that merely channels and exploits the intensities that are invested in it. This is the dissimulating effect, which is to say the duplicity, of *dispositifs*, all of which conceal their own aetiology—their cause and origin as merely the teleology, the movement—of the intensities that appear to constitute them. It is equally the case, however, that the intensities that appear to constitute the *dispositifs* also serve to actually structure them; they are indispensable, for without these intensities, the *dispositifs* would be nothing.<sup>31</sup> Such a duplicity—or, in another sense, such an interdependence—means that these intensities and their structuring *dispositifs* are open to the radical possibilities of reversal and recursion: intensities, that is, may be just as readily channelled and exploited to render the system stable as they may be channelled and exploited to intensely disrupt the same system.

This presents another possibility for intensities, one that conceives of them as more than simply those elements that are regulated by the *dispositif*: for intensities, we learn, can also destabilise the system. For Lyotard, as much can be seen in the example of the child with the match:

[when] a child strikes the match-head [he does so] *to see* what happens—just for the fun of it—[and] he enjoys the movement itself, the changing colours, the light flashing at the height of the blaze, the death of the tiny piece of wood, the hissing of the tiny flame.<sup>32</sup>

In striking the match-head, the child is involved in certain expenditures—physical gestures and propulsions that result in “uncompensated losses” and the “dissipation of energy.”<sup>33</sup> Since these movements are unproductive—and in fact incapable of production or reproduction—Lyotard calls such forms of movement “sterile motion.”<sup>34</sup> This motion allows for no production of a vendible product or form of merchandise through labour, and so facilitates no return of capital or value. What is to be discovered in this movement, rather, is only an “intense enjoyment and sexual pleasure (*la jouissance*).”<sup>35</sup>

### Movement as Pleasure in the *Dispositif*

If “immobility and excessive movement” are the “two poles” of the cinema that produces “true, that is, vain, simulacrum, blissful intensities, instead of productive/consumable objects,” then such a movement conforms to what Lyotard elsewhere describes as “acinema.” Static, immutable stillness—just as much as radical kinesis—disrupt a film’s rhythm, diegesis, and cuts; the compositional techniques that more broadly constitute commercial cinema’s “impression of reality,” where energy is invested into an otherwise stable system.<sup>36</sup> In other words, cinema’s movements may be understood either as “subordinated” to “narrative meaning,” or in experimental cinema, as “useless to the narrative whole of the film.”<sup>37</sup> In spite of their uselessness, however, movements of the latter kind generate uncompensated losses in consumption; they enact or allow for a spectatorship that involves the *jouissance* to which Lyotard refers.<sup>38</sup> This second kind of movement, however, is also perverse, since it has no reproductive capacity, and inaugurates no economy of exchange. In all of this, however, what I have described as uncompensated losses are not in fact losses of form (although Lyotard does elsewhere refer to the “good form” and the “transgression of form”).<sup>39</sup> Rather, these losses produce a kind of mutable, ill-defined form that remains unamenable to the system of (commercial) exchange; they are types of energy that have no price.

In Marx’s and Lyotard’s distinctive analyses (respectively of the political economy and of film) we discover an economy of “surplus values” and “uncompensated losses.” These are forms of non-economic value (or value that transcends a measurable worth) that I want to argue also pervade splatter or snuff films. But to identify these kinds of values in snuff films is not simply to speak of the *circulation* of splatter images in this kind of cinema—even though these images do enter circulation, even if only for a select, cult viewership. The point is rather to suggest that the libidinal

economy is incompatible with and amenable to the indices of capital in a political economy, which is to say a non-libidinal economic.

The libidinal body is everywhere and everything, intensive and unconditional. And yet, precisely because the body has no limits—because it possesses a libidinal or surplus value that goes beyond economics and enters into politics, into the political economy—it is a thing that can be exploited. And exploitation is a phenomenon that is peculiar to the political economy, even though the intensities of the libidinal economy that invest the political economy are beyond control. As James Williams writes, “although the [libidinal] economy exploits intensities, it never fully understands or controls them.”<sup>40</sup> But this is a different take to that which Klossowski expresses in his *Living Currency* (1970), where intensities, which are generated by the fantasy or simulacrum, are “non-exchangeable” because their domain “falls outside of the realm of prices.”<sup>41</sup> Intensities, in other words, are not perceptible to the political economy; rather, they are perverse, and for this reason not exploitable. And although, in “Acinema,” Lyotard describes all “intense enjoyment” as perverse (because whatever expenditure they inaugurate is a non-productive one, a non-exploitable *jouissance*) in Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy* such intensities seem capable even of investing the “constitutive negations” that lie “beyond the circuits of capital,” for they are willing to “sacrifice the most exorbitant ‘price’” for “whatever [additional] intensities it can glean from” these spaces too (those of the libidinal and political economies).<sup>42</sup> Thus, while they do not find much equivalence with a monetary currency, intensities can make up and inhere in positive economies by investing in the libido in a way that presupposes no limits; and such an investment, Lyotard argues, is the “exorbitant” and “polymorphous” one that makes these intensities so infinitely exploitable.<sup>43</sup> Just as new intensities arise, then, new *dispositifs* come into being to exploit them. The investment of the libido is thus the “opening out” of the libidinal surface (“band/skin”), an opening that is continuous with this originary investment and that re-invests in it endlessly.<sup>44</sup>

We can consider the “price” or “value” of intensities, Lyotard notes, by reference to the analogy or allegory of prostitution. For prostitution is one among a range of prototypal sites, Lyotard proposes, at which we may witness the exchange of intensities and capital. Grant explains the “libidinal exchange in prostitution” as one that “invests the prostitute’s desire” precisely because the “foreclosure” of this desire is demanded by “capital (and the pimp),” which is required for capital to “profit from the prostitute’s body.” In this example, Grant notes, the exorbitancy of the libidinal exchange becomes clear; the exorbitant has no equivalent, he writes, and

so is “inevaluable and unaccountable”—beyond measurability. And yet the libidinal economy is not merely divorced from the political one; it is, rather, a force that is capable of engaging the latter economy. Its perverse tenacity and polymorphousness means that it is prepared to “sacrifice” whatever it has to sacrifice in order to exploit its own interest—and it is, in this way, a threat to the political economy.<sup>4</sup>

For exploitation film to exploit the spectator’s sensations, then, intensities cannot simply be exploited for the sake of a capital return. An exploitation film, like the intensities Lyotard describes, is “exorbitant” and, indeed, not equal to the amount that is exchanged for it. It is not, in other words, about what has been *paid* by the spectator for the intensities they will experience, for capital return is not a goal—or at least not a relevant goal—of the production of such a cinema as this. For a film production company working in this mode, the intensities that are engendered by means of “splatter” may well enter circulation as politico-economic *and* libidinal intensities, among other kinds; however, they do so only to gain a value that is, in an important sense, *beyond* value. In terms of exploitation films, though, it is the spectator themselves who is prepared to “sacrifice” the most exorbitant “price” to glean something from these intensities; and by extension, the “uncompensated losses” of energetic expenditure constitute a form, if not the very form, of that “something” that may be gleaned from the affective experience of the film. In other words, there is a “price” *beyond* an economic value involved in exploitation film—one that is paid by the viewer in return for the experience of such intensities.

In turning our attention to *The Horseman*, we might consider how prostitution functions in the film to elicit an affective response from the father, Christian Forteski—a man who never truly accepts the death of his daughter, Jesse. In one kind of structural and narratological analysis, Jesse’s death may be read as the too-high and exorbitant price that she inexorably pays to stave off the symptoms of her drug dependency, for it is the promise of satiation—and of the capital return that enables it—that foregrounds her “willingness” to participate in the pornographic shoot. However, Jesse’s death means that from the expenditure of intensities arising from her engagement in sex work, Jesse gains no such return. Her death means that her sex acts as a sex worker have generated a series of “uncompensated losses” including, in fact, a fatal loss. These are damages that, both for Jesse and the spectator, cannot be understood in terms of a “price,” since the loss of life transcends value, both in economic and narratological terms.

But the question remains: What is the nature of this expenditure for particular kinds of cinema? If the direction of commercial cinema means that such films as *The Horseman* communicate intensities that are, as Ashley Woodward observes, “eliminated or dampened by the director’s work” (because this kind of cinema “subordinates the sensuous immediacy of the cinematic material to a narrative meaning”) then acinema may be understood to do something different to this. Acinema, unlike commercial cinema, is constituted by those libidinal intensities that *escape* narrative meaning, by those that are not subordinated to narrative, but enact and perform that “sensuous immediacy” of the image to which Woodward refers.<sup>46</sup> In this context, it may be proposed that extreme immobilisation and mobilisation are unproductive and even disruptive to the narrative whole, for these extremes constitute different kinds of uncompensated losses. The disruptions to the *dispositif*—such as those that enlarge or “open out” the libidinal band/skin through its increasing “intensification”—are nothing more than examples of the processes of ecstasy and *jouissance* at work. And yet, *jouissance* grates against the ethical demands posed to spectators of such films as *The Horseman*, where the uncompensated loss also functions as an extreme form of violence—one that, in *The Horseman*, leads to a character’s gruesome death. And this brings us face to face with the implicit problem: How are we to understand or account for the spectatorship of splatter or snuff cinema in a way that is unethical—in a way that formulates these intensities only as libidinal values? It is a question that returns us to Lyotard’s interlocution with Freud.

## The Cinematic and Subjective Topology of Loss

In the *dispositif* that Lyotard identifies in Freud’s “A Child Is Being Beaten,” the “beat,” which is a “contact... between two surfaces,” is said to “[open] up a spacing.”<sup>47</sup> As a result of this opening-up, which is also an artefact of the crucial disparity between the “charge and discharge of tension,” a certain *jouissance* arises. However, as Lyotard clarifies, this opening-up less resembles the parting of two level masses (or “terms”) than a tectonic shift as between two distinctly non-level “ridges.” That is, it is

not a matter of separating terms that belong on the same plane, forming part of a single area, of which they would merely delineate the lines of cleavage. It is rather a fracture, marking the subsidence, the cav-

ing-in of a surface, a fracture that leaves two ridges of widely differing altitudes suspended on either side of the chasm it has opened up.<sup>48</sup>

For Lyotard, *jouissance* has an economy that transgresses the “form” or “rhythmics” of the ridges (beats) that lie on either side of this interstice, and which “opens” onto the chasm. This is the case even as it may be said that it is really the *disparity* of tension between either side of this gap—the beats—that constitutes the fracture and the chasm itself. *Jouissance*, in other words, envisages only the *product* and the *result* of the topological dehiscence; it pays little, and perhaps no attention to the structural elements that enframe or create it. However, this *jouissance* economy overlooks not only these spatial distances that constitute the chasm, but also the time that has been lost between the world and subject during the time (*durée*) at which the subject is “open” upon the chasm; for this period, the subject is engulfed in the chasm, becoming the chasm.

Interrogating the “opening” of the subject into this object (the chasm) is one important way of re-evaluating the cinematic experience; it allows us not only to understand the way in which both subject and object are “lost” in the experience of cinema, but also the way in which Lyotard conceptualised such a loss. In this formulation of “loss,” the cinematic experience is no longer discernible as a spatial configuration of the subject or spectator before the object or film; it is rather to be seen as a transmission between these agents or entities of energy and expenditure—one in which “loss” is key. This “loss” is the fracturing explosion and expenditure of *jouissance* that results from the “difference” in tension between beats. Ecstasy or *jouissance* is predicated not just on affective proximity, but on the uncompensated losses experienced by the subject for whom an expenditure of energy is, though inevitable, subject to variation.<sup>49</sup> Here, both distance and mastery is lost in relation to *jouissance* so that it is not simply the case that the spectator exercises their mastery over space and time from one point to the next. Rather, the spectator loses herself in the very difference between a charge and discharge in tension; mastery becomes nugatory as the subject and object collapse in a procedure that, infinitely variable, represents no more than the *operation* of expenditure.

*The Horseman* belongs to a particular mode of production in a situated politico-economic moment, and it produces a correspondingly unique economy of spectatorship. Originally a short film, *The Horseman* was remade as a feature after it received accolades of critical acclaim at the Queensland New Filmmaker Awards in 2006. While Australia has a history of producing exploitation or so-called “Ozploitation” in films (examples

include Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971), Brian Trenchard-Smith's *Turkey Shoot/Escape 2000* (1982), and Russell Mulcahy's *Razorback* (1984)), the genre of the snuff film only seldom appears in Australian cinemas. One could argue that this paucity of Australian snuff films relates to the way in which Government funding is so often a determinative factor in the process of Australian film production. However, in the wake of digital technologies that allow for cinematic work to be produced at a much reduced cost, it should be unsurprising that we see different kinds of representations of real deaths—for instance, in social media and documentary forms—representations that generates for snuff films an ethical dilemma related to its production.<sup>50</sup>

To define *The Horseman* as a “splatter” film might be to suggest that the film engages in a kind of unreal or over-the-top production of blood imagery without availing viewed of any moral or epistemological thematic. This is because the splatter film often disregards any pretension to a moral or religious code, and frequently avoids meditating on the ethical motivations that lie behind its violence, setting up one splatter tableau only to build a nexus to the next one. However, *The Horseman* is a different kind of film to ordinary splatter films, for in it we witness the collision of the splatter effects, which are exemplary of exploitation, and the real life representation of death, which is exemplary of the snuff film. This combination means that, while *The Horseman* provides much spattering of blood, this is for the purpose of playing out an emotionally heightened and melodramatic (but, as in the best melodrama, always potentially real) moral narrative.

The sex tape that Forteski receives is also exemplary of the way in which “real death” is the impetus that motivates the characters in snuff film. (*The Horseman* has, it could be said, closer links to the sub-genre known as “torture porn” than to splatter cinema.) The film is a moral tale structured in three acts; its narrative is motivated by the desire of father figure, Forteski, to hunt down men involved in a pornographic film that resulted in the death of his daughter.

And yet, consonant with the splatter film, *The Horseman*'s narrative comprises a string of violent, blood spattering tableaux, all of them shot at high speed, and each of them leading to the next instance of another such killing. Offering a description of splatter cinema that conforms neatly with these scenes, Michael A. Arnzen writes that in such films

all is disjointed for the sake of shock... and the spectacle of violence replaces any pretensions to narrative structure, because gore is the only part of the film that is reliably consistent.<sup>51</sup>

It is the goriness of the blood splatter that generates the investment and exploitation of intensities, then, for these spectacularly blood-soaked tableaux create an “opening out” of intensities that also “opens out” the viewer (not to mention the victims). Splatter, according to this argument, engenders an affect best described as *jouissance*; its liquefied presence on screen has the effect of transmitting the “sensuous immediacy of the cinematic material” to the spectator in an intensive, unalloyed manner.<sup>52</sup> However, splatter is also a substance and effect that exploits the spectator; it produces sensations that are intended to be “felt” by them, thus eliciting from them something that they may have otherwise been loath to expel or expend. What makes exploitation cinema exploitative, then, is—much apart from the exploitation of its actors, characters, or themes—this intensive and spectatorial exploitation: the exploitation of those intensities at first instance produced by the film and at second instance felt by its spectators.

Of course, it is not uncommon in cinema studies for films to be described as just such sites of affective spectatorship, as zones wherein affect—or what the spectator “feels”—routinely exceeds the visual image. Modleski’s study of “The Terror of Pleasure,” for instance, is as important as any among such studies, not least because it underlines the singular status of the “contemporary horror film—the so-called exploitation or slasher film,” which “assault[s]... all that bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish.”<sup>53</sup> As well as drawing together the economy of cinema and the affect of terror, however, Modleski’s essay is also notable for its acute analysis of mass art and mass culture. Modleski writes, for example, about the value of mass art as a “mass-mediated experience,” whose pleasures, at least when afforded by technology, are false and vacuous, not unlike those provided by other older forms of entertainment or amusement.<sup>54</sup> Describing mass culture, its relation to technology, and the pleasures produced thereby, Modleski recalls one aspect of our received wisdom:

The masses, it is said, are offered various forms of easy, false pleasure as a way of keeping them unaware of their own desperate vacuity. And so, apparently, we are caught in the toils of the great monster, mass culture.<sup>55</sup>

What is at stake here, Modleski writes, is precisely what the Frankfurt School cautioned us about: namely, the “manipulative contrivance” of ideology.<sup>56</sup> And it is ideology, in this sense, that the *dispositif* channels and exploits, serving to restrict and curtail the economy of communication,

where that economy is understood as a disruptable, destabilisable transmission and exchange.

But as I suggested earlier, Modleski's essay is also instructive because it focuses specifically on the modern horror film—which she calls the exploitation genre—singling out these kinds of films for their counteractive approach to the prevailing orthodoxy. And as she avers, *pleasure* is the diacritical variable in the horror equation; it is crucially important, that is, because it is anathema to the production of a counternormative, counter-capitalistic cinema. Thus pleasure, Modleski writes,

remains the enemy for the postmodernist thinker because it is judged to be the means by which the consumer is reconciled to the prevailing cultural policy, or the “dominant ideology.”

However, as Modleski continues, the contemporary horror film “provides an interesting counterexample” to this pleasure principle.<sup>57</sup> Modleski in fact goes on to describe those horror films that assault the prevailing ideology as generative of their own kind of *jouissance*: a pleasurable subversion that takes the form of an avowedly “adversarial relation to contemporary culture and society.”<sup>58</sup>

Another noteworthy virtue of Modleski's essay is that it offers more than simply a description of these films; it also furnishes critical insights about their structural operation. Thus, the economy of horror films, she writes, involves both a dismemberment of the body, and a dismantling of the text, a dual procedure that operates as a grand rupture both of body and text—and one which culminates in the spectatorial sensation of pleasure as terror.<sup>59</sup> In other words, it is most palpably in exploitation films that pleasure, which is to say that part of the film that audaciously disconforms to the “dominant ideology,” becomes terror, which is the film's affective exploitation of this very heterodox element, the one that sometimes “strikingly recapitulates the very terms adopted by culture critics,” and moves us away from traditional pleasure and, as Modleski avows, “nearer to so-called *jouissance*, discussions of which privilege terms like ‘gaps,’ ‘wounds,’ ‘fissures,’ ‘splits,’ ‘cleavages,’” and—as in this essay—“chasms” and “dehiscences.”<sup>60</sup> Thus focusing on *jouissance*, we can understand pleasure and terror as the rupturing affects produced by the cinematic apparatus; further, though, we could think of both pleasure and terror as possessing surplus values of various kinds: the former entails leisure, contemplation, and distance, while the latter connotes expenditure, intensity, and proximity. It does not matter

that pleasure and terror can both be exploited, that they can enter an economy of exchange; what matters is that these intensities are exploited by exploitation film in such a way that the film “opens” the spectator to terror, producing the gaps, lacunae, and uncompensated losses that remains always unamenable to future exchange.

Understood as the master system within which these exchanges occur, the *dispositif* channels and exploits energies, thus allowing for cinema’s possibility. But in “opening out” these intensities, the *dispositif* necessarily generates many “losses” too. We may thus reconsider our notion of what “exploitation” denotes in the generic description of exploitation cinema; the sub-genre’s exploitation of texts and of bodies is less important than its exploitation of these intensities, which engender certain expenditures on the part of the spectator. And these are expenditures that, by their very nature, are outside exchange, and cannot in any sense be exploited after they have been expended. The expenditures are, as Patricia MacCormack writes in “Zombies without Organs: Gender, Flesh, and Fissure” (2008), a commonplace in horror cinema, wherein

the affective nature of [its] images puts end to the stratification and significations of the demand that we “read” images by deferring them to their meanings and possibility of existence in the real world. Horror is all about exploiting—not bodies, but the impossible in the real becoming possible through cinema.<sup>61</sup>

To put it another way, horror exploits, but what it exploits are certain intensities that are not exploitable anywhere other than *in* cinema, *within* the cinematic frame. The visceral effects so engendered by film have no real presence other than their cinematic presence (a metaphysics of presence limited to the screen itself). But these *sui generis* or cinema-specific intensities also have *values* “beyond their worth,” for their production signifies a sacrifice: namely, a sacrifice of the spectator herself by and to cinema. Nevertheless, the spectator, who is now part of the film’s expenditure, is prepared to participate in this ritual, inaugurating a communion between herself and the film qua the site of such an intensity. But of course, ultimately this sacrifice is also a loss; it is an energetic divestment that is felt by the spectator, who, wounded, senses it as an affect. Considering this, we may now refine our definition of exploitation: when we use the word in relation to films, we should not mean simply the exploitation of texts and bodies, but the exploitation of energies that consist not of actual acts but of intensities.

There is a relationship engendered in the cinematic experience that directs our attention to something beyond ideology, ethics, or social commentary and toward a particular articulation of the body and the body's operation within the *dispositif*, one that we can think of as its own economy. Steven Shaviro writes that films are “*machines for generating affect*, and for capitalising upon, or extracting value from, this affect.”<sup>62</sup> I want to add that horror films, and especially splatter films, are more efficient machines for performing this task than are many, if not all, other kinds of films. The *dispositifs* that these films instantiate, moreover, are less ideologically inflected (as they are for Jean-Louis Baudry) than they are enmeshed with the affective effects that distinguish them.<sup>63</sup> And yet, *The Horseman* also comprises ideological structures, such as those expressed in the moral code and in the protective instincts of Forteski, the father, so that even as the affective apparatus of the splatter film is preeminent among its effects, it can also be read in terms of its ideology.

But what in the splatter film distinguishes the moral or ethical from the affective? The diacritical element is, of course, the blood. Blood is the genre's master signifier. And splatter film blood, I propose, may and *should* be understood in aesthetic rather than ethical terms, because the splattering *movement* of blood—its chaotic and explosive dispersion through space, captured in the cinematic frame—gestures at the primitive, savage and affective body that is before the law, unbounded and chaotic, a pre-medicalised and horrifying body, defiled and torn asunder. As Lyotard writes in “Prescription,” there is a “savage or alien space and time that are foreign to the law” called *aisthesis*.<sup>64</sup> Relevantly for splatter films, Lyotard describes the relation of *aisthesis* to blood that circulates freely, that is, to blood which is foreign to the “law” because it expresses and performs a spatial freedom that the “law” cannot control (except insofar as it can predict or bear witness to the blood's inevitable spillage). The “law” that touches the body and spills the blood, Lyotard observes, touches it in both particular and transcendental ways—particular because each encounter with the body has “particularity” (both in physical and aesthetic terms), and transcendental because the “law” seeks to parse the body in a singular and “pure” signification, reducing it to a universal meaning whose truth (as blood) is evident in every body (a process that generates an “ethics”).

In relation to *The Horseman*, the splattering and spattering of blood invokes a particular sensation that I want to suggest puts the body “before the law.” The overwhelming emotional grief that Christian Forteski encounters when faced with the news of his daughter's death drives, for

instance, promptly compels him to plan the murder of those whom he learns is responsible for the tragedy. These men are put “before the law” insofar as the law is Forteski’s ethical program, and his vengeance, exacted as it is on the bodies of his targets, is confirmed by the spillage of these targets’s bodies’s blood. In this configuration of blood revenge (an ancient one), it is the “law”—which is to say Forteski’s ethical or moral code—that “touches” what Lyotard describes as the “savage” body. That is, Forteski’s moral code comes to function as that force through which he is himself “touched” by something savage and through which his own savage touch is communicated to the savage bodies of his targets. It is this law qua ethical program that inscribes itself on all of these agents’s “savage” bodies, so that these aesthetic bodies (“*aesthetic*” in Lyotard’s terms) are thus now “before” the law just as a horse is “before” a cart. Of course, if the formal performance of this law functions as a programmatisation of an interior, “savage” impulse, then this is merely the acting out of something for which the body is always already primed; as Lyotard writes, “this savagery or this sinful peregrination... is always there as a potentiality of the body... [since] for the law, the body is in excess.”<sup>65</sup> However, for the body to act out the law, the law must first touch it in a way that it will register as sensible—in a manner, that is, by dint of which it will be enlivened to act. It must “touch” the body in an *aesthetic* way—in a manner, for instance, that will cause it, in one way or another, to spill blood.<sup>66</sup>

When Forteski kills his victims in *The Horseman*, the splatter of the blood—its sudden, capricious, and unruly movement in space, and its lurid, deeply scarlet colour—engenders an aesthetics of disarray and disorder, albeit one that is also counterpoised or grounded by the moral code of Forteski’s “law,” the latter of which is itself an attempt to enforce and master the world. In fact, Forteski’s law seems to attain an even higher ethical meaning and universality than does the official law of the film, that which the stock detective character, Detective Adams (Ron Kelly), wields and enforces. When Adams flags Forteski and Alice down on the road, somewhere between Rockhampton and Brisbane, his own ethical code is absorbed by capital exchange. Accepting a money bribe for Forteski and Alice, Adams directs the pair to the men whom he knows to be involved in the pornography ring. That such an exchange is possible demonstrates the detective’s belief in capital as a key or pass through whose use one may legitimately access certain intensities, notwithstanding that there is, according to his formal procedures, a rule that seeks to keep such intensities occulted. Adams’s act of tipping off the pornography ring, of course, is an exploitative one, but it cannot predict the real nature of the exchange or the ambit of

what will later become its uncompensated losses. The detective cannot foresee, for instance, that directing the pair to the men will allow for a repetition of the original events that led to Jessica's death in the first place, for later in the film it is implied that Alice, intoxicated by disorienting drugs, will come to participate in a porn shoot just as Jessica had, her body like Jessica's becoming used and subjugated for the gratification of others.

As I have already suggested, in those scenes of *The Horseman* in which we see the movement and splattering blood, these images serve both as aesthetic and intensive phenomena. However, the form of this on-screen bloodshed may also emblematised other features of motion and mobility in cinema to which Lyotard refers in "Acinema." In that essay, for instance, Lyotard writes of what he calls the "tableau vivant" (a living picture): a space in which certain forms of immobility—as well as lyric abstraction, and forms of agitation—may appear. But while in one way these phenomena may be understood as discrete elements within the picture space (the *mise en scène*), they can also be understood collectively as intensities within the film's libidinal economy. And these intensities—for instance, immobility and agitation—may also become entwined, thus becoming so imbricated and irreducibly coiled that whether they are "incompatible" or not becomes unclear.<sup>67</sup> Where this occurs, the spectator of the film may sense the intensity of immobility, for instance, as one of the most *agitating* of sensations (or vice versa); and this affective experience may take the form of a debilitating paralysis that strikes at, while intensifying the micro-movements of the body.

Elaborating on these pseudo-biological descriptions, Lyotard writes of how intensities of emotion should be understood as a particularly inflected category of motion, an invariant state of stillness at one end of the scale or spectrum of mobility: "We should read the term *emotion* as a *motion* moving towards its own exhaustion, an immobilizing motion, an immobilized mobilization."<sup>68</sup> In *The Horseman*, just such an "immobilizing motion" or "immobilized mobilization" strikes at the father figure, Forteski, who becomes paralytic and ossified as he watches the sex tape on which his daughter appears. In later scenes, by contrast, the spectator might be thought to see Forteski as "liveliest agitation." As the conjuror of a gruesome series of splatter scenes in which he avenges his daughter's death, Forteski is a spectacle away from which we cannot look. While they are shot at high speed, the dynamism of these scenes echoes something of what Lyotard described in his observations of posing models—those engaged in what he called "Swedish posering"—albeit that in this film, faced with Forteski, it is the spectator who becomes the poser's client, and we are overwhelmed

by the lively agitation before us, a client or spectator whose intensity is only heightened, and which reaches a sublime and disturbing nadir, by the presence and dynamism of the blood. It is the spectator's immobility before this blood, in other words, that forms the site in which this "liveliest agitation" can be felt. Structuring these intensive forces of movement and its relations with the spectator, as I have argued, is the *dispositif*, which I define as a kind of tableau vivant: an arrangement in which movement and immobility become the primary forces of intersection and interaction.

## Conclusion

The first argument I have advanced in this essay is that exploitation cinema may be understood as a mode in which the spectator's sensations are channelled and exploited by the film's movement. In this regard, the spectator might be thought of as a component of or agent within the *dispositif*—that is, as one who channels and exploits intensities at the same time as she is herself exploited and channelled. The paradox of exploitation film that I have aimed to articulate is as follows: in the energy exchange between film and spectator a surplus of energy arises; then, the spectator of the exploitation film "misspends" this energy so as to generate a "loss" of energy; finally, this loss, which is borne by the spectator alone, remains uncompensated, embodied and absorbed rather than returned to the exchange system—to the *dispositif*—itself.<sup>69</sup> This spectatorial expenditure, then, involves all those elements in a film that are beyond the spectator's mastery. Of course, thinking of cinematic expenditure in this way—as the spectator's unmitigated loss—might lead us to understand cinema less as a recuperative system of exchange that prompts the dialectical order than that of the pleasurable terror that brings spectators to the brink of catastrophe in ecstasy: pleasures that are in surplus and unproductive in their expenditure. The critical area of the "surplus" and "loss" of energy and its expenditure is associated with the work of Georges Bataille. Lyotard's shift from the inscription of cinematographic movement to "uncompensated loss" in his essay "Acinema" makes relevant a Bataillean understanding of "loss" as sacrificial expenditure.<sup>70</sup> While this essay has not elaborated on the way in which film might be understood as this sort of sacrificial expenditure, it is hoped that future studies might be moved to imagine cinema in precisely this way.

In addition to the above, this paper has advanced the argument that intensities imply a certain telos for the spectator. If cinematic intensities

enable the spectator to experience an ecstasy or *jouissance*—and if the “opening-up” of the subject to these intensities also represents a loss of identity—then cinema may be seen as the facilitator of the spectator’s “libidinal passage.” In other words, films may be seen in a Lyotardian formulation as conduits through which the “communication” of energetic intensities transpire, imbricating the cinematic image and spectator in what is the energetic arrangement.

Having made these arguments, this article has also asked how we might understand the exploitation of the spectator’s sensations in *The Horseman*. It has made the point that we may draw on exploitation films such as this one to elaborate the ways in which certain aesthetics of cinematographic movement may diverge from the “propagative” models of movement that pervade commercial cinema, and offer a more chaotic and disordered tableau vivant. As I have underlined, much of *The Horseman* consists of what might be called sequences of splatter tableaux. There are many scenes in the film that this essay has not addressed, such as the opening scene in which Forteski, arriving in a van to a house, takes a crowbar to the man who greets him at the door, violently attacking him in a way that causes blood to splatter against walls. In scenes such as this, the various elements of the sequence—the crowbar, the attacked man, and Forteski himself—all function as moving, momentary, and intense components of the *dispositif*. Made up of such constituents, the *dispositif* of the splatter film is a deeply disturbing affective structure, one that is infinitely variable but invariably exploitative.

## Notes

- 1 Jean-François Lyotard, “Acinema,” in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 177.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Michael A. Arnzen describes the “splatter film” as “a filmic text that promotes itself in the marketplace as one of ‘horror,’ and self-consciously revels in the special effects of gore as an artform”: Arnzen, “Who’s Laughing Now? The Postmodern Splatter Film,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21, no. 4 (1994): 178.
- 4 Lyotard, “Acinema,” 177.
- 5 See Alexandra Heller Nicholas, “Fatal distractions: Australian Horror Beyond National Cinema,” *Metro* 164 (2010): 26–31; Brian McFarlane, “Family Business: An Australian Genre,” *Metro* 166 (2010): 42–7; and Steve

- Jones, "Torture Born: Representing Pregnancy and Abortion in Contemporary Survival-Horror," *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 3 (2015): 426-43.
- 6 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 7 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), ix.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 1-8.
- 11 Tania Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory," in Modleski (ed.), *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 155.
- 12 See Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 363.
- 13 Isaac Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 41, qtd. in Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure," 155.
- 14 Iain Hamilton Grant suggests that the image, as a simulacrum—or what Lyotard also calls the "exorbitant"—is libidinally invested in an exorbitant manner. See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, tr. Iain Hamilton Grant (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), xvi.
- 15 See Pierre Klossowski, *Living Currency*, tr. Jordan Levinson, [http://monoskop.org/images/b/b0/Klossowski\\_Pierre\\_Living\\_Currency.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/b/b0/Klossowski_Pierre_Living_Currency.pdf)
- 16 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 109.
- 17 *Ibid.*, x.
- 18 Lisa Trahair, "Jean-François Lyotard" in *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*, ed. Felicity Colman (Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 223.
- 19 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, x.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 24 Lyotard, "Acinema," 170.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 171-2.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 27 See Lyotard, "Desire's Complicity with the Figural," in *Discourse, Figure*, tr. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1971] 2011), 275; Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," in *Discourse, Figure*, 351; and, on cinematic "rhythm," see Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, tr.

- Christopher King (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997 [1963]), 119.
- 28 Lyotard, "The Unconscious as *Mise-en-scène*" in *Performance and Post-modern Culture*, ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Milwaukee: Codapress, 1977), 94; Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," 328.
- 29 Sigmund Freud, "A Child Is Being Beaten," in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1959 [1911]), 17: 179; and Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," in Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition*, 19: 253–4.
- 30 See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 12.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 16–17.
- 32 Lyotard, "Acinema," 170–1.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 170.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 170; cf. Ashley Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image: Lyotard on Cinema," *Angelaki* 19, no. 4 (2014): 144.
- 37 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143–4.
- 38 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 39 See Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure," 351.
- 40 James Williams, *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 40.
- 41 Klossowski, *Living Currency*.
- 42 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, xvi.
- 43 *Ibid.*, xvi.
- 44 On the first page (1) of his *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard begins with the following invocation: "Open the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces."
- 45 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, xvi.
- 46 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143.
- 47 Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure," 351.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 50 John Bailey, "Viewing death: Disturbing New Genre of Snuff Films Create an Ethical Paradox," *The Age*, 5 July 5, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/viewing-death-disturbing-new-genre-of-snuff-films-create-an-ethical-paradox-20150701-gi26zx.html>.
- 51 Arnzen, "Who's Laughing Now?" 179.
- 52 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143.

- 53 Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure,” 158.
- 54 Ibid., 163.
- 55 Ibid., 156.
- 56 Ibid., 156. On this same page, Modleski elaborates the point thus: “For the Frankfurt School, in fact, mass culture affected a major transformation in the nature of ideology from Marx’s time: once ‘socially necessary illusion,’ it has now become ‘manipulative contrivance’...”
- 57 Ibid., 158.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., 159–60.
- 60 Ibid., 159.
- 61 Patricia MacCormack, “Zombies without Organs: Gender, Flesh, and Fissure,” in *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*, ed. Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), 98.
- 62 Steven Shaviro, “Post-Cinematic Affect: On Grace Jones, *Boarding Gate* and *Southland Tales*,” *Film-Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2010): 3.
- 63 Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286–98.
- 64 Lyotard, “Prescription,” in *Toward the Postmodern*, ed. Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 179.
- 65 Ibid., 179.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 As Lyotard writes in “Acinema” (at 177): “It is only for *thought* that these two modes are incompatible [whereas in] a libidinal economy they are, on the contrary, necessarily associated; stupefaction, terror, anger, hate, pleasure—all the intensities—are always displacements in place.”
- 68 Lyotard, “Acinema,” 177.
- 69 Ibid., 171.
- 70 See, for instance, Georges Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, tr. Stoekl et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 116–29.