'Forget about all your taboos': transgressive memory and Nazisploitation

At the conclusion of Sergio Garrone's (1976) *SS Lager 5: L'inferno Delle Donne* (*SS Camp 5: Women's Hell*), as smoke from the climactic gun battle drifts across a concentration camp, on-screen text implores the audience to 'remember those who cried, those who suffered…'. Following 96 minutes of medical experiments, forced prostitution, rape, torture and murder, this is, perhaps, a little disingenuous. However, it is the appeal to memory amidst the Grand Guignol-cum-grindhouse grotesquery that is of interest to us here. The appeal to an historical reality demands to be unpacked. Much has been written on the inability of the Holocaust to be represented (cf. Friedlander 1993). Simply put, it is argued that neither the scale nor horror can be fully or truly captured. As Friedlander (1993, 25) puts it, any such representation inevitably becomes "kitsch". It becomes folded into the "order of things". As Howe (1988 cited in Geuens 1995/6, 115) suggests, it becomes domesticated, somehow familiar and 'in some sense even tolerable'. What then to make of films that embrace the distasteful and excess, that push far beyond the 'voluptuous anguish and ravishing images' of the kitsch (Friedlander 1993, 21)? For Herzog (2005, 14), the broad 'pornographization of Nazism indisputably functions to trivialize Nazism's horrors and thereby to ward off serious confrontation with those horrors'. There is, however, a visceral appeal to the Nazisploitation genre: the skein of films that direct a lurid focus towards Nazism and its associated imagery. They speak to what Bourdieu (1994, cited in Lowenstein, 2005) frames as a "pure pleasure" of the body. Our assertion here is that it is precisely the synthesis of the lurid with an appeal to verisimilitude that takes us beyond the trivialising and kitsch. Instead, they establish alternative and disruptive means of memorialising. It is their appeal to a "low" art of the body and affect that leads us to question the trivialisation of the horrors. Rather, these films provide an alternative, disruptive means of memorialising. In short, they produce a "transgressive" memory.

Our focus upon "transgressive" memory, as we define it here, takes its influence from a range of disparate sources. Of course, as Wolfreys (2008, 10) suggests, memory itself is inherently transgressive. The process of remembering and forgetting indicates a boundary that is crossed and re-crossed. Our use of it here evokes that notion of boundary crossing, but more in the sense of a thrilling traversal of normal and accepted bounds. Fulkerson and Shoop (2015, 66), for example, describe a 'dangerous memory [that] disrupts practices of meaning'. They posit a transgressive memory that opens up conventional memory and memorializing practice. It problematizes the "safe" and "accepted". Athanasiou (2010), similarly, describes memory as a means of 'dismantling…disciplinary modes of memorialization'. Our contention here is that Nazisploitation films are at once cinematic outliers that also cross over and disrupt the conventional. Their narratives speak to questions of testimony, records and recall mixed with appeals to affective responses. As we shall explore, our key examples here speak to the ways in which these themes overlap with the wilful construction or evocation of memory within the films themselves. Characters distort "collective" or "purist" memory. They disrupt the disciplinary schemas that shape the memorialising of these phenomena. This transgression renders them taboo. In so doing, they provide a point of entry to analyses of myth, memory and historical reality.

Of central importance here is the challenge to a "purist" approach. As Hirsch and Spitzer (2009, 151) put it, 'the Holocaust has in many ways shaped the discourse on collective, social and cultural memory, serving both as touchstone and paradigm'. Our argument here is that Nazisploitation challenges and disrupts accepted memory. Where "common" (Bennett, 2005), "hegemonic" (Gibbons, 2007) or "collective" (Hoskins, 2003) memory has established the accepted schema of understanding of the Holocaust, a transgressive memory – discomforting as it will inherently be – is a synthesis of the disruptive and affective. Carruthers (2001) details the ways in which concentration camp footage was used in post-WW2 Germany as a means to instil "disciplinary" memory. This was intended to both invoke collective guilt and shape an "appropriate" response. Herzog's (2010) criticism of the Nazisploitation genre implies that the films provoke a decidedly inappropriate response. In this reading, the focus on the lurid and violent is deemed flippant or voyeuristic. Our argument is somewhat different. We see the eroticization of violence as disrupting the accepted schema and provoking an *im*purist response. It is transgressive. The strength of the transgression is derived from its engagement with affect. In this regard, we draw upon Landsberg's (2004) notion of "prosthetic memory". This similarly challenges 'more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, "heritage", and ownership' (ibid., 3). This envisages the prosthetic memory as a supplement to individual and collective experience. It sees film – and mass media more broadly – as a "transferential space" (ibid., 113). It becomes the site through which the personal is augmented by engagement with traumatic memories that the audience member did not experience. The viewer's own personal experiences interconnect with those of the larger historical narrative. Or rather, these are prostheses, 'memories [that] originate outside a person's lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memory' (Landsberg, 2004, 19). So, the prosthetic memory develops through the individual's 'experiential relationships to events' that they experienced through 'experientially oriented encounters with the mass media's various technologies of memory' (Ciocea and Cârlan, 2015, 12). Despite its "prosthetic" nature, Landsberg argues that this leads to a more deeply felt memory. It becomes a position from which to develop 'a new radical politics of memory' (ibid.). Our point of ingress here is to highlight the role of affect in transgressive memory to prompt or provoke a similar challenge to "purist" memory or accepted schema. If we accept Landsberg's (2004) model, then unpacking the Nazisploitation as "transferential space" merits further attention. Nazisploitation – as an exemplar of "paracinema" – is concerned with provoking an affective response. In Williams' (1991) pleasingly crude terminology, they offer a synthesis of the "fear jerker" and the "jerk off" movie. As Hake (2010, 16) piquantly describes it, they elicit an 'orgasmic discharge com[ing] from the sight of mutilated, violated and tortured female bodies'. We will return to Williams in due course, but the evocation of the physical, emotional response in the body of the audience member heightens that experience within Landsberg's transferential space. As Williams (1991, 4) puts it, the body genres are seen as "low" because of 'the perception that the body of the spectator is caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen'. Where the "low"-ness of paracinema might see it dismissed as trivializing, it is precisely this appeal to the body that is key.

In unpacking the taboo, this article first sets out the porousness of the genre before examining how the particular context of (largely Italian) film production saw overlaps between "high" art and "low" culture. In itself, these aspects speak to the

role of memory, be it the cannibalizing and revisiting of tropes or, relatedly, the cinematic manifestation of trauma. Second, we analyze how these films – as examples of transgressive memory – subvert frameworks of memory relating to the Holocaust. For this, we turn to the ways in which histories of sexuality within Nazism and traditions of the Italian Gothic inform the ways in which Nazisploitation disrupts "purist" history. We unpack the ways in which they look back to older Gothic traditions whilst also consolidating the representational frameworks that have been applied to Holocaust media. We look to the ways in which they make explicit appeals to verisimilitude, yet also appeal to excess. Finally, we conclude by narrowing the focus to that notion of excess and audience *jouissance*. In providing a simulacrum of the unrepresentable, they collapse real and reel in vulgar, yet valuable ways. Their poor taste pushes them out of the "order of things". To paraphrase a song lyric performed in *Salon Kitty's* (1976, Brass) Nazi bordello, must we 'forget about all [our] taboos'?

Nazisploitation: genre and production context

There are two paths of origin for Nazisploitation. Firstly, we can point to Cresse's (1969) *Love Camp 7*. Rapaport (2003) highlights it as 'the first soft-core porn film set in a Nazi concentration camp'. It emerged from the post-war Women in Prison genre, but with a harder, more aggressive edge. The violence places them within the further sub-genre of the "roughies" with an emphasis upon 'the repeated humiliation and degradation of women' (Serfozo and Farrell, 1996). In English language cinema, this would reach its peak with the Canadian production *Ilsa: She-wolf of the SS* (1975, Edmonds). Our main focus here though is more narrowly upon the second path of "*il sadiconazista*". This describes an Italian sub-set that started with the 1969 release of *La Caduta Degli Dei* (*The Damned*), Luchino Visconti's exploration of decadence in the waning of a post-Weimar Germany. Visconti's film was followed by a string of similar features that each used Nazism as a backdrop for more or less lurid excesses.

To describe this phenomenon of an original feature prompting a series of follow-on releases, Nakahara (2004 cited in Betz 2013, 511) speaks to the ways in which film production and distribution in 1960s Italy would incentivize "quickies": 'low-budget regionally distributed exploitation" fare following a successful "quality" release. This comet's tail of copycat releases was termed a "*filone*". In Hake's (2010, 16) apposite phrasing, they were an example of 'late capitalist recycling'. Similarly, Mathijs and Sexton (2011) point to the success of Italian exploitation cinema as a function of the peculiarities of its national circuit, as well as the links between American and Italian film companies. The particular Italian production context prompted and promoted these *filone*, these threads across and within the "high" and "low". Indeed, the same actors – and, in some instances, sets – would reappear, tightening the web of signification. This at once speaks to the financial imperative and value of a string of semi-remakes, copies and revisions, as well as the strength of the thematic core. Beyond this cannibalizing or "late capitalist recycling" was the socio-political backdrop of Italian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, *il sadiconazista's* rise coincided with the "years of lead" (*anni di pombi*) between 1973-1981 which saw Italy wracked with political violence. As Hake (2010, 12) frames it, the post-68, post-ideology world prompted directors like *The Night Porter*'s Cavani, *The Damned*'s

Visconti and *Salò*'s Pasolini to examine fascism through an 'uncompromising exploration of power and sexuality'. There was an overlap then between the political "moment" of the post-68 1970s, the Italian film production context and the Italian response to its own history of violence. The themes of this can be traced through each thread of the *sadiconazista filone*. A thin thread of Nazi-themed exploitation cinema was also produced in France and Spain throughout 1977-8. The Spanish-German production *Greta – Haus ohne Männer* (*Ilsa, the Wicked Warden*) in 1977 saw Dyanne Thorne revisit the titular role within a variation of the director Jess Franco's women-in-prison pictures. However, we would suggest that the prominence and volume of Italian Nazisploitation comes from the particular confluence of national production context, the market for and popularity of Italian exploitation, as well as the national political "moment" of the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise, 'it also forces us to consider to what degree the art films, too, profited from the visceral pleasures' associated with the pornography and horror of the "low" culture exploitation films (Hake 2010, 15).

So, to provide an example of the lines of production and theme running through *il sadiconazista*, *The Damned* offered an initial art-house critical engagement with the corrosive effects of fascism. *The Damned* served as the close inspiration for Tinto Brass's *Salon Kitty* (1976). Brass's film saw the cannibalisation of a Nazi aesthetic driven to absurd heights. *Salon Kitty* was itself then given a "roughie" reinterpretation of its core story in *L'Ultima Orgia Del III Reich* (*The Gestapo's Last Orgy*, 1977, Canevari). The *sadiconazista* are best described then as a core of films held together through the 'centrifugal motion of a larger object that lets loose some of its smaller components or by-products' (Hake 2010, 16). There was a gravitational pull to the central aesthetic and associated tropes. As we shall see, they have collectively 'created powerful mythic images that have pushed past the margins of exploitation and made an indelible impact on film as a whole' (Kozma 2012, 56). It is this that allows us to plot a through line between a She-wolf of the SS and Spielberg[1].

Further, Stiglegger (2012) identifies three broad trends that cover *il sadiconazista*, from the art house of *The Damned* to the grindhouse of *The Gestapo's Last Orgy*. Firstly, with *The Damned*, for example, there is an attempt to comment upon *both* the rise of fascism in the *ventennio nero* (the period 1922-43), as well the "years of lead" in the 1970s. It 'belong(s) to a unique configuration of European postwar cinema and politics that sheds light on the central role of the postfascist imagining in mobilizing political fantasies and managing political affects' (Hake 2010, 12). As such, we might also fold Pasolini's (1976) *Salò* in to this discussion. Secondly, and at a tighter focus, are films like *Il Portiere di Notte* (*The Night Porter*, 1974, Cavani) that use fascist society and systems as organising principals to explore 'interpersonal obsessions' (Stiglegger 2012, 31). Finally, there are those films that use the backdrop as a 'dramaturgical justification to wallow in sadomasochistic excesses' (ibid.). As we can see, these map onto largely traditional understandings of "high" art and "low" culture. It might be suggested then that the political ambitions of *Salò*, as suggested by the first type, are somewhat different to those of *Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandantur* (*SS Experiment Camp*, 1976, Garrone). The examples of this

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[1] Important precursors to *il sadiconazista* were the "macaroni combat" movies of the late 1960s and early 1970s (cf. Hughes, 2011). These were themselves responses to big budget Anglophone films such as The Dirty Dozen (1967).

particular paracinematic sub-genre that are our focus in the coming pages span the "high" to the "low". Yet, *The Night Porter*, *Salon Kitty* and *SS Lager 5: L'inferno Delle Donne* (*SS Camp 5: Women's Hell*, 1976, Garrone) each touch upon textual and extra-textual discussions of testimony that are filtered through the genre's central trope of the observation of the performance of sexuality. As such, they co-mingle memory and affective response in transgressive ways. Before examining them in detail, we must first situate the discussion in relation to broader systems of memorialization and the Holocaust.

Constructing frameworks of Holocaust memory

In *Empathy, Pornography and Suffering*, Dean (2003) states that the seeming commodification of trauma and memory at the Washington Holocaust Museum - as well as at Auschwitz itself - has been described by critics as pornographic. The "pornographic", Dean argues, is often left unexplored or undefined. It implicitly suggests that the true horror of the events have been obscured. There is an echo here of Herzog's assertion of the trivialisation of the effects of Nazism. Also, it follows that, in diminishing the horror, there is an erosion of memory. And so, we are left with myths that 'have become more real than historical memory' (Cole 1999 cited by Dean 2003, 102). Certainly, we can suggest that *il sadiconazista* films have contributed toward the construction of those myths. Yet, what if we take the term "pornographic" at its normative reading. Rapaport (2003, 55) pointedly asks, 'what happens to Holocaust memory when the Holocaust is eroticized?' In this section, we first examine how the Nazisploitation genre drew upon contested systems of memory and how *il sadiconazista* more narrowly drew influence from the Italian Gothic. This leads us, secondly, to an examination of the eroticized lens that the genre applies to Nazism's horrors. These facets of the discussion allow us to illustrate the transgressive within the fusing of constructed memory and the erotic. For this, it is useful to turn briefly to the sexual politics of the Nazi era itself.

As Kozma (2012, 59) indicates, a recurrent theme of the sexploitation *sadiconazista* is that they attempt to 'legitimize themselves by claiming to expose a history of horrors that the Nazis attempted to hide'. The confused and confusing means by which this was attempted overlaps with the importance of the libidinal to the Third Reich. In the superlative *Sex after Fascism*, Herzog (2005, 1) describes how '[s]exual politics functioned as a main locus for recurrent reconstructions of the memory and meanings of Nazism'. Questions of sex, sexuality and morality were of central importance within National Socialism. It provided a framework to vilify the "over-sexed" Jewish male body and the threat that it posed to racial purity (Richardson, 2012). Simultaneously, there was also a reification of the Aryan body and a privileging of heterosexual sexual pleasure. Herzog (2005, 2), however, points to the ways in which, latterly, the German New Left reframed sexuality and sexual politics under National Socialism as being 'profoundly repressive'. This was at odds with commentators immediately following the war who 'suggested that their sexual immorality was inextricable from their genocidal barbarism' (ibid.). So, the Nazis were perceived as *both* highly sexually conservative *and* licentious.

This period, as well as that following the war, was a roiling mess of 'continuities and discontinuities (and complex mixtures thereof)' (ibid., 3). Sexuality

was privileged and denigrated, supported and punished. In the post-war society it was a means to both distance from and overcome the scars and taboos of Nazism. It is this that sees 'the Nazi past….as this reservoir of sexual energy on a communal level [serve as] a kind of communal "return of the repressed"' (Fuchs 2012, 286). In relation to this, it is important to dwell briefly upon the horror framing of the libidinal in *il sadiconazista.* Specifically, Picart and Frank (2006) use a "horror frame" to examine representations of the Holocaust. This, following their earlier work, is informed by readings of the monstrous and victimization that are influenced by the Gothic genre. This positions the 'Holocaust as an "ontological breach" with the flow of normality and history' (ibid.). As such, this places such a representation firmly within the Gothic. This speaks to Billiani's (2007, 20) Todorov-inflected notion of 'an existential condition which displaces actual reality to accommodate a new reality'. It is a breach of the line separating rational and irrational. In Callois's (nd cited by Hantke 1998, 181) phrasing, it is 'an irruption of the inadmissible'. We can drill down further into the Gothic to see its influence.

Billiani (2007) explores the ways in which Italian Gothic literature of the nineteenth century emerged a little later than, and drew influence from, the English-language Gothic. It was a product of Italian unification across the nineteenth century as well as the social, cultural and political ramifications that radiated out from it. Alongside English language Gothic, Italian Gothic drew upon other texts within and outside the genre, as well as the importance of text (and textual haunting) within the fiction. In this respect, the recycling of theme and footage (as well as the use of archival footage itself) in *il sadiconazista* suggests similar lines of influence. In a particularly resonant passage, Billiani (2007, 23) refers to Italian Gothic as seeking to 'destabilize paradigms of realism, rationality, and morality by using the past as a mirror for the present'. If we see *il sadiconazista* as a working through of its contemporary political trauma, as well as that of fascism, the ties to an Italian Gothic are clear. The (Italian) Gothic is centrally concerned with contested history and memory. These themes are similarly worked through within the cinematic texts highlighted here. Further, we can point to the more generically understood features of Gothic literature as informing the *sadiconazista* cycle. Namely, there is a central focus on imprisoned female characters and monstrous male Others. For LaCapra (1998 cited in Picart and Frank 2006), these two aspects are elided in the notion of Holocaust representation as "sexy memory". The sexualised violence enacted upon the female body is, for LaCapra (emphasis added, 1998 cited in Picart and Frank 2006, 138), done to '*elicit a reaction of pleasure'*. We can pursue this further. The lascivious gaze in sexploitation frequently punctures through the skin. Doctors probe at prone bodies. Sex organs are cut, removed and grafted. Flesh is sliced. Skin is corrupted. This speaks to another aspect of the (Italian) Gothic: the corporeality of victims. The body 'becomes the multiple space for the irruption of irrationality' (Billiani 2007, 21). The medical experiments of *SS Experiment Camp* see the collision of historical fact and gross-out fiction enacted upon the fragmented female body. As Rapaport (2003) details, the medical experimentation and forced prostitution of *il sadiconazista* were drawn from the historical record. Citing Herbermann's (2000) work, Rapaport (2003) states that there were at least 11 camp bordellos. Inmates at Ravensbrück were used in the SS brothel in Mauthausen, as part of their 're-education'. In terms of medical experimentation, we see in *il sadiconazista* an eroticized representation of historical fact. Inmates were forcibly sterilized, subject to extremes of temperature and pressure, as well as deliberately contaminated or

exposed to toxins (Rapaport, 2003). The discarded bodies in the ovens in *SS Experiment Camp* offer the nadir of bad taste. Healthy naked female bodies spasm against poorly composed fire. There is a hybridization of affective audience response and discomforting use of historical record.

In echoing the Gothic, *il sadiconazista* also speak to socio-political frameworks of understanding for the Holocaust. In Mintz's (2001, 38-9) effective phrasing, the exceptionalist model, for example, sees the 'Holocaust as a radical rupture: human history that goes well beyond notions of uniqueness'. This is juxtaposed with a constructivist frame that 'stresses the cultural lens through which the Holocaust is perceived' (ibid., 39). It does not deny the uniqueness of the event/s, but rather it places importance on the pre-existing ways in which to shape the understanding of those events. The exceptionalist frame argues that there is *a* truth of the Holocaust. The constructivist model states that 'beyond their factual core, historical events, even the Holocaust, possess no inscribed meanings; meaning is constructed by communities with interpretation – differently by different communities – out of their own motives and needs'. (Mintz 2001, 40). As Ingebretsen (2006, xvi) suggests, 'Holocaust texts – witness, polemic, history, even fiction – ape genre coherency even when their contents deny genre intelligibility'. We can marry these ways of understanding and shaping the "truth" of the Holocaust with a further dichotomy that seeks to explain it: structural-functionalism and ideological-intentionalism. The former speaks to Bauman's (1989) notion that the Holocaust emerged as an inevitable function of the bureaucratic processes of modernity. Claude Lanzmann's (1985) *Shoah*, for example, details the vast administrative edifice that was erected to facilitate the Final Solution. From the costings of train transport to the camps, to the rigid geometry of the camps themselves, there was a long string of *Schreibtischtater*. These "desk perpetrators" populated the bureaucracy. The distance between order and act flowed through this bureaucratic rhizome. This led to what Bauman (1989) terms "adiaphorization". The distancing effect of a paper trail of orders that travelled through the levels and layers of a bureaucratic hierarchy stripped the individual actions within that system of their morality. Orders were pushed over desks. Trains were timetabled. Chemicals were purchased and delivered. The ash falling from chimneys could be compartmentalised and distanced.

The other position – the ideological-intentionalist – frames the Holocaust, as with the exceptionalist model, as a distinct phenomenon. It places emphasis upon 'the demonic, satanic, anti-Semitic, murderous Nazi [as] the causative agent in this narrative' (Picart and Frank 2006, 17). Nazisploitation films broadly – as well as *il sadiconazista* discussed here more narrowly – seemingly fold into this framework. Their cultural frame is that of horror. Their "tastelessness", willful or otherwise, is a part of their appeal. For our purposes here, their value lies in exploring how they speak to a sense of verisimilitude and how – in combination with their tastelessness – this pushes them outside of the edges of this framework. It is their shaping of memory and evidence that we turn to now.

Archival footage, memory and evidence

The opening credits of *SS Camp 5: Women's Hell* are played out over black-and-white photography of the camps. There are images of bodies that have been

stacked or discarded: 'bodies that no longer had anything to do with persons' (Hirsch 2004, 14). Emaciated faces look at the camera. One body hangs on a gallows, whilst another is pushed into an oven. A sequence later in the film consists of a monologue from Serafino Profumo's Lt. Hans delivered to two of the camp doctors. Hans berates the doctors, but this is directly addressed toward the audience. His dialogue continues to play on the soundtrack whilst there is a cut to a series of black-and-white sequences: naked Jewish men hand over their clothes (providing the only male full frontal nudity in the film), what appears to be piles of dentures, hair, glasses, luggage, then piles of bodies being bulldozed.

The sequence details the terminal stages of dehumanisation for the concentration camp victim: the arrival, stripping of clothes, starvation and the final indignities enacted upon the corpse. The dialogue talks about the financial cost of a 1000 prisoners being used in experiments and that '[t]hese are the calculations of our experts'. Hans complains that it has not been possible to rent the prisoners to factories and '[t]his is without calculating the gold from their teeth, hair, their money…And to the foregoing, we can also add what we can use from their ashes in fertilizer'. For this, it is important to highlight Doneson's (2002) differentiation between two types of documentary footage from the Holocaust. The first consists of images produced by the Nazis themselves for the purpose of propaganda; liberating armies produced the second. The latter, Doneson (2002, 102) states, is inherently "post-Holocaust" and 'not part of the concentration camp experience'. It is possible to infer that the still images used in the opening credits come from the image libraries of both the Nazis and liberators. The use of the former is axiomatically problematic. Accompanied by the protruding eyes of Profumo, the archival footage is the *ne plus ultra* of the 'Gothic aestheticization of atrocity footage' (Picart and Frank 2006, 65). Curiously though, the dialogue speaks to structural functionalism. It is a juxtaposition of the 'demonic, satanic' Nazi-as-sexualised-monster, as described by Picart and Frank (2006), and *schreibtischtater*. The opening close-ups, that imply an arrival at the camp within this narrative were taken from the British Pathé 'German Atrocities' newsreel. It is liberation footage. Whilst we have been unable to source the provenance of the other sequences, they are of similar style and tone to other liberation footage. That said, the images of the naked men handing over their clothing have an unsettling resonance with the fictionalised internment footage in *The Night Porter*. The use of archival footage sees the sequence make an appeal to historical accuracy whilst also embracing the full grotesque monstrousness of the ideological-intentionalist model. As Kozma (2008) puts it, in relation to *Ilsa*, the films attempt to historicize their sensationalism in the hope of legitimizing themselves. Not only do title cards speak to their historical veracity, but archival footage positions them alongside the "real". The explicit linking of the Grand Guignol grotesqueries of the film to archival footage imposes a sense of equivalence upon the audience. Kavka (2016) details the ways in which documentary footage of animal cruelty is elided with fictional representations of human suffering in *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980). In this instance there are also echoes of the *Mondo* films of the 1960s and a pre-figuring of *Faces of Death* (director, 1978) in the following year.

The use of archival footage has the effect of 'eras[ing] generic differences and disrupt[ing] the viewers' extracinematic knowledge, thereby creating a documentary contagion that makes all of the extreme acts in the film equally charged with the real' (ibid., 51-2). Its evocation of an affective response, it clashing messages of the

demonic and *schreibtischtater*, as well as its provocative use of the didactic/disciplinary archival footage itself sees this map clearly onto the 'transgressive' as set out here. Likewise, in *Salon Kitty*, there are two sequences where footage of Nazi rallies is projected upon female characters. The first occurs where an audience member stands and salutes in a cinema whilst newsreel footage plays across her. Later, in the bordello, similar footage plays across a naked woman whilst a Nazi officer looks on. Clearly there is the implication here of an erotic, transgressive charge to the footage itself. It is inscribed upon the naked female body. The victims within *il sadiconazista* are the abject of the antagonists', camera's and audience's look. 'Looking and violence' co-mingle (Hake 2010, 17). Sexton (2011) suggest this is not simply a trope of the exploitation genre, but pre-figured by the systems that facilitated "observations of sexuality" within the films themselves. In this regard, Barber (2012, 102) has a particularly eyebrow-raising reaction to the scatological *Salò*:

> The filmic material of *Salò* is one that compacts celluloid and shit, in Pasolini's desire to burst the limits of cinema, via the anally resonant eye of the film-lens.

This is an apposite way of describing the co-mingling of the gaze, obscenity and "pure" pleasure in *sadiconazista*. Each of the *sadiconazista* films discussed here feature an inspection scene and an echoing of historical fact through an eroticized lens. The camera lingers over characters as they disrobe. As doctors probe and guards leer, we too are drawn into the inspection of the victims' bodies. The cinematic nature of this is further accentuated by Brass' (1996) *Salon Kitty*. The peephole-cum-camera lens is used to observe women being "tested" upon apparent "deviants". This centrality of the camera lens/gaze radiates out to the rest of the film in terms of set design, cinematography and theme. Kitty's first brothel consists of decoratively framed mirrors reflecting back upon one another. The central lounge in particular is a singular machine for looking. It frames and directs sight. It emphasises the artifice of the *mise en scène*. This is a device for pure spectatorial pleasure both within and outside the cinematic frame. The peepshow tableau of the medical/sexual tests aligns us with the 'genocidal gaze' of the Nazi doctors (Von Dassanowsky, 2012). For Von Dassanowsky (2012: 125), the price the audience pays for the earlier Brassian softcore is this shift to a "visual subservience to "scientific" cruelty and…dehumanization'. Within this frame, the male gaze moves focus from she-objects to it-objects.

The confluence of filming/footage, the gaze, memory and the libidinal takes on an added potency in Cavani's (1974) *The Night Porter*. When the key protagonists, Bogarde's Max and Rampling's Lucia, first meet, he is filming men and women as they are interned. Max is in the process of producing precisely the sort of footage that we see in *SS Camp 5: Women's Hell*. Valentine (2007, 447) provides a detailed and persuasive account of the sado-masochistic relationship as depicted in the film:

> The camera represents both the power of a gun and of the phallus, symbolizing the prescient colonization of her body and mind. Both are to become possessed by the other.

Our reading is somewhat different. Clearly the psychosexual dynamics of Max and Lucia's relationship are of central importance; however, so too is memory and the gaze ███████████████████████. Max blinds Lucia with the bright light of the camera. We, the audience, see this on the grainy handheld footage. When Max films Lucia, we see as Max sees. We are formally aligned with him as he *documents*. We see the evidence as it is being filmed. He shoots her (with camera *and* gun). The camera captures a naked and cowering Lucia (echoing the footage discussed earlier in *SS Camp 5: Women's Hell*). Ouroborous-like, camera becomes gun becomes camera. There is an elision of sexualized violence, affect and memory as each prompts the other. The sequence provides an exemplar of a transgressive transferential space.

As per genre convention, we see the female character held captive by the Nazi-as-sexualized-monster. Yet, as Valentine (2007) powerfully demonstrates, the sado-masochistic relationship between Dirk Bogarde's Nazi officer Max and Charlotte Rampling's young Jewish internee Lucia, whilst echoing the genre, provides a more nuanced correspondence to the underlying discussion of fascist systems of order. Further, the flashback device used in the film also evokes the notion of contested individual and collective memory. The concentration camp sequences, in particular, could be referred to as Gothicized in the way in which they offer a heightened representation. Lucia states that 'Max had imagination…[He shot] sensational photographic studies. It's obvious that not one of his subjects survived'. He frames them. He captures them visually. He destroys them physically. They will persist on film until that is destroyed, the physical memory erased and the history warped. Within *The Night Porter*, the memories of the characters collapse upon one another. We are unsure whose memories we are seeing. The past punctures the present: non-diegetic sounds of the past play alongside diegetic sound of the present. Documents are used as markers of history/ies. A faux trial is used to both construct and eradicate history. This evokes Ingebretsen's (2006, xv) reading of Gothic texts and 'narrative breakdown' reflecting the 'fierce contesting of memory about the Shoah'. In an appeal to affect, this contestation is further complicated.

Of "pure" pleasure and *im*pure memory

Krautheim (2009, 8) states that

> [t]here is nothing productive about simply accusing Nazi sexploitation of being careless, misogynist or historically inaccurate—such statements go without saying, and to consider the films with the hostility that they actively invite is completely counterproductive

We agree in part. They facilitate a leering gaze. Their historical accuracy is complicated, conflicted and confused. It is rather that, instead of these elements going 'without saying', we feel that they merit further exploration. Their relationship to the broader film production – both as part of a contemporaneous *filone* and with regard to later representations – is valuable. We see a re-examination of this field as being necessary in the same way in which Clover (1992) explored the "slasher" genre. A reductive approach that assumes these elements and leads to a hostile response negates a more nuanced consideration of their place within a framework of representation. A drive toward the explicit, toward "excesses of corporeality on-

screen as well as in the spectatorial experience" is a key feature of exploitation cinema and Nazisploitation in particular (Betz 2013, 505). There is a shared *jouissance*: both in the on-screen cruelty and in the audience response. As Bourdieu (1994 cited in Lowenstein 2005, 141) phrases it, there is a 'pure pleasure' in these films. This is a pleasure borne of disgust and an affective response at its most corporeal. This is of 'the belly and sex' (ibid.). It is a disgust that is 'the paradoxical experience of enjoyment extorted by violence, an enjoyment which arouses horror.' It is the un/easy co-mingling of 'two "body genres", porn and horror' in Nazisploitation that drives this "pure" pleasure (Hake 2010, 15). Or, perhaps as with the fascist libertines in *Salò*, our response to the cruelty is an indicator of our 'absolute power over these "miserable creatures"' (Indiana 2000, 53). Kearney (2003) describes monstrousness as a questioning of boundaries. Horror and the horrific are centrally concerned with those things that are categorically interstitial. Horror is that which disrupts and confuses conventional categorisation. There are self-evident ties to the texts discussed here. However, Kearney pushes this further. Here the monstrous pushes into *our* selves. An uncontrollable, 'uncontainable *excess*' pushes into *our* egos (emphasis added, Kearney 2003, 3).

We might consider how this overlaps with the themes outlined earlier in a sequence in *The Night Porter*. A series of flashbacks to the camp occur whilst Max and Lucia (separately) attend a performance of The Magic Flute. In the flashback, the camera pans across the fleshy, pumping buttocks of a German soldier. He wears his leather boots as his arms wrap around a shaking male figure. The intertwined figures resemble a pulsating, animated version of Francis Bacon's (1972) *Three Studies of Figures in Beds*. The camera tracks across the vacant stares of female prisoners as they watch the pair. It comes to rest on Lucia. She lies, prone, on a bed. As Mailänder (2012, 180) observes, she evokes 'the total self-abandonment of the so-called "Muselmann"'. Or, rather, she embodies Agamben's (1999) "witness": that final shred of humanity within the terminally traumatised corporeal that endures, that *witnesses*. Whether the sex act that the women are observing is consensual is difficult to determine. Max enters the room. His uniform is enshrouded by a white doctor's coat. He leads the enfeebled Lucia from the room, ignoring the men on the cot. Pollock (2015) suggests that what follows is Lucia's 'initiation into sadomasochism'. An already weakened Lucia is secured. Max pushes his fingers into her mouth. The juxtaposition of the two passages of the flashback suggests an equivalence between the figures on the bed and Max and Lucia. Yet, Lucia is able here to return Max's gaze (where she was blinded when he first "shot" her with the camera). The heightened emotion of the opera (the music for which plays non-diegetically across the flashbacks) also contrasts with the earlier deadened "Muselmann" gazes. The audience too are voyeurs here. Cavani's desire to depict their complex relationship expands out to a question of audience complicity. Are we the giggling libertines of *Salò* if our reaction is one of "pure" pleasure? Alternatively, is this a repulsive gift for the audience and is this the cinematic equivalent of fingers pushed into our mouths?

A reading of Nazisploitation as trivializing Nazism's horrors would see them folded into Friedlander's "kitsch". The *sadiconazista* may well be a notably egregious aspect of this sub-genre, but they too could still be placed within pre-existing schema and conventions. The sub-genre remains, in Picart and Franks's (2006, 133) phrasing, a collision of 'eroticized violence, the fetishism of Nazi symbols and the perpetuation of Nazi-as-sexualized-monster'. As such, they offer 'an erroneous sense of

understanding' leading, possibly, to 'a perverse, pornographic curiosity' (Bertov, 1997: 52). However, our position here is that the "aesthetic vertigo" that they evoke – the backwards stagger from an artwork that prompts a sensation of disgust – situates them outside of the kitsch (Young, 2000). Rather, it is the "pure" pleasure that comes from this that further deepens the strength of their *im*pure and transgressive memory. This places a slightly different emphasis upon our response to the titlecard that concludes SS *Camp 5: Women's Hell*. The call to 'remember those who cried, those who suffered' remains discomforting after the 96 minutes of lurid, pornographic excess. Yet, it is precisely that feeling of discomfort that is key. The film is of "the belly and sex" in cohering Williams' (1991) "fear jerker" and "jerk off". Trauma and affect are drawn together. Be it in the use of archival footage in *SS Camp 5: Women's Hell* or in the elision of gun and camera in *The Night Porter*, we see a heightening of Landsberg's (2004) transferential space and a push away from "collective" or "hegemonic" memory. So it is that we return to those lyrics from *Salon Kitty* that serve as the title of this article. The taboo should not be forgotten. Rather, it should act as a point of departure and re-evaluation.

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