

WHAT A WONDERFUL FASCISM: CLAIMING *THE REAL* IN LARS VON TRIER AND DOGMA 95

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*Given the dominance of **the victim** as the realist documentary subject, this is cause for some concern, for it does not mean that the ethical difficulties faced by the realist filmmaker go away – only that they can be ignored.*

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I.

In many respects, the DOGMA 95 film movement was intended and presented as their founders' (Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg) plea to turn from the traditional or fictional film narrative towards the framings of documentary film narrative within traditional cinema: towards *the real*. What was perceived as *unreal* was genre film, technologically advanced film editing, Hollywood's ideological, economical and esthetical system of representation. In more utopian terms, DOGMA 95 initially wanted to escape the boundaries of *commercial film history* and the logic of *art as rhetorical sign*. Instead of worn-out signs, film art should have been the area of uncanny, direct, terrible, *authentic* experience; the event of the Real,² preferably causing "fear and trembling," a total Dionysiac change of Apollonian lifestyle led by Rilke's archaic statue (as described in the poem *Apollo's Archaic Torso*), and with the final goal of escaping *the little death* of decoding, signification, conventional interpretation.

As usual, whenever an artist claims *The Real*, s/he also expresses the will to exit from an – implicitly accepted! – interpretative legacy where art is treated as "only" artificial unreality; an everlasting Platonic realm of "mere" shadows.

¹ Winston, Brian (1999 [1995]): *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Revisited*, London: British Film Institute, p. 230.

² Badiou, Alain, (1993): *L'Éthique: Essai sur la conscience du Mal*, Paris: Hatier.

The neon light of The Real is therefore traditionally linked with discourses that are perceived as far as possible from linguistic control: discourses of the body, subconscious, dream, politics of desire, pain, illness or death. In Žižek's words "the Real of death and sexuality" and "the Real of human finitude."³ The paradox of entering the Real, the Real as Lacanian "encounter with the Impossible," remains connected with both physical and metaphysical experiences of *painful*, and at the same time *desirable*, loss (or sometimes even an orgiastic explosion) of control. Let me say that this definition of the real as an encounter with the Impossible also has many religious connotations, of which Lacan was also well aware (he admitted dealing with "mystical experience" of psychoanalytical hermeneutics⁴). As a formal description, the "encounter with the Impossible" is, in fact, constructed as the powerful rhetorical figure called oxymoron; a rhetorical figure, according to Kenneth Burke,⁵ classically connected with all the religious persuasions, because the sublime object of faith gets to be described as something *so absolute* that it can be imagined only as "impossible encounter." The Real in religion is therefore a paradox of meeting the impossible or absolute NonPresence (or God), just as the Lacanian Real is meeting with the impossible Other Side of Rational Control. Irrational and instinct, as instances of the Real, here stand hand in hand. They are not the Real; they are both representations of the Real, as much as human love for St. Paul turns out to be representation of future meeting with the Real or encountering God "face to face." Yet for Lacan, "there is nothing behind representation."⁶ In his own words: "Beyond appearance there is nothing in itself, there is the gaze."⁷ Therefore the encounter with both divine or Lacanian Real preserves the notion of semantic transfer or the rhetorical procedure, no matter how much the artist claims s/he is entirely autobiographic or fully documentary or subversively outside any known or given sign system. Here on Earth, the Real stubbornly encounters us only as representation. Žižek: *The very word SIGN, in opposition to the arbitrary mark, pertains to the <answer of the real>: the <sign> is given by the thing itself, it includes that at least at a certain point, the abyss separating the real from the symbolic network has been crossed, i.e. that the real itself complied with the signifier's appeal.*⁸

³ Žižek, Slavoj (2001): *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, London: Verso; pp. 84-85.

⁴ Lacan, Jacques (1998 [1973]): *The Four Fundamental Principles of Psycho-Analysis*, London: Vintage, p. 4-8.

⁵ Burke, Kenneth (1961): *The Rhetoric of Religion, Studies in Logology*, Berkley: California University Press.

⁶ Copjec, Joan (1995): *Read My Desire*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p. 35.

⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1998 [1973]): *The Four Fundamental Principles of Psycho-Analysis*, London: Vintage, p. 103.

⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2000 [1991]): *Looking Awry*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p. 32.

II.

In contact with the representation of the trauma or raw instincts, of subconscious or the religiously miraculous experience (experience of the absolute), one is supposed to transform. Intense pain and pleasure, however, turn out to be translated into ideologies of victimhood and sainthood, at least for mass producers of the Real. The formula for the Real, let us not forget, is first and foremost a rhetorical mixture: there is nothing “absolute” nor deterministically “real” about *that kind* of Real. There are other signification systems besides psychoanalysis and religious representations; not to mention art as an area of extremely complex reality effects that can also change us profoundly. I am certain that psychoanalytical myths, no matter how entertaining, are not at all the universal key to the Real. These myths deal with interconnection between Eros, Thanatos and the notion of never-ending Past, or, as Malcolm Bowie says: *An entire dimension of Freud’s work redramatizes the myth of the Furies: the past is visited upon the individual in a series of violent intrusions, and his future, if he has one, can be envisaged only as a prolongation of these and a continuing help-less desire to lift their curse.*⁹

I would suggest that the Real, as radical insight or cathartic refiguration or the (ethical) Event cannot use predictable semantic routes. For instance, in Aki Kaurismäki’s film *Crime and Punishment* the Real is perceived as an (impossible) desire *to forgive*, not the sexual desire or death drive. On the other side of the spectrum, in Hollywood cinematography, sex and death are so overdosed and over-used that there is absolutely nothing “impossible” or shocking about them. They are the stuff that Hollywood is made of. Post-modern American directors like Quentin Tarantino and Coen brothers are not even taking them seriously. What they fiercely *mock* is precisely the seriousness of Hitchcock’s era and its psychoanalytical dream-work, in the same way that Renaissance authors used to mock the standard of performing the Real of public executions. In both instances, “the Real” can obviously go out of date.

It is, however, still very much possible to talk about psychoanalysis as mythopoetic praxis of retelling and eternally tracing the Real of death and desire, but cathartic potential of Eros and Thanatos Corporation, in my view, grows more and more limited. Where they *do* hold power are very common therapeutic sermons about ethics of pain. Discussing Kant and particularly the ethics of pain, Alenka Zupančič rightfully concludes: “From this perspective, we might define with great precision the limit at which ethics is transformed into either terror, or the obscure desire for catastrophe. [...] [S]ince

⁹ Bowie, Malcolm (1991), *Lacan*, London: Fontana, p. 182.

suffering and pain become the mark of ethics, the rarity of 'good' becomes the 'omnipresence of evil;' the incompatibility of ethics and pleasure leads to methodical masochism [...]."¹⁰

And does it also lead to perceiving the world as *fascist* (as "omnipresence of evil")? This is the question I wish to explore through the material of DOGMA 95 and Lars Von Trier's films. But first let us visit documentary film genre during the period of historically recognized fascist era.

III.

The most famous example of documentary style used as a mask for completely different (fictional, mythical, highly ideological) purposes can be found in the works of Leni Riefenstahl, where the "real life event" is *framed* as documentary narrative, but is just as much propaganda material for Hitler's Nazi party. In *The Triumph of the Will* (1934-35), Riefenstahl employs several purely fictional strategies to create *the document* of the time. The question about *how real* the documentary film is immediately answers itself: it simulates the workings of real event. What do I mean by that? First of all, Riefenstahl insists on producing sentimental visual identification with the "mind-numbing repetitiveness"¹¹ of united party images: pattern after pattern of obsessive, collective symmetries. This is one of the oldest rhetorical strategies. Secondly, she uses people as props; as the triumph of the *director's* free will only. Which means that there is nothing random or contingent about her choices. Thirdly, she records Hitler's *mythically* framed descent to the German nation. Finally, she pretends to ignore the political aspect of the very occasion she covers. *The Triumph of the Will* (with the opening credit: "Produced by Order of the Führer. Directed by Leni Riefensahl"¹²) is specially designed and staged as a rally, paying symbolic respect to the SA Nazi wing (the brownshirt, common, street-fighting, more populist and proletarian stream of the Nazi party), whose uniform Hitler himself wears in the documentary, even whilst he was coldly ordering "purges" (mass killings) in the ranks of these very same, cinematically "honored" SA forces, not only on the eve of the rally, but also while it was taking place. Riefenstahl afterwards predictably claimed fantastic things like: *I told Hitler I don't know what is SA and what is SS.*¹³ The most morbid detail in

¹⁰ Zupančič, Alenka (2000): *Ethics of the Real*, London: Verso; p. 236.

¹¹ Winston, Brian (1999 [1995]): *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited*, London: British Film Institute, p. 75.

¹² Barnouw, Erik (1993): *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 103.

¹³ Infield, Glenn (1976): *Leni Riefenstahl: The Fallen Film Goddess*, NY: Crowell, p. 74.

this particular story concerns the “real” SA deaths, unrecognized by another, more visible “real event” of the filmed occasion. But this is also the case of pure propaganda or the most invisible ideological manipulation. As Goebbels said: *People who are influenced by propaganda must not notice it.*¹⁴

In case of Lars Von Trier’s usage of documentary film techniques, he *does* want us to notice the shaky camera and its falling out of focus as vivid “proofs” of directors special access to illogical Subconscious or the Higher Truths of representation, while, I argue, this recurrent quasidocumentary technique is no less “staged,” digitally edited, narratively constructed, stylistically calculated, pre-rehearsed and scripted than Riefenstahl’s “documents.” Furthermore, quasidocumentary technique is employed to mask Trier’s “invisible” propaganda model. In this model, quasidocumentarism is cast as the representation of our collective Subconscious.

IV.

The subconsciously “real” of bourgeois society is systematically ridiculed and glamorized in Trier’s first DOGMA movie: *The Idiots* (1998). The victims of social alienation in this film decide to leave the oppressive system and form a separate community (in an empty villa, belonging to the group leader’s rich uncle). They live on “borrowed” (perhaps stolen) corporate credit cards and enjoy the freedom of finding their “inner idiots.” Handheld camera and “on-location” shots, deliberately filmed to make objects and characters out-of-focus, are here to create the grand illusion of *cinema vérité*, although the “documentary style” remains present as a sophisticated and complex director’s mocking game with perceptive conventions of the audience. The audience knows that Trier works with professional *actors* (some of them are famous and we immediately recognize them), with his own professional (fictional) *script*, with classic takes and re-takes, selection of shots, process of editing. Why is it then that he needs *the documentarist* rhetoric in the first place? Is it because art is not “real” enough for him? Does he need to legalise his work by the criteria of art-despising “realists”? Or is it because he needs a royal, that is, an oneiric road to our subconscious? In any case, Trier is only *faking* documentarism and falsely obeying DOGMA’s “Vow of Chastity.” If anything, his works show all the characteristics of *auteur* cinema; again criticized in DOGMA’s original layout. On top of it all, the final version of *The Idiots* was digitally reworked by

¹⁴ Quoted in documentary film *Hitler’s Henchman: Goebbels – the Firebrand*, ZDF: 2000; dir. by Peter Hartl.

the producers, because the original version was overexposed to light and literally impossible to use for further film copying and (massive!) distribution. In a funny ironical twist, Trier's exclusive "document of the Real" was rewritten in order to become more commercial and more profitable; in the Hollywood sense of the words.

The Idiots furthermore show a naivete of understanding the Real as the characters' nudity, sexual promiscuity, cheating to avoid paying restaurant bills and expletive-ridden outbursts at bureaucratic officials. Trier seems to expose, again ironically, the three greatest myths of the Sixties: communality, sexual freedom and the religion of necessary abnormality (modelled by the teachings of R.D. Laing and his antipsychiatry movement). While staged isolation in communalism and hymns to non-inhibited sexual behavior work only for a *short* while, the notion of turning back to "idiotic" or most creative freedom outside the histrionic ghetto does *not* work for any member of the histrionic group. But behind their collective escape into "Primal Drives" of Sacred Idiocy (Trier calls it spastic behavior), there is also a story about Karen, played of course by the professional actress. To Karen belongs the role of the "real victim" of society and therefore of a stranger to the community of *histrionic idiots*. In the subplot about Karen, *the real* is connected with Karen's serious pain; i.e., Karen's suppressed grief over the death of her baby and possible parental abuse. Yet, the pleasure principle is also important for Karen's character: while visiting the "idiotic community" of fakes, Karen is the only one to say: *I have never been happier. I love you all so much*. Being the only mentally challenged person in the group, in the end Karen turns out to be the only one for whom the group therapy really worked.

Fascism is explicitly named and condemned in *The Idiots*, through Stoffer's (he is the authoritarian boss of his community) outraged cries. The world *out there*, outside the boundaries of Stoffer's community, we learn, is described as "fucking fascism." But the world *in there*, within the community, is no less discriminatory: Stoffer makes all kinds of repressive hierarchies, he makes decisions about everybody else, he even leads the male members of the group into one "joking" attempt to rape a female member of the group. The freedom of Stoffer's community, its range of representational masks, is extremely limited. In fact, all of the members know only the simplest hypocrisy games: allowing their "inner idiots" to be heard in private and safe ghetto, but silencing them in public. Belonging neither to the outside world nor to the hypocritical regime of Stoffer's theater, Karin appears to be a double outcast. In the "documentary" sequences while interviewing the actors, Trier has talk to them about her character with interest, but without understanding or compassion. She gets even less kindness from her family. There are therefore

three circles of hopeless isolation and despair: larger society (attacked by Stoffer as <fascistic>), small community membership that repeats the aggression from the outside world, and the smallest unit of infinitely “misplaced” Karin. That is why I suggest that Trier’s nihilism might, in fact, *promote* the very discriminatory politics it describes. The same goes for his stylistic devices, based on the belief that “the real” evil has to be fought by a faked documentary style of directing, otherwise no one will take you seriously enough. Art in itself, art without the documentarist framing of events, art as *representation*, art that does not perform under the myth of live TV and “real presences” of true historical document, is seen as totally corrupted, useless, pointless. This is, of course, rather naive “artophoby.”

In Trier’s earlier expressionist movie, *Zentropa* (1991), made before the DOGMA years, Trier tells the story about an American who visits Germany, only to discover that we are even now living in the middle of everlasting Nazi Europe values and commerce. Nazi factories and Nazi corporations are still in power and we are not able to see the real dimension of the remaining, ongoing, German and pan-European fascism. The chief character in *Zentropa* discovers the Real of silent, overwhelming, suppressed fascism – passed to him through *a woman* and through the working of sexual drives. The sexual dimension therefore remains the guilt-ridden area in all of Trier’s movies. In his early films, like *Medea* (1986), it is society that is traitorous and rotten to the bone. Hence the society *projects itself* onto the hero and *infects* the chief protagonist with its own poison. In Trier’s later films, like *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), death and desire as principles of the Real are accompanied by the workings of the Absolute: the heroine is safe from fascistic misjustices in another world. The sacrifice and resurrection therefore became the only possible direction towards the Real.

V.

DOGMA 95 also has its more secular face. In Thomas Vinterberg’s *Celebration/Festen* (1998), the group of actors participates in shooting on location from handheld cameras according to DOGMA rules. Yet, contrary to Trier’s *Idiots*, these people maintain the coherence of the *therapeutic* group. Once again, the discovery of pain is narratively linked with the *pleasure* (even in the film’s title: the party or the celebration) of orgiastic breaking of society norms, and the film ends at the moment when the family *painfully* acknowledges, and for the first time socially ostracizes (punishes), their incestuous father; indirectly guilty for the death of the daughter he sexually abused. Again

and again, the Real is staged around the political and personal role of the victim. Vinterberg tightly links family *violence*, *contemporary racism* and *false sentimentality* of contemporary Europe, seen as no less fascist than in Trier's *Zentropa* (the film was originally called *Europa*). The main difference between the two DOGMA directors is Trier's much stronger est/ethical cynicism. Nevertheless, the concept of the Real as religious absolute is not entirely cut out from Vinterberg's films neither. *The Celebration* is a story about the incestuous history and suicidal sacrifice of the oldest daughter in the family, so the Real is again and again introduced through the victim.

VI.

Now I wish to concentrate on the link between glorification of the victimhood and ideology of fascism in Trier's most successful and acclaimed films: *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). In both of them Trier further explores the role of the FEMALE victim; the leading female roles are presented as emotionally disturbed personalities with a publicly verified private mythology of self-destruction. With Bess from *Breaking the Waves* and Selma from *Dancer in the Dark*, we enter into the Wagnerian forests of BEAUTIFUL fascism; fascism that openly joins forces with the Catholic Sublime. Here, the Woman (the archetypal one) becomes the painful/pleasurable Real, and at the same time, the "purging" vehicle of masculine society. Selma and Bess are presented as heroines WITHOUT true choice; mythically doomed to sacrifice their life for the sake of the *greater good*. Both are (sardonically, in my opinion) awarded with eternal salvation in Heaven. Speaking the language of pure ideology, they present exemplary propaganda models of *social masochism* and *political conservatism*. In the case of Bess, her obsessive behavior, i. e. blind following of what she perceives as direct *orders* from two male protagonists in the film – God and her husband Jan, and her high emotional interest *only* in Jan, her history of formal emotional breakdowns etc., – are constructed as the exact *repetition* of her native community obsessively strict values; values that she endorsed before Jan's arrival. *Complete lack of freedom* in her religious community (which could also stand as definition of fascism!) is repeated by her blind, slavish devotion to Jan. Despite one episode of shouting at Jan's promiscuous plans for her and the event of vomiting after she has been "raped," following Jan's instructions, she does not have a "will" or "self" of her own; she just follows orders. In other words, she desperately shows the desire to be – in her own words: "a good girl." A good girl is in fact only the obedient girl, and she constantly feels guilty because she does

not consider herself to be obedient enough. The explosions of her huge guilt complex are directly connected with her sexual behavior (and pleasure principle). At the end of the movie, she wears the double mask of *sexual masochism* joined with the role of *the social victim*. Contrary to Girard (1986) opinion, her sacrifice does not “purify” the community who watches it. On the contrary: the film confirms the reality of “absolute” violence.

What we are invited to ignore or forget here is that Bess, not some higher power, is *responsible* for her *choices of obedience*. The ethics of responsibility has entered even the contemporary psychiatric treatments. We are also invited to consider her as symbol of *goodness* (that is the characteristic we hear about her most often), although Bess lacks in elementary compassion for anything outside her obsessive small universe (a memorable event of her coldness is the scene in the beginning of the film, when she has fun watching coldly the funeral of her village neighbour). In her obsessive mind, she is interested only in completing the violent transaction: to sacrifice her own body for the survival of Jan. The director and scriptwriter (in the same person of Lars Von Tier) “approves” it. We see that her Biblical sacrifice *works*: previously handicapped Jan is miraculously back on his feet. What a wonderful fascism! After Bess was completely abandoned by her *evil* community, expelled from the Church, denounced by her mother, betrayed by her best friend Dodo, deserted by her psychiatrist and even stoned by the local children (as “whore”), she fulfils her own obsessive desire: at least in the viewers and in Jan’s eyes she is finally metamorphosed from the live sexual object to the dead Saint (we see the shot in which godly bells from somewhere Beyond tolls for Bess resurrection). The Real of sex, death and religious Absolute is on its climax. To use Žižek’s Lacanian vocabulary, woman is here only a helpless symptom of cruel male society, and if it looks like as if she has been “favored” by the film, it is only because the audience follows the story of her magnificent *destruction*. In the general system of obedience, she internalizes the most horrible group order: denounce your own integrity – and freedom – for the power of Higher Good. As Canetti underlines, describing totalitarianism and its system of open or secret orders: *It is well known that men who are acting under orders are capable of the most appalling deeds.*¹⁵ Acting *under orders* does another important thing: releases Bess, like any other divine or secular soldier, from any responsibility. She is a sacred object exchanged between god and her husband and back to god again. And the power of this ideologization is terrifying when observing *female* reactions to Trier’s film: many of them have internalised the propaganda of victimhood so much, that they feel as if Trier has grasped “the Real”

¹⁵ Canetti, Elias (1992 [1960]), *Crowds and Power*, London: Penguin, p. 385.

content of their subconscious and described “a true love.” Looking awry at that agenda, we could say that Trier teaches women how to admire their own torture and how to accept suicide as way to stellar sainthood.

The same divinisation of suicidal behaviour happens with Selma in Trier’s movie *Dancer in the Dark*. Selma is robbed of her savings and forced to kill her attacker in self-defence, but she does not defend herself at the court (when accused for murder) because she has already accomplished her own obsessive mission: she regained the money for her son’s eye operation. Yet it seems that Selma *wants to die* from the very start of the narrative: she is so tired of oppression, eye sickness and poverty that in the beginning of the film she almost injures herself badly, before a factory friend “saves” her. On another occasion, she ignores a distinct feeling that she is being watched at the moment of opening her secret savings box, and this incident in fact leads to theft and all further crimes. Selma *refuses to see* in the most elementary sense. If Bess is obsessive about seeing only Jan, Selma is obsessive about being blind to anything that goes beyond her daily routine. Death seems like the most radical escape, fulfilling all the levels of anticipating the Real: pain and pleasure of Absolute Otherness. This is again the most beautiful fascism: teaching us the beauty of death. While Selma’s fictional flights into Hollywood-like musical melodrama (scenes shot in rich digital photography and with collective choreography) proves the beauty of death, the rapid worsening of her sight and her final decision not to defend herself properly at the trial shows her desire to sacrifice the grim reality of her existence as soon as possible. The film is not concentrated on her son, nor does it elaborate on their mutual relationship (we see her nagging and shouting at the boy once; that’s all). Selma shows affection *only for musicals and death*. The son’s operation is her “terrible” *duty*; not her loving choice. Selma’s world also follows the triadic structure of fascism: the broadest reality is the reality of the cruel factory exploitation, the second level is her obsessive savings for her son, and the third is the intimate level of her obsessive intoxication with deceitful Hollywood spectacle. The blind obsession also marks the main difference between Antigone and Trier’s heroines; Antigone is choosing her death against all social odds, she is *protesting*, while Selma and Bess end up killed by silent, obedient, internalised and self-destructive social programming. In paying (unnecessarily) for her son’s operation by “currency” of *her own death*, Selma repeats and endorses the blindness of the whole social system. She accepts to be guilty for it.

What Trier is presenting again and again is the omnipresence of evil; the symbolic universe full of suicidal desires. Is this perspective politically realistic? We can certainly factually prove that inequalities between people, be-

tween classes, races, ages and sexes in today's world are not getting any smaller. The deep gap between non-white poverty and white propaganda could be called fascism; it could be even called "capitalistic, corporate fascism." Yet Rastko Močnik, author of the book *How Much Fascism?* and persistent critic of right-wing fascistisation in the postcolonial, post-Yugoslavian states, is careful enough to warn us against using the term too easily: fascism is an extreme and therefore politically almost empty term.¹⁶ I would rather suggest then of talking about *fascistic tendencies* in otherwise complex cultures of oppression.

One could perhaps say that Trier works with elements of "gothic" genre. As Mark Edmundson¹⁷ describes the gothic, Trier indeed plays with all its characteristics: maiden in distress, maiden trapped in horrible claustrophobic situation, punishment for expressed sexual desire by death, general infatuation with death. But gothic is also a genre that is decisively sceptical, if not critical of any social authorities.¹⁸ In itself, the chief gothic hero, the Vampire, functions as a radical parody of any rational or state control. Trier therefore never produces vampiric rebels or romantic outcasts with fangs. He produces suicidal saints; he belongs to the Christian tradition. But should we really understand Christ's sacrifice as a call for all of us to kill ourselves? *Divinisation by death*, on the other hand, is the strategy of psychotic patients and religious cult members. The trauma of encountering the Real or the Absolute is not at all singularly or exclusively ethical event; it can be used for various, including fascistic or even comic purposes. Consider the terribly shallow but popular melodrama *Life Less Ordinary*, directed by Danny Boyle, where the audience is invited to have "fun" and laughter during the scene where the hero, sobbing with distress, gun pointed at his head, is forced to dig his own grave somewhere in deserted woods. But the audience knows it is really an Angel in disguise, molesting the hero "to teach him a lesson;" so there is nothing to worry about. Hollywood knows all about public executions in concentration camps, with its scenery of prisoners who are digging their own graves before dying, and yet the film industry will use it as a *comic relief* sequence. This is the point where commercial cinematography distastefully ironizes the documentary film as tradition that exploits The Real of victimhood and the Real of death and desire. Documentary films are not shy about quoting and accepting fictional strategies either: many of them, since John Grierson's times, include completely staged minidramas.

Finally, the question of the Real seems persistently connected with the

¹⁶ Močnik, Rastko (1998): *Koliko fašizma?*, Zagreb: Arkzin, p. 147.

¹⁷ Edmundson, Mark (1997): *Nightmare on Main Street: Angles, Sadoomasochism and the Culture of Ghotic*, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

representation of the trauma, but any representation of trauma also indicates openness to nasty political manipulations. Nationalism, for instance, works with “trauma” of the past; religion operates with threat and guilt of desire for the Absolute. The role of the victim should therefore be studied with utmost precision. In case of Lars Von Trier and *DOGMA 95*, I am convinced that female victims and their obsessive sacrifices perpetuate *the culture of death*. Even if we decide not to call it “fascism,” I choose to criticise it as ideological falsity and cognitive trap of advertising ultimate helplessness. Between *wonderful fascism* and *ugly freedom* I am rather inclined to mess with imperfections of the second option: the Real minus victimhood, in both fictional and documentary narrative.

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