

UCLA

Capstone Projects

Title

Consuming Raw: Cannibalistic Transformation in Julia Ducournau's *Raw* (2016)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6rc3v76c>

Author

Naqi, Seline

Publication Date

2019-04-25

Seline Naqi
Professor Mott.
English 184
Winter 2019

CONSUMING RAW: CANNIBALISTIC TRANSFORMATION IN
JULIA DUCOURNAU'S RAW (2016)

Followed by the turn of the 21st century, there entered a new style of filmmaking that reflected images intended to shock, engage, and ignite the deeply concealed cravings of the viewers. Julia Ducournau's film, *Raw* follows a life-long vegetarian, Justine, as she navigates her first year of veterinary school. Upon entering, she undergoes a hazing ritual during which she is forced to eat a rabbit's kidney, thus giving way to Justine's newfound cannibalistic desires. Justine's experience with cannibalism is shared with the viewer not so much through the graphic nature of cannibalism itself, but instead through Justine's corporal experiences, much of which are presented within tight frames, and intimate camera angles. What Ducournau presents us with, instead, is Justine's cinematic affective experience of transforming into an animal through the act of consumption in all manifestations of the word: sexual, visual and physical in order to achieve the liberated feminine-self.

This new style of filmmaking, a term coined by James Quandt as 'The New French Extremism,' aims to, with all French cinematic extremity, break taboo. The genre relies on the intimacy that exists between two prominent taboos: sex and violence. Julia Ducournau's film, *Raw* presents the viewer with a narrative that does more than cinematic provocation: a veterinary-school-coming-of-age-cannibal thriller that capitalizes on the visceral urges of sex. These urges extend far beyond the ingenuous intentions behind the act of breaking a societal taboo. Ducournau achieves an insight into that which can only be described as a more

unexplored territory in the realm of horror. The cannibalistic desires of Justine, the primary character, explore a more mysterious side to sexual desire: jealousy, humiliation, hunger, and rage. *Raw* looks at a loss of innocence that negates the socially defined views of a woman succumbing to her sexuality. Instead, the film looks at treating sex and desire as carnal, natural and animalistic. The film stages the transformation from an adolescent to a woman and human to animal, and does so through the metaphorical lens of Justine's movement through her first year at veterinary school. In doing so, the film confers the portrayal of feminine power and subjectivity within an overtly masculine iconography of horror cinema, and culture at large. The portrayal of burgeoning womanhood within the film, is far from subtle; however, Ducournau's concern is not with this coming-of-age. As Justine commits herself to a psychological spiral of self-discovery, the viscera that is central to the film is the treatment of flesh and blood throughout.

Sexually-transgressive female characters are generally punished in horror films, while purity is preserved. Yet Ducournau's *Raw* values the transposed nature of the 'New French Extremity' genre. Tim Palmer describes this movement as a "crossover between sexual decadence, bestial violence, and troubling psychosis." (Palmer, 22) James Quandt, who initially claimed ownership of this term describes the desire to break taboo through the means of "wading in rivers of viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and subject it all to manner of penetration, mutilation, and defilement." (Quandt, 18) Quandt's writing aimed to snub the genre as "growing vogue for shock tactics." However, *Raw*'s presentation of 'The New French Extremity,' as exposed by its very name, does much to present a film that aims to make visible a transformation as a central affective technique than to indulge the guilty pleasures of the traditional horror trope in excessive gore and jump scares. Ducournau's work does more to unleash the 'raw' nature of humanity in a transgressive way.

The prohibited nature of human cannibalism is made evident by its very inclusion within the horror genre itself. However, in order to contextualize the act of cannibalism within the film, it's crucial to define the act itself. In general, a cannibal is a member of a species that consumes the body and flesh of any member within its species¹. However, what is considered to be immoral and unnatural is very much established convention within the animal kingdom. Remaining within the guidelines of cannibalistic acts, what distinguishes human from animal is the ability to restrict oneself from indulging in the act of consuming another human. *Raw* maneuvers itself within a lengthy convention of man-eating women in Western culture and mythology. Merrall Price's *Consuming Passions* helps to illuminate the cultural anxieties that surround the act of cannibalism. She references Peter Hulmes who comments that "boundaries of community are often created by accusing those outside the boundary of the very practice on which the integrity of that community is founded." (Price, 2) Greek mythology, according to Price, refers to cannibalism strictly to enact power plays. Incestuous consumption within mythological families occurred (and here she makes references to Cronos and Gaia) to secure one's rule. Other texts use the act of cannibalism to differentiate between human and animal, thus showing that human bloodthirst is grotesque and unnatural. However, as Price notes, early Christians were able to manipulate the nature of cannibalism to express salvation. This is encompassed in the word "martyrdom" which taken literally means "devouring". This later gave rise to the belief that the incorporation of Christ into the body through the consumption of flesh would cure the world of ruthless maceration and misfortune, which later gave rise to the Eucharist. Price writes:

But, the concept of cannibalism, as Peggy Reeves Sanday reminds us, is never just about eating. It is a powerfully complex and divisive symbol that channels communal

¹ Bill Schutt, *Cannibalism: A Perfectly Natural History* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2017)

and individual anxieties about incorporation, ultimately functioning to reinforce critical, social, and cultural taxonomies...Cannibalism, then, suggests a prelinguistic lawlessness—a return to the Lacanian Imaginary, of being literally infants. This is the domain of the mother, and it is not surprising, then, to note the associations between cannibalism and the relationship of mother and child. (Price, 23)

Price goes on to discuss that the act of eating another human involves the distortion of limbs thus opening one body to another in which “eater and eaten are interwoven and begin to be fused in one grotesque image of a devoured and devouring world.” She points out that most often the “body that is desired and therefore endangered is ultimately the male body...they are collapsed back into the feminine threat.” (Price, 24) Thus, the act of consuming is metaphorically associated with the maternal female, sexuality and, incest. Moreover, Susan Bordo furthers this idea, referring to Adam and Eve. Eve’s consumption of the forbidden fruit was founded upon her desire to obtain knowledge, and her agency allowed for this exploration. Yet, as a result, eating and sin became intertwined. Bordo notes that “women’s appetites must be curtailed and controlled because they threaten to deplete and consume the body and soul of the male.” (Bordo, 11) Justine’s cannibalistic urges satisfy not only her curiosities but, through the lens of the camera, that of the viewer who seeks to break taboo, without taking agency in breaking a taboo.

With regards to looking at Justine’s desire for human flesh, I argue that this desire is reflected within the film in a manner that’s sexualized. Within the narrative, the act of cannibalism is presented as non-normative; it becomes fetishized. Looking at cannibalism as an expression of sexuality, Justine’s desire to consume meat expresses what Jane Ussher defines to be ‘eclectic.’ An ‘essentialist’ view of sexuality, suggests that sexual acts and tendencies are less so about choice and more so about inherent sexual tendencies. Janis

Bohan writes that “essentialist views construe gender as resident within the individual, a quality or trait describing one’s personality, cognitive process, moral judgement, etc...” and further goes on to state that, “essentialist models, thus, portray gender in terms of fundamental attributes that are conceived as internal, persistent, and generally separate from the ongoing experience of interaction with the daily socio-political of one’s life.” (Bohan, 6)

Thus, the transgressive act of cannibalism to present newfound sexuality combined with ‘New French Extremism’ brings about the theoretical nature of eclecticism, as defined by Jane Ussher. Ussher speaks of the ways in which female sexuality have been “framed within a narrow hypothetical-deductive mold.” The suggestion here is that phallogocentric norms have dominated the ways in which sexuality and desire have been approached. Ussher argues that adopting a pluralistic stance is more effective when “we put the different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together so that we see a broader picture and gain some insight into the complexity of female sexuality, desire, or of what it means to be a woman.” Moreover, Ussher notes that “this methodological stance also demonstrates the nonsense of conceptualizing women as a homogenous group, where generalized statements can be made about the nature of female sexual desire” (Ussher, 43). Thus, it could be considered that Justine’s desire to consume flesh is none other than an expression of a “complex female desire” that could even be deemed, with regards to Ussher’s definition of eclecticism, as encompassing “sexual desire.” Indeed, the staple horror trope involves the consumption of a female to the violent nature of the dominating male. However, *Raw*’s focus is submission to animalistic female sexuality, a reclamation of female pleasure in a way that is equally transgressive, and unfiltered.

VIEWING AND CONSUMING

The film is largely centered around the act of consumption and eating for pleasure. There is constant surveillance that exists throughout. When Justine enters, she is watched by those above her. When put through hazing rituals, she is forced to eat animal flesh under the eyes of those around her. The two prominent party scenes within the film present themselves in parallel to each other: the former focuses on being watched and the latter on the act of watching. The middle of these two scenes sees Justine become her own voyeur as she, aware of her newfound hunger, dances ritualistically in the mirror until she makes out with her reflection and consumes her sexuality. Here, the lighting is quite natural with tinges of blue. This scene, in particular, recalls Justine's previous conviction that "monkeys are self-aware because they can see themselves in the mirror." There is a suggestion here, that indeed Justine is becoming more "self-aware" and essentially, one with her new-found animalistic self. For Linda Williams, "the very impetus for the invention of cinema was precisely that it seems able to register the previously invisible hard-core truth of bodies and pleasures in a direct and unmediated fashion." (Williams, 30) Certainly, Williams aids the notion that *Raw's* engagement with feminine sexuality as being a desire to eat flesh, procures cannibalism under the title of eclecticism just as much as it can be under the cinematic title of horror. In *Hard Core*, Linda Williams argues that viewing sex, rather than reveal an inherent perverseness, instead encourages our "passion for perceiving," one that originated from a genuine sense of curiosity. Over time, voyeurism "gained new importance" (Williams, 46) and became normalized as it fulfilled a desire to seek more 'truth' about the body. While Williams's *Hard Core* focuses on pornography's visual depiction of sex to satisfy the "knowledge of pleasure," the concepts with which Williams use to describe the filming of sex can be applied to Ducournau's depiction of Justine's satisfaction. What Williams coins as the "meat shot" manifests itself quite literally when applied to Ducournau's visualization of Justine's satisfaction. For Williams, the on-screen performances of sex aim to present a "meat

shot” to display an illusion of pleasure through bodily functions rather than humanizing factors, “to prove that not only penetration but also satisfaction has taken place” (Williams, 73). Similarly, the presentation of pleasure in *Raw* is epitomized in moments of flesh-filled meat consumption. I argue that, instead of viewing for male satisfaction, *Raw* inverts Williams’ notion that the “meat shot” (which she later develops to be the “money shot”) is in place to satisfy a masculine curiosity of female pleasure. Through this inversion, the “meat” or “money shot” through Ducournau’s lens, is the spilling of blood, what Williams describes to be “the ultimate confessional moment of ‘truth’.” Within pornography, the “money shot,” was created to tackle and satisfy the missing piece of female sexuality: the climax, the exact thing that was “unseen in the unseen world.” Yet *Raw* instead, with its own “meat shot” satisfies the curiosity of the filmgoer that seeks (and gains pleasure from horror) to uncover the inner desire to mutilate and thus consume human flesh, a taboo that is mostly unexplored within society.

CONSUMING SEX

Williams’ *Hard Core* draws a similarity between the act of penetration in sex to the act of penetrating the flesh of the body as both sadistic and perverse acts. For what Williams would consider once was a quest for finding the female pleasure point because of a quest to further “probe the unseen world of the female body” (Williams, 192). According to Williams, “for many, the horror shifted from the bloody content of the film to the spectacle of viewers who would pay to see what they thought was the ultimate orgasm” (Williams, 193). For Williams, a comparison can be made between the slasher horror film and low-budget pornography. Williams finds that “snuff seemed [to be] a perversely logical extension of hard-core pornography’s quest to see pleasure displaced onto pain” (194). However, she

concludes that within the “frenzy of the visible” women are always the victim, as a submissive to the male, “the female victim cringes at the phallic power of the dominator” (Williams, 2009). Even when the female pretends to “succumb” she is still succumbing to the phallus as the “rules are not her own” (Williams, 2009).

Yet, to further the idea that *Raw* inverts the act of viewing sex as “probing the unseen world of the female body,” Ducournau places Justine in the position of agency. Within Justine’s narrative, the rules are exactly her own. Justine becomes infatuated with her homosexual roommate Adrien. As he plays soccer, she observes him. And as the camera follows her line of sight, our eyes, mimicking the motions of the camera like a predator, we survey his legs, arms, muscle composition and finally his crotch. In this instance, the camera does much to tell us that this infatuation is not with Adrien himself but rather, it implicates Adrien’s body. Immediately, Justine gets a nosebleed and proceeds to lick it off her face seductively. When finally, alone with Adrien, he probes her if she “likes S&M s—t...or worse.” When she sleeps with him, she tells him it’s the latter. This results in an aggressive sex scene where the loss of her virginity is displayed through the biting of her arm, and a subsequent rush of blood to the bedsheets as Adrien tells her to “stop, stop.” However, more titillating is that at this very moment, Ducournau does much to ensure that the ‘climax’ or “meat shot” of this moment is shared between both Justine and the viewer as the biting of her arm coincides with her staring directly into the camera. As she moans, her mouth seeps blood as she maintains contact with the camera. The focus here is clearly not on intercourse as all genitalia is out of sight, the bottom half of their bodies in the shot is obscured by Justine’s raised head as she contorts her body on top of Adrien’s. The image of entwined limbs can be referred back to Price’s comment in which the act of cannibalism fuses the “eater” and “eaten” within a “devouring world” and that the desired body is “ultimately the male body.” In contrast to Williams, Justine doesn’t “cringe at the phallic power of the dominator”

(Williams, 209). Instead, her “quest to see pleasure displaced onto pain” (Williams, 194) is momentarily satiated, ultimately resulting in a moment of orgasmic satisfaction. However, Ducournau does well to obscure the lines between obtaining pleasure from consumption, sex, and dominance.

Justine’s previous predatory view of Adrien playing soccer encapsulates Brittany Poole’s adoption of Laura Mulvey’s “female gaze.” While Justine’s sexuality is a large focus of the film, the filming itself makes sure that Justine is not objectified. In reverse, we see Justine in positions of power, often surveying. Poole, in order to hone in on the definition of the female gaze, defines the male gaze writing that the male gaze utilizes a plot within the linear storytelling function to represent “the male sex act in its insistent forward motion” (Mulvey 79). With this in mind, the “plot and spectacle” reflect the masculine hierarchy such that women are objectified, occupying a “secondary fetishistic position” (Mulvey 80). Poole thus describes, using the words of Mulvey that the female gaze is “women gaze as women, disconnected from a conventional male economy of desire, whether or not a man made the film or a patriarchal perspective informs it” (Mulvey 80) Instead, sexual desire is embraced by both male and female. Later in the film, at another party, Justine is pictured perching on a countertop, surveying the crowd for someone with whom she can have sex with. As Mulvey states, “cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire.” Ducournau utilizes this, creating a level of mutuality among the observer and the observed. The camera is facing Justine directly as though she watches us watching her. She licks her lips while the background music intensifies with eerie notes from an organ. The color of the room is a distinct and vibrant red. Initially, the scene opens upon with the image of two students passionately moving, the silhouettes of the bodies moving together. The camera begins to pan inwards such that the viewer makes its way in between these two bodies until we are aligned with Justine’s gaze. While the camera maintains its

focus on Justine, it is easy to disregard the two students that slowly move into the foreground. However, when carefully looking at the frame, we see that the female student is licking the eyeball of the male in a motion that mimics the act of kissing. Arguably, this image produces a metaphorical portrayal of Justine's intense desire to consume through her gaze.

The concept of viewing-to-consume, a mutual moment shared between Justine and the viewer within this particular scene is touched upon within Anat Pick's *Vegan Cinema*. Pick discusses the way in which "the voyeur is the consummate consumer: [s]he wants to devour – to possess in full – the object of sight, to make [him/her] their own; which is why true to cinematic convention, voyeurism, facilitated by the male-identified camera, leads to murder" (Pick, 126). However, Ducournau's camera alters such a "male-identified camera." Instead, she overturns this in its entirety such that the focus is placed upon the "female gaze." We seek out Adrien through the eyes of the camera, which in turn, reflects the gaze of Justine as she observes his body. Pick goes on to describe cinema as being "a system of rampant consumption and preservation that lends itself to the analogy between looking and eating. Eating consumes and destroys the object. To look but not eat is to accept the existence of things beyond our satiation, however, the to engage in the act of consuming, we divulge our desires. Therefore, by initially consuming meat, Justine terminates her devotion to vegetarianism and then by consuming human meat, she forgoes a commitment to maintain societal taboo. The analogy between looking and eating connects the culinary with visual habits. "Can we eat without destroying? Look without appropriating? Enjoy without acquiring?" (Pick, 127). However, *Raw* crosses this boundary, merging the act of consumption with the act of destroying. The moment in which Justine consumes meat onscreen details this very first act of violence.

CONSUMING MEAT: COMMODIFICATION AND CONSUMPTION

Indeed, the moment immediately following Justine's first consumption of meat finds her sitting at the lunch cafeteria, with her white lab coat tainted in pig's blood from a prior hazing, discussing the ethics of raping a monkey as she and her fellow veterinarians dive into their lunch with animalistic haste. The image of the blood upon the white is reminiscent of menstruation, the first bleeding that signifies a transitional phase within a woman's body. Here, what Pick describes as "Vegan cinema," the notion "of the non-devouring gaze" breaks down, to become all-consuming. As the students are sitting at the table, rather discernibly and perhaps on Ducournau's part, they eat ravenously, delving into their food almost comically. One student brings up the ethics of raping a monkey. Justine chimes in, arguing that a monkey, "has rights" and can feel as much pain as a human when they're raped. This elicits the following response and question: "the monkey won't turn anorexic and see a therapist...so a raped woman, raped monkey, same thing?" Which, Justine responds to with a simple, "yes." She then contends that much like women, monkeys are self-aware. In Carol Adams' *Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals*, she claims that animals, similar to women are subject to patriarchal oppression stating that "[ecofeminism] fails to give a consistent conceptual place to the domination of animals as a significant aspect of the domination of nature." (Adams 125) Ironically, Ducournau does much to capitalize on this transformation as Justine moves from being a vegetarian to an all-consuming cannibal. No longer do the ethical arguments proposed against the raping of monkey exist, instead as Justine's urges transgress, her intentions override the sensibilities of a vegetarian that has sympathy for animals. Instead, her view "otherwise, why are we in vet school?" becomes an intriguing moral stance, one that holds far more weight at the end of the film than it does at the very beginning. The effects of this scene help to eliminate the boundaries between human and animal, deterritorializing the human body. In response to an interview, Ducournau revealed

that the image of the cannibal perfectly encapsulates this intermediate state, commenting that, “[the cannibal] it’s too present in us. Because the animal inside our bodies can’t escape, it’s here, on many levels, still inside us. That’s why we would rather treat cannibals as if they don’t exist and are outside of humanity. It’s too close.”²

RITUALIZED CONSUMPTION

However, Justine’s initial consumption of meat does not come without consequences. The metaphorical transformation that she undergoes presents itself on her very skin. The first night after consuming the rabbit’s kidney, we see Justine underneath her bedsheets writhing. The only other sound is that of constrained breathing and scratching. Suddenly the sheets are ripped open, tossed to one side, and Justine’s silhouette is left on the bed in a fetal position. The view is unable to see her face yet a faint glow of light illuminates us to a single spot of skin on her leg: a patch of bruised skin which she soon reaches over to itch. After a moment of irritation, Justine switches on her lamp to find that her entire body is covered in a rash. The rest of the scene provides the viewer with close-ups of Justine scratching her body, the redness of the rash illuminated by her bedside lamp. As she lies back down and closes her eyes, the camera fades out and fades into a black room where a horse is shown running in slow motion on a treadmill. The only sounds that can be heard are violins and Justine’s faint breathing. The body of the horse is restrained by ropes yet can run freely. Arguably, this image of the horse reiterates this transformation-in-action.

The coming-of-age theme is most usually associated with a female’s movement from adolescence to womanhood, a ritual which is in turn as deemed by societal convention, correlated to a woman’s progress towards maternity. Certainly, *Raw*’s treating of Justine’s

² Gabbatt, Adam. “Cannibal Horror Film Too Raw for Viewers as Paramedics Are Called.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 14 Sept. 2016, www.theguardian.com/film/2016/sep/14/cannibal-horror-film-raw-toronto-film-festival.

desire for flesh coincides with her budding sexual maturation. Arguably, a staple indication of burgeoning womanhood is conforming to a beautification process such as waxing. Thus, the most graphic scene within the film occurs during Justine's first Brazilian wax. Her sister Alexia, tells Justine "at your age, I already gave myself Brazilians." The reference to "your age" here indicates that Alexia has already gone through this maturation process. The next shot has Justine, lying on the bed in the middle of the frame, legs spread as the camera slowly approaches her. Much to the viewer's surprise, Alexia's dog enters the frame, approaches Justine and begins to lick her genitalia. This brief engagement procures the notion of bestiality without fully indulging in it as immediately Alexia steps into the frame, dismissing the dog to the side. What occurs next is a close-up of Justine's genitals as Alexia spreads the wax, telling her "beauty is pain." The next strip, however, gets stuck and the camera once again engages the viewer with an intimate close-up. Alexia reaches for scissors and Justine protests, arguing that her sister will cut her: "you'll castrate me!" Instead, Ducournau within this debacle inverts this "castration" resulting in Alexia cutting off her finger (a phallus) and fainting to the floor. Justine proceeds to consume the finger and within this moment, Justine subverts all notions of beautification as imposed by masculinized ideals. Instead, her coming-of-age encounter, as opposed to her first wax, is her first taste of human flesh.

The scene that follows Justine's observations of Adrien playing soccer is also of particular interest. The camera finds itself positioned behind Justine in her bedroom, as though the viewer is intruding into a personal space. Justine is turned away, facing her mirror and we observe her from behind as she dances, stiffly rotating one leg. As the dancing ensues, her body begins to loosen and thus, becomes more fluid with a movement generating from her legs up into her arms as though she is in a trance. The camera turns, and the viewer takes the position of the mirror, facing Justine and once more, her gaze. As Kaja Silverman describes in her text *The Acoustic Mirror*, the acknowledgment of one's self within a mirror is an

acknowledgment of subjectivity. Subjectivity, as Silverman suggests, “from the very outset is dependent upon the recognition of a distance separating self from the other – on an object whose loss is simultaneous with its apprehension.” (Silverman 7) This moment, in particular, recalls the lunch scene in which Justine tells Adrien, “monkeys are self-aware. They see themselves, in a mirror, right?” Here, Justine finds herself in a position of self-alteration where the differentiation between human and animal reveals itself to be non-existent; it is as though she is seeing herself for the first time. As Justine dances, she is listening to a song by two female twins, Orties. The song is called “plus putes que toutes les putes,” which translates to “sluttier than all the sluts.” The lyrics detail a libertine description of commands that refer to sexual dominance in the most animalistic and debased of ways. As the song develops the lyrics develop as a sort of manifesto against the male, and sexual freedom through necrophilia and cannibalism:

I'll leave you even if you're handsome
my love, "coco" is not "pig"
you're always in my bed
"guys" plus "me" equals "nothing"
I'm sick of 69
I just want 666
I suck your bones, lap it up
you would choke on the cum, dear
I like to bang the dead.

While the song continues, Justine puts on lipstick intensely, gaining speed in time with the beat of the music until it is smudged around the entirety of her mouth. Conventionally,

women use mirrors for a private moment to recompose their image, most often to fix their faces for the outside world. The way in which she puts lipstick on in this scene really heightens the way in which she rebels against the notion that the mirror is used to attain perfection, an idealization of one's own image. The camera then moves in on her and cuts between viewing her in front of the mirror to being behind the mirror. She rubs her lipstick onto the mirror and kisses it, coalescing with and consuming this new, messy reflection of herself.

CONSUMED: THE TRANSFORMATION

The very metaphor of herd-like animalistic behavior manifests itself in the action of the first hazing scene. The movement of students through an institutionalized education system is demonstrated quite physically as they move from the dorms to the hidden warehouse. The narrative is layered with hierarchies and the notion of overcoming obstacles. The new students must not only navigate their way through the school, which plays the most inconspicuous role in the film, but also through the hazing that is inflicted onto them by the older students, or, as mentioned within the film, "the Great Ones." Within the first hazing scene, the students are awoken from their beds in the form of a raid and told to line up. When one student asks, "now where are we heading?" One of the "Great One's" responds, "to freedom fuckers!" whilst pointing to the sky with two fingers. Students are herded, like a cattle drive, from all directions down a series of stairs, that is somewhat reminiscent of a factory line. Pushed into an elevator, the students emerge underground, and the film slows down. The image that follows is one of slow movement, students with their faces obscured, on their hands and knees crawling across the floor. The lighting here is almost nonexistent barring some white neon lights. Ducournau emphasizes the act of crawling within the

moment of the bare, undressed bodies such that muscles are exposed and defined by the shadows cast by the lighting. Upon reaching a warehouse, the doors are flung open to reveal bright light and the students are shepherded into a chaotic space of bodies partying. As the camera guides the viewer through this scene, we experience a long action shot of sweaty debauchery cast in a deep red hue. For adolescents, this is the ultimate coming of age: the consumption of sex, drugs, and alcohol in one setting. Interestingly, the walls are graffitied with writing in English, and one boy walks through the frame wearing a hat that reads “WTF.” The space in which Justine finds herself thus represents the epitome of non-conformity, a space where one can not only lose themselves, but also their culture and identity.

Here, Ducournau presents the viewer with a realized human ‘food-chain.’ This ‘food-chain’ metaphorically reflects a societal hierarchy and is what Justine navigates to make it through the ritualized hazing. Interestingly, the choice of using a veterinary school once again relates to Ducournau’s use of inversion. In the place that teaches humans to reconstruct the animal, we see a break-down of the human. We are consistently reminded of this throughout the film through the various placements of still animal imagery: an anesthetized horse hanging by its hooves; a pig cadaver on a gurney; a slow-motion revealing of a stiff dog on an instrument table. These images provide a background to Justine’s ultimate transformation as she metaphorically-turned-literally consumes her way to the end of the film, “becoming-animal.” The concept of “becoming-animal” is a concept coined by Deleuze and Guattari that addresses the question of what occurs beyond the human subject. This idea takes into consideration exactly what it means to be human when assuming that a human is defined by all the associated norms and expectations of a human as developed over the course of history. The happenings within the second party scene directly contrast that of the first. Here, we distinctly see Justine’s transformative, animalistic state. Once again, Ducournau places the

viewer in an indiscernible location, lit by a deep red color. However, this party is distinctly tamer. As mentioned earlier, Justine sat atop a counter surveying the crowd. When she finally stands, she similar to the first scene, navigates herself through the room. However, this time she is severely intoxicated and finds herself stumbling up to a boy, whom she tries to kiss. The girl that he is accompanied with pushes Justine which leads her to turn and attempt to kiss this girl. Before any more trouble ensues, Alexia appears to drag her out, and we see Justine being pulled away from the camera, her eyes locked straight at the viewer. The next morning Adrien shows Justine a video from the previous night. It reveals Justine, on all fours the floor of a mortuary being coerced by Alexia through the words “fetch,” to eat the dead body of a man. Here, Ducournau reveals to us Justine’s final, raw, unrestrained, cannibalistic self. The film ends with Justine’s father telling her that cannibalism runs through the family on the maternal side, which immediately brings forth Price’s connection between cannibalism and the mother-child relationship. However, rather comically he assures her, “I’m sure you’ll find a solution honey,” which suggests that to remain human, Justine must distinguish herself through restraint.

Ducournau’s presentation of Justine’s transformation thus makes indiscernible the divide between being human and inhuman. As stated by Deleuze and Guattari, the act of “becoming-animal is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes.” (Deleuze 262) Therefore, Ducournau’s presentation of Justine throughout the film is a state of transition as opposed to a final subject. Julia Ducournau’s *Raw* presents cannibalism through the lens of a young woman and the act of consumption. While the act of eating is to lessen from the outside within, Ducournau’s undertakings of inversion serve to deconstruct this idea. Ultimately, Justine’s cannibalistic tendencies allow her to grow from her old self into a new ‘liberated’ self.

Works Cited

- Adams, Carol J. "Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals." *Hypatia*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1991, pp. 125–145. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3810037.
- Bohan, Janis S. "Regarding Gender: Essentialism, Constructionism, and Feminist Psychology." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, Mar. 1993
- Bordo Susan, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)
- Raw*. Directed by Julia Ducournau, performance by Garance Marillier, Petit Film, Rouge International, Frakas Productions, Ezekiel Film Production, Wild Bunch, 2016. *Netflix*. www.netflix.com/watch/80115405?trackId=13752289&tctx=0%2C0%2C722739089445c2af8f50c1f2b27d68f1bcac2af2%3A7b91a2307f7cba64149aaaf1cc307e9e836c8da8%2C%2C
- Gabbatt, Adam. "Cannibal Horror Film Too Raw for Viewers as Paramedics Are Called." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 14 Sept. 2016, www.theguardian.com/film/2016/sep/14/cannibal-horror-film-raw-toronto-film-festival.
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum Books, 1987)
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Feminisms*, 1991, pp. 432–442., doi:10.1007/978-1-349-22098-4_25.
- Silverman, Kaja. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Indiana Univ. Press, 1999.
- Palmer, Tim. "Style and Sensation in the Contemporary French Cinema of the Body." *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2006, pp. 22–32. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20688527.
- Pick, Anat. (2018). *Vegan Cinema*. 10.1007/978-3-319-73380-7_6.
- Price, Merrall L. "Consuming Passions." 2004, doi:10.4324/9780203493939.
- Ussher, Jane M. "Eclecticism and Methodological Pluralism." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1999, pp. 41–46., doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1999.tb00339.x.
- Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*. University of California Press, 2010.