3

The Book of Revelation: othering the centre

With Sharon Bickle[1]

The Book of Revelation, Kokkinos's second feature and her most controversial film to date, premiered in Australia at the Melbourne Film Festival in July 2006. Released eight years after *Head On* (1998), *The Book of Revelation* spent most of those intervening years in development (Byrnes n.d.a; Cordaiy 2006). One challenge was adaptation: Kokkinos and Andrew Bovell adapted the film from Rupert Thomson's 2000 novel of the same name, including transposing the story from Amsterdam to Melbourne, the site of all of her fictional films. Another challenge was financing. Even for Kokkinos, who had emerged with such resounding success on the national stage with *Head On*, *The Book of Revelation* was a tough sell to financiers. As Byrnes (n.d.a) offers, Kokkinos's 'films are more formally adventurous and self-conscious than most of her contemporaries, and more difficult to finance'. Certainly as an art-house rape-revenge film *The Book of Revelation* was some distance from the commercial, genre-based filmmaking that the Australian film industry was shifting towards at the time (a shift epitomised by the 2008 founding of Screen Australia).[2] It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that where *Head On* was released to frequently rapturous reviews, particularly in Australia, Kokkinos's follow-up was received tentatively and, even now, remains widely regarded as an anomaly in her otherwise highly regarded oeuvre.

This dynamic is also reflected in scholarly engagement with the film. More than a decade after its release it is still the focus of only a handful of discussions published in trade magazines

and scholarly books and journals. Of this existing work, most has focused on the film's engagement with the rape-revenge genre[3] (Heller-Nicholas 2011a, 2011b; Henry 2013, 2014; McWilliam and Bickle 2017), and particularly its reversal of gendered norms: its replacement of a female rape victim with a male, and male perpetrators with females. In this chapter, we aim to expand this genre work into an examination of both the characteristics and preoccupations of the film, as well as its place within Kokkinos's broader oeuvre. In doing so, we are interested in examining how the film does indeed depart from many of the trends established in Kokkinos's earlier films, most notably her previous emphases on social realism, Greek-Australian milieus, and queer coming of age, yet still conforms in key ways with her emphases on sex, trauma, and outsiders. We are particularly interested in the depiction of the film's protagonist Daniel (played by Tom Long) who, as a successful, white, hetero-masculine man is the only hegemonic protagonist of Kokkinos's oeuvre. In particular, we argue that Daniel's abduction and torture disorientates him so profoundly that he is rendered an outsider to his own life – he changes his name and leaves his previous job, house, partner, and profession on his return from captivity. Further, we argue that the film's close focus on the vulnerable heterosexual male body, and particularly its privileging of spatial relations, presents rape as a trauma of disorientation – a sort of vertigo – in which the victim is unable to reassert control and achieve stability, even after his release. Daniel's experience of rape fundamentally alters his sense of place and hence his understanding of himself in the world, to the extent that he is traumatised into becoming an outsider. Directed by and towards his unknown attackers, the three masked women, Daniel's relationship to his body and masculinity is transformed; his ability to make meaning of people and objects is lost. Only through Mark's (Colin Friels) intervention does the film end with the promise of Daniel's restored masculinity. Thus, where Kokkinos's previous films increasingly focused on an intersectional outsider (or centring the other), *The Book of Revelation* can be read as the reverse: as 'othering' the standard

hero of much Australian cinema, namely the 'white, heterosexual man of Anglo-Irish origin as the Australian type par excellence' (Seco 2008: 145). We examine how this occurs in relation to its revisioning of genre, its use of space, and its emphasis on disorientation.

The Book of Revelation

Unlike Kokkinos's three previous films, *The Book of Revelation* is neither set in a working-class Greek-Australian milieu nor organised around an intersectional protagonist, both of which had emerged as her directorial signatures by 2006. Instead, the film begins in the privileged world of modern dance and centres around a celebrated Anglo protagonist. But Daniel's privilege is soon challenged when he undergoes a series of violent abuses. Indeed, *The Book of Revelation* is a 113-minute rape-revenge film that employs a stylised or art-house realism, alongside stylised dialogue and minimal or discordant music. Set in Melbourne, the film follows Daniel who, with girlfriend Bridget (played by Anna Torv), is the principal dancer in a modern dance troupe directed by Isabel (played by Greta Scacchi). After a rehearsal in the first scene of the film, Daniel walks to the shops and is abruptly abducted in an alleyway by three masked, cloaked women. Daniel spends twelve days in captivity, which are revealed slowly in increasingly intense flashbacks, and it is this captivity and its impact on his (and others') life that is the film's focus.

As its biblical title suggests, Daniel experiences a personal apocalypse during his captivity: he is chained to a floor, raped, and tortured. On his release, Daniel is unable to explain what has happened to him; he leaves Bridget, stops dancing, and embarks on a violent quest to find his attackers, who remain unidentified throughout his abduction and throughout the film. Instead, he searches for women with similar features: a butterfly tattoo, red fingernails, red hair. When Daniel begins a relationship with Julie (played by Deborah Mailman), he begins to reclaim parts of his

life, including a tentative return to dance, in part because the casting of an Indigenous actor allows him to trust that she was not one of his attackers. However, Daniel is far from recovered and, when he violently attacks a woman in a nightclub after mistaking her for one of his attackers, he is arrested. It is only then, his abductors still unknown and at large, that Daniel seems as though he may finally be able to communicate his traumatic experience to Mark, a sex crimes detective and Isabel's ex-partner.

The film marks Kokkinos's first use of the rape-revenge genre, a genre that emerged in 1960 with the release of Ingmar Bergman's *The Virgin Spring* – a director Kokkinos has noted as an early inspiration (Kalina 2009) – though it was not until the 1970s that the genre achieved widespread popularity, at least in the United States (Clover 1992: 138; Lindop 2015: 55; Heller-Nicholas 2011b). Although still associated with the 1970s (Projansky 2001: 60), the rape-revenge genre has recently undergone another surge in popularity with films like *The Last House on the Left* (2009), *I Spit on Your Grave* (2010), *Straw Dogs* (2011) – all three of which are remakes of 1970s rape-revenge films of the same name – alongside *Descent* (2007), *Teeth* (2007), and *The Book of Revelation*. Like most rape-revenge films, *The Book of Revelation* is organised around 'a rape (or many rapes, or an attempted rape) and an act of revenge' (Heller-Nicholas 2011b: 3). These events are narratively organised across three acts: 'rape, transformation, revenge' (Read 2000: 242). In the first act, the protagonist is raped (or almost raped); in the second act the protagonist undergoes a recovery, whereby they slowly transform from victim to avenger; and in the third act, they seek and enact revenge, often raping and/or murdering their attacker in the penultimate scene (Read 2000: 242; Heller-Nicholas 2011a: 88).

In *The Book of Revelation*, these acts are intercut with Daniel's captivity and are told in flashbacks throughout the second and third acts of the film. The effect is, rather than emerging from captivity into a clear revenge phase, Daniel remains lost: confusion and disorientation stay with him. Even at the film's end, the motives and identities of his attackers remain unclear, not only

to Daniel himself but the audience: this is reinforced when we learn in the credits that Anna Torv plays both girlfriend, Bridget, and the attacker, Gertrude. Though Kokkinos has insisted there is no narrative link between the two characters (Hopgood 2006), nevertheless the reimagined spaces of rape not only remain, and continue to affect Daniel, as well as extend beyond the diegetic world of the film.

Unlike most rape-revenge films, however, *The Book of Revelation* reverses the typical emphasis on male perpetrators and female victims (Heller-Nicholas 2011a, 2011b; McWilliam and Bickle 2017). Byrnes (n.d.a) argues that the film is 'based on a simple, powerful idea: most films about rape are about women as victims of men, so reversing that idea allows men to experience the trauma of violation'. And it is through that trauma that, as we argue throughout this chapter, it is the hetero-male body that is rendered vulnerable and Daniel who is violently remade into an outsider. But unlike the characters of Kokkinos's other films, who are marked by diverse intersectionalities but who frequently demonstrate considerable resilience, Daniel remains vulnerable: broken and unable to adapt to his new situation.

The film itself opens on a rehearsal focused on Daniel and Bridget who, like the heterosexual newlyweds at the beginning of *Head On*, are also at the centre of the frame and again suggest the primacy of heteronormativity. Certainly Daniel is a stereotypical lead; young, white, and muscular, he is both popular with and desired by other dancers. The opening scene offers a split screen: the camera follows Daniel as he moves through the dance studio, revealing the bodies of the other dancers flexing and stretching. The use of Daniel's point-of-view establishes Kokkinos's visceral approach, as well as introducing bodies – working bodies as objects shaped by and for work – and their orientations as a key feature in the film. This attention to physicality and purpose contrasts with the dialogue, which is minimalist and often phrased in questions: 'Can you buy me some cigarettes?'; 'Where have you been?'; 'Why are you doing this?' Language in this film marks relationships in terms of uncertainty, particularly Daniel's

relationships with the female characters (Bridget, Isabel, his attackers). In contrast, the rehearsal establishes the centrality not of Daniel's perspective (the scene is shot behind Daniel's head) but his body. A physical hierarchy is established: Daniel directs a harnessed Bridget confidently and pushes down male dancers. When Isabel reprimands Daniel after an overtly sexual thrust, her demand that he dance 'without ego' draws attention to his (hetero)sexuality and the way it overshadows and dominates the bodies of the other dancers. After the rehearsal, Bridget asks Daniel to buy her cigarettes and it is on his way to the tobacconist that an abrupt fade to black marks the moment he is abducted.

The following scenes are of Isabel's and Bridget's concerns when Daniel does not return for the evening's performance. But we do not immediately see where he is; in fact, the next time we see Daniel he is being pushed out of a moving van in an isolated dirt field beside a train track, his head covered in a hessian bag in the first, and quite literal, indication that Daniel has been disoriented by his capture. It is also the first hint that Daniel has been rendered an outsider, from having started in the city centre in a position of control and privilege to being pushed into the dirt on the outskirts of the city. French (2013: n.p.) writes: 'After his kidnap and rape, Daniel is dumped in the west of Melbourne like rubbish – perhaps signifying the west of the city as a wasteland.' Where *Head On* concluded with Ari walking away from the city, choosing to embrace a disorientated worldview (in Ahmed's sense of it) and to live aslant (see Chapter 2), Daniel walks towards the city with a newly disorientated worldview that has instead been thrust upon him by trauma and abuse.

On his return home, Daniel is unable to tell Bridget what has happened, which at this point is also unknown to the audience. Claire Henry (2014: 128) notes that the audience 'feels Daniel's trauma, coming to know he has been raped before seeing the visible proof of the rape scene'. Indeed, Daniel is now both effectively mute and unable to sleep; he flinches at light and at sudden movement. Daniel's fragility is symbolised by glass: his return is marked by Bridget breaking a glass decanter and Isabel

later breaking a wine glass. Not only is the fragile uncertainty of connection through language lost, he also loses the ability to dance – an action over which he previously held mastery. When he returns to rehearsal, he stands impassively looking helplessly down at his body (via a disorienting camera shot down his body at the clothed bulge of his penis) before leaving.

Daniel's twelve days of captivity, seen in flashback, involve a series of assaults, from being physically stimulated against his pleas to being forced to masturbate and later raped and tortured, chained to a wall from his penis. During his forced masturbation early in his captivity, Daniel reasserts his subjectivity by telling the women 'when a man fucks a woman, no matter how beautiful she is, whenever he closes his eyes he always thinks of himself'. This briefly reinstates the male as active (the one who 'fucks') and beauty as a passive quality possessed by women. This stands in contrast to the women's answer to his early question 'Why me?', which is 'Because you're beautiful.' His claim to control an internal space, and assertion of the primacy of his relationship to his penis, is brutally countered when he is raped with a large strap-on dildo. After he is sodomised, his attacker says, 'You know what you are, don't you? You're a cunt.' This shift of Daniel's status from active to passive, from male to female, reasserts the conventional gender relationship familiar to the genre, and marks the point of transformation in Daniel's subjectivity. His hegemonic privileges are being forcibly removed from him: he is being 'othered'. As Kokkinos (qtd in Cordaiy 2006: 41) notes, the abuse scenes are 'about power and the reversal of power [. . .] his power position as a man is stripped away from him'.

Further, it is power that Daniel does not recover on his release, where he is instead increasingly an outsider to his own life. Indeed, once released, far from emerging from captivity to embrace the conventional role of avenger, Daniel's search is chaotic: he is no longer fit for purpose as a dancer, but neither is he an effective tool of revenge. Daniel leaves Bridget, and has sex with multiple women in a search for his attackers. This search, however, lacks narrative coherence as the distinguishing marks of his attackers – red hair,

red fingernails, a circle tattoo on a breast, a butterfly tattoo on a hip – do not resolve the identities of the attackers, but instead remain random fragments that resist organisation and closure.

While seduction is frequently an element in the revenge act (Lehman 2001: 7; Henry 2013: 141), the intimacy of Daniel's search for his attackers creates an increasing 'tension' around the 'threat of vengeful violence' (Henry 2014: 132, 133). In seeking to avenge his rape himself, Daniel's revenge quest is consistent with films like *Kill Bill Vols. 1 & 2* which feature the rape victim avenging the attack themselves. As Projansky (2001: 60) notes, there are two main variants of the genre, depending on who avenges the rape. In one variation, the avenger is typically a man who has lost his 'wife or daughter to a rape/murder', as in *The Virgin Spring*, *Braveheart*, and *Memento*, and in the other, the avenger is the victim themselves, as in *Lipstick*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Ms. 45*, and *Kill Bill*; in both variants, however, the victim is a woman and her attacker a man or men (Projansky 2001: 60). Indeed, 'the most immediately recognizable instances of the rape-revenge film are [. . .] structured around a male perpetrator and a female victim' (Heller-Nicholas 2011b: 9). That Daniel is both victim and avenger is thus of note. In fact, the gender reversal and attendant shifts it triggers offers a reimagining of the genre itself, for as Andrew Urban (2006: n.p.) notes in his review of the film: 'We see many films about men using and abusing their power over women, rarely the reverse. And never like this.'

Henry (2014: 127, 130) agrees that *The Book of Revelation* offers a reimagining of the genre (it is what she terms a 'revisionist rape-revenge' film), though she argues that this is primarily because of its 'sensitivity' to depicting the experience of a male rape victim, as well as its emphasis on the subsequent post-traumatic impact on his life. However, we argue that its 'reimagining' extends beyond these aspects. It is not only highly unusual for its gender inversion of victim and attackers – in the small number of rape-revenge films where the victim is male, the attacker is also male (for example, *Deliverance*, *Acolytes*, *Vulgar*, and *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*) – but also because its victim is a masculine,

heterosexual man. Male victims in rape-revenge films are typically marginalised or 'othered' in some way, usually constructed as either a 'feminised' man or a child (Lehman 2001: 75; Heller-Nicholas 2011b: 50). In *Deliverance*, for instance, the victim is overweight, feminised Bobby, whose marginalised status is flagged by his attackers when they note 'Looks like we got us a sow here instead of a boar' (Schubart 2007: 86; Cohen 2014), while in *Acolytes* the victims are teenagers. In *The Book of Revelation*, however, Daniel's muscular body and heterosexual desirability are emphasised from the very first scene of the film, first during the dance rehearsal and later when a fellow dancer flirts with him. Even so, any expectation that Daniel's masculinity and heteronormativity might translate directly into a more satisfying revenge narrative is frustrated. While Daniel quickly turns to violence as a means to reassert himself, his masculinity, and his mastery of his world, his inability to accurately identify his attackers means this violence remains unfocused and unresolved, and extends the impact of the original rape by creating new victims from his (falsely) retributive assaults. Thus, rather than depicting revenge as an effective counter-narrative to rape trauma, the film instead suggests that revenge is a site of further trauma, an expansion of the initial crime. In terms of the rape-revenge genre, then, *The Book of Revelation* denies the role of revenge as a form of return or reinstatement of the status quo: instead, the outcome of rape is a rolling state of trauma.

The film's title also flags a broader reimagining. The biblical Book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, presents the prophetic visions of John, events that describe an apocalyptic vision of death and destruction and the second coming of Christ. At the centre of the film is Daniel: not only is the film's narrative fixed on Daniel in terms of his psychological development but, particularly in the captivity scenes, Daniel's naked male body, trussed or hanging, is literally the centre of the room and the centre of frame. At the centre of his body, his penis, and the power struggle over who controls it, means that while he is the victim, Daniel's body/the naked heterosexual male body

is never de-centred or marginalised, even while Daniel himself struggles to understand his place post-rape. In this sense, the male body is the film's 'text', the visionary 'Book of Revelation' and that which is revelatory. The portentous title both indicates the power rape has to wreak destruction, and points towards what is revealed: a post-rape world that, regardless of the intervention of the Christ-like Mark, remains scarred by the horrors that have been witnessed.

What is also significant for this reimagined post-rape world is the contrast between the rape narrative as it is written on the naked male body and the way in which the raped female body exists in other films. Thus, while the raped male body describes and defines a profound disorientation in the world, in other films, even the recent *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) – a film lauded for its presentation of female subjectivity – raped, tortured, and traumatised female bodies are used as a generic strategy to orientate the audience, invoking a familiar post-apocalyptic world, with motherhood and milk symbolically affirming the subjugation of humanity to the alien-looking Immortan Joe and his War Boys. Therefore, by associating rape with the male body rather than the female body, Kokkinos finds a space to redefine rape as a site of unresolvable trauma, but also, problematically, raises questions about the raped female body as decentred and normalised: little more than apocalyptic mise en scène. As Kokkinos herself offers, 'Man as victim, women as perpetrators seemed such a bold idea. The simple reversal invites us to look at the situation through new eyes' (qtd in Urban 2006: n.p.). One of the things those 'new eyes' reveal is the cultural intersections between rape and gender that become apparent when gender norms are reversed.

In focusing attention on the heteronormative male body as the location and interpretative framework for the experience of rape, Kokkinos not only redefines the rape-revenge genre, but presents a new vision of the post-rape experience as a traumatic reimagining of the world. A phenomenological reading of the film using Ahmed's notions of queer phenomenology reveals how rape trauma can be usefully interpreted in the film as a problem

of orientation. From his original position as the dominant male (the site of 'ego'), Daniel does not emerge in the revenge act, as we might expect of the genre, loosed from the ties of relationship and moral responsibility, newly shaped to the purpose of vengeance. Indeed, the complicated structure of the film in which Daniel's rape/s are shown in flashback means that clear boundaries between the rape and the return are impossible to establish. The film thus raises questions about when, and if, Daniel re-emerges at all. In this way, Kokkinos resists the genre's simple stages: the narrative movement which displaces the trauma of rape with the subsequent atonement of revenge. Instead, Daniel has been knocked askew, trapped in a world defined by dislocation. Daniel's experience of rape redefines his world but not in simple, purposeful ways. Instead, he is effectively ejected from the life he previously lived: he is rendered an outsider to his own life.

Ahmed (2006: 25) describes phenomenology as a 'turn toward' objects. Traditional phenomenology concerns itself with the experience and perception of objects (Cerbone 2006: 3), and Ahmed refines this, using not only the work of Husserl and Heidegger but particularly Merleau-Ponty's work on embodiment, to focus on orientation as a way of knowing where we are: both spatially and in terms of sexual orientation. Ahmed (2006: 5. 68) argues that bodies 'become orientated by how they take up time and space' and 'orientations toward sexual objects affect other things that we do such that different orientations, different ways of directing one's desires, means inhabiting different worlds'. In this way, Ahmed defines the queer of 'queer phenomenology' as a departure from the straight, not only in sexual terms, the differences between normative and non-normative sexual identity, but also more broadly as a way of being in the world, of facing the world aslant. The spectre of a world reshaped by violent disorientation is raised, but itself exists aslant to the main interest of her work. It is these largely unexplored implications of disorientation as a violent reimagining of the world, and of the subject's altered place within it, that we are interested in in this chapter.

In the film's opening scene, there is a direct relationship between body and purpose – dance is less performance and more a way of being and mediating the self as subject, although the scene of fans by the studio door reinforces the success of Bridget and Daniel's embodiment of gender roles through dance. Daniel's view of the world as revealed by dance is not so much black and white as up and down: he orientates himself to those around him hierarchically by pushing the harnessed Bridget firmly upward, and the male dancers down. Daniel's dance has a clear, vertical axis and direction. That this also reflects the orientation of his life is made clear when, after the rehearsal, Daniel walks across Melbourne to the tobacconist. The vertical architecture of the city reinforces the upward trajectories of the dance: the eye is drawn up by the sky above the narrow laneway he walks through, and follows the upward flight of pigeons (see Figure 3.1). This is punctuated by the downward slam of a window signalling his abduction.

If, in Ahmed's terms, it is our orientation to material objects – tables, chairs, doors, windows – that determines the way we act and think in the world, then the shift from the vertical orientation of the early scenes to Daniel lying horizontal on the floor in his

Figure 3.1 An emphasis on the vertical early in *The Book of Revelation*

Figure 3.2 Daniel's shift to 'horizontal' after his capture in *The Book of Revelation*

captivity (see Figure 3.2), his wrists and ankles bound, becomes highly significant. A ballerina in a music box sits just out of his reach, a symbol that Daniel is now his captors' plaything, which is emphasised when he asks why they have abducted him and is told, 'For our own pleasure.' The shift of orientation from vertical to horizontal can thus be interpreted as Daniel's transformation from subject to object. Ahmed argues:

> The upright body is involved in the world and acts on the world, or even 'can act' in so far as it is already involved. The weakening of this involvement is what causes the body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects. (Ahmed 2006: 159)

The masked women's final assault is to chain him to the wall by a cock ring until he dances for them, which he does, as they remind him he is 'powerless'. Whereas previously Daniel's muscular dancer's body affirmed his primacy and his dominance, Daniel's dance confirms his transformation: locked alone in the centre of a small room, bound wrists attached to a chain in the ceiling, Daniel hangs, unnaturally and awkwardly upright, rather than stands. At the end of his dance, he spins ineffectually, confirming his collapse into object as he embodies the containment and purposelessness of a music-box figure.

In returning to 'ordinary' life, Daniel is unable to return his world to an upright perspective. Bridget contributes to the blurring of the boundaries between captivity and release through a shift in the film's colour palette. The oranges of the early scenes are now reds (in chairs, furnishings, and in Bridget's dress) which invoke the distinctive red nails of one of his captors. Moreover, Bridget is far from sympathetic to the returned Daniel. When Bridget returns home to find Daniel naked asleep in bed (on sheets and pillowcase with vertical stripes), she pulls the sheet from him and thrusts him onto the floor in an echo of his captive (horizontal) position. The blurred boundaries between captivity and ordinary life emphasise Daniel's rape as a trauma of disorientation – a shift to a world that does not or cannot right itself. Daniel's initial return to his life is characterised by failure: he is unable to account for his missing time; he is unable to dance (the means by which he previously asserted his masculinity and a reflection of his emasculation by his female abductors); and, despite his rising tally of anonymous sexual partners, he is unable to find his attackers. Even in the final moments of the film, when Daniel thinks he has found one of his attackers, he is wrong. Daniel follows a red-headed woman into a toilet, violently hitting and undressing her as he searches for a tattoo. When he fails to find it, he abandons the attack but is literally expelled from society – he is chased down by members of the public before being locked in a police cell – his quest to find his attackers unachieved. The moment, occurring in the final two scenes of the film, marks Daniel's transition to outsider as complete. That Daniel's revenge is ultimately unsuccessful also underscores the complexity of enacting his revenge in a traumatised post-rape world.

There are two attempts to re-anchor Daniel after he has begun to seek out his attackers. Through Mark, a dying Isabel re-establishes contact and invites Daniel and Julie to lunch. Her act of reconciliation is presented as a maternal act: Daniel recognises the familial associations when he jokes to Julie, 'it's not like you're meeting my mother or anything. Isabel's much worse than my mother.' While Daniel's reconciliation with

Isabel aids his recovery – he tentatively returns to dance – this is upset when he is arrested. This sets up the final attempt to re-anchor Daniel when Mark – the film's paternal figure as well as, in terms of the broader biblical association of the title, a Christ-figure – visits Daniel after his arrest in the final scene. Mark hugs a stricken Daniel, holding him upright, literally offering Daniel the support to reorientate himself from object (horizontal) to reimagined subject (vertical). Mark then invites Daniel, in the last words of the film, to 'go back to the beginning': to tell his own story. This suggests that, with Mark's help, Daniel might be able to finally assert a coherent narrative framework for all of those fragments, and thus re-establish control. In this way the film ends with the possibility of Daniel reorienting his disoriented masculinity.

From revelatory to *Blessed*

As a rape-revenge film, *The Book of Revelation* represents a confronting departure from many of the genre's heteronormative foundations. In its replacement of a female (or even marginalised male) rape victim with a dominant, heterosexual male who is then unable to successfully enact his revenge, Kokkinos explores a new space for the genre, one that resists a simple progression from rape to revenge such that revenge somehow atones for the trauma of rape. Instead, *The Book of Revelation* depicts rape in terms of violence and dislocation which, read through Ahmed's notions of orientation, reimagines Daniel's world, profoundly altering his relationship to his body and to the people and practices that had previously anchored him in his life. The effect is that Daniel – violently stripped of his privilege in his abduction and progressively rejecting, or ejected from, every one of the connections of his previous life – is remade into an outsider who is, at the film's end, literally locked away from society. In some ways, then, the only hegemonic protagonist of Kokkinos's oeuvre becomes the most explicit outsider in it.

Certainly *The Book of Revelation* shares with Kokkinos's previous films a focus on a traumatised outsider. Moreover, the

outsider again functions as a witness to the failures of hegemonic institutions in the Australian cultural landscape: the family in *Antamosi* and *Only the Brave*, and the police in *Head On* and *The Book of Revelation*, the latter when Daniel decides against reporting his abduction to the police when two male police officers laugh at his suggestion that a male could be abducted by women. The moment underscores the failings of fixed or hegemonic notions of gender and identity, offering another facet to Kokkinos's interest in diversifying conceptions of Australian identity, and rendering vulnerable and powerless the most privileged subject in Australian cinema. Indeed, it is possible to read the film as a violent rejection of masculinist Australian film mythologies. At the very least, where Kokkinos's previous films increasingly focused on an intersectional outsider (or centring the 'other'), *The Book of Revelation* offers the reverse: an 'othering' of the standard Australian cinematic hero, the white, hetero-masculine man (Seco 2008: 145).

But while *The Book of Revelation* shares a number of foci with Kokkinos's previous films, it is nevertheless an anomaly, too: Daniel is a privileged subject whose story is neither set in a Greek-Australian, working-class milieu nor told using the conventions of social realism. But these are conventions that Kokkinos returns to, to different extents, in her final film, *Blessed*. However, unlike *Antamosi*, *Only the Brave*, and *The Book of Revelation*, each of which focuses on a single outsider protagonist, *Blessed* focuses on an ensemble of outsiders comprised of a group of teenagers and their mothers.

Notes

1 This chapter has been redeveloped from our earlier article originally published as:

> McWilliam, Kelly and Sharon Bickle (2017), 'Re-imagining the rape-revenge genre: Ana Kokkinos' *The Book of Revelation*', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 31.5: 706–13, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2017.1315928>.
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2 For an account of this shift, see McWilliam and Ryan's *Australian Genre Film* (Routledge, forthcoming).
3 We acknowledge the work of scholars like Clover (1992, 1993) and Creed (1993), who have discussed rape-revenge as a sub-genre of horror, and Read (2000), who has discussed it as a narrative pattern across genres. However, in this chapter, we follow Claire Henry (2014: 4), who sees rape-revenge as a specific genre that has emerged from horror but has developed its own narrative, stock characters, themes, and iconography.