

Rape, Murder, Camera, Action: The Final Scenes of Vicente Aranda's *Libertarias*

JULIA BARNES
Berry College

Abstract

This essay analyzes the final scenes in Vicente Aranda's much lauded film *Libertarias* to argue that the director's graphic and arguably gratuitous depiction of the rape and murder of the militant women at the end of the film invites comparisons with the misogynistic treatment of women in popular horror films of the 1980s and 1990s. In the scenes under consideration, the militant women, or "*libertarias*" are brutally raped and murdered by a battalion of Moroccan troops. Barnes takes care to discuss the treatment of violence throughout most of the film in order to establish what she calls the "jarring disconnect" between the optics of violence prevalent in the film up to the point where the women are attacked by the Moroccan soldiers recruited for the Nationalist Front. The author argues that a close study of the scenes in question against the conventions of the "slasher" genre reveals that Aranda either knowingly or inadvertently chose to turn militant women into victims of their gender rather than casualties of war. Barnes contends, furthermore, that viewing these final scenes through the lens of a genre or subgenre that takes pleasure in seeing women savagely raped and murdered necessarily results in an ambivalent reading of a film that is most often considered exemplary in its recognition of women soldiers fighting against Franco in the Spanish Civil War.
