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Expression of Female Rage: Defining a New Genre

Bachelor's thesis in Filmvitenskap

Supervisor: Anne-Marit Myrstad

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Sammendrag: Denne bacheloroppgaven er en sjangeranalyse av undersjangeren «female rage». Ved å analysere tre filmers hovedkarakterer er målet å svare på spørsmålet «Hva gjør en film til en «female rage»-film, og hvordan er det tydelig i motivasjonene til hovedpersonene jeg har valgt å analysere?». Ved å bruke teorier fra Laura Mulvey om «The Male Gaze», analysere «rape-revenge» historier og komme til en forståelse av kvinners og samfunnets forhold til sinne. Målet er å definere egenskapene og aspektene som er typiske for kvinnelige raserihistorier ved å analysere Carrie fra *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976), Jennifer fra *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009) and Amy Dunne fra *Gone Girl* (Fincher, 2014).

Summary: This bachelor thesis is a genre analysis of the subgenre “female rage”. By analyzing three films’ lead characters the goal is to answer the question “What makes a film as a “female rage” film, and how is it evident in the motivation of the lead characters I have chosen to analyze?”. Using theories from Laura Mulvey about “The Male Gaze”, dissecting the rape-revenge trope and coming to an understanding of women and society’s relationship with anger. The goal is to define the traits and aspects that is typical of *female rage* stories by analyzing Carrie from *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976), Jennifer from *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009) and Amy Dunne from *Gone Girl* (Fincher, 2014).

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Introduction

Upon reading reviews for the film *Promising Young Woman*, (Fennell, 2020), it was intriguing how many women were disappointed in the execution of the narrative. Reviewers seemed to desire a morally just person who could also enjoy the act of murdering predatory men. Complaining the film 'didn't deliver' on its depiction of a story of a woman who sought personal justice for the assault and eventual suicide of her best friend. I began to wonder what makes a film deliver on this fantasy and thought to myself "Why are there so many violent women nowadays?" The past few years, most of the emerging thrillers and horror films feature a woman - teetering the lines of protagonist and antagonist - who enacted various acts of violence. Films such as *X* (West, 2022), *Pearl* (West, 2022), *Raw* (Ducournau, 2016) and the television show *Killing Eve* (Jennings, 2018) came to mind. Peering through reviews of these films, I found how highly revered the female leads were. Why are these female characters met with so much sympathy? As well as not only receiving forgiveness for their wrongdoings, but encouragement?

From a historical perspective I wondered if this was the start of an era within film and if so, why is it coming now? Film as an artform reflects the thoughts and ideals within society at the time it was made. I gleaned from the reviews of these films that people had an appetite for seeing women get revenge and as the critiques of *Promising Young Woman* stated, preferably a violent one. Three films I felt encompassed this genre quite well were, *Gone Girl* (Fincher, 2014), *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009) and *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976). These films feature a particularly violent female lead character, all of which are loved and even idolized for the violence they cause.

In this bachelor thesis I will be working with feminist film theory to focus on the portrayal of female characters. Feminist film theory, beginning around the 1970s as a part of Second wave feminism (Doughty and Etherington-Wright 2022, 173) came with a critique of women's portrayal in film and literature with a push for women to receive redeeming and substantial roles in film. Authors and critics that wrote about Feminist film theory coined several terms and applied theories within their analyses of films, some of which apply to the films I will study. As this study is focused on women, I have chosen to analyze material by feminine scholars and critics, as I feel their perspective is greater on the subject than my own. I am analyzing these characters to further understand the appeal they have towards the feminine

audience, as well as determining if that could have an effect on the increase in modern films with violent women as leads.

Researching this topic, many online articles agreed with my perspective. In an article from The Hollywood Reporter titled *Why the Cathartic Release of Female Rage Dominated 2021's TV Plotlines*, journalist Robyn Bahr used the term “female rage” to describe this genre of entertainment (Bahr, 2021). This term, while relatively new, is minimally researched. Literature found on violent women focused more on heroines and revenge stories. *Reel Knockouts: Violent Women in Movies* (McCaughey and King, 2001) is a collection of essays on different types of violent women, containing the essay *Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representations of Rage and Resistance* (Halberstam 2001, 244) which describes the type of violence most relevant to my focus.

I seek to understand the reasoning for the appeal of these films. My research question is therefore: “What makes a film as a “female rage” film, and how is it evident in motivation of the lead characters I have chosen to analyze?”. I hope doing this will shed some light on the appeal these films have. I will do this by analyzing three characters from the three movies previously mentioned: *Carrie*, *Jennifer's Body* and *Gone Girl*. I will start by giving a brief overview on how women in film have historically been represented. I will go into depth on terms like “The Male Gaze”, “to-be-looked-at-ness”, scopophilia and how that ties into the femme fatale. To understand the behavior of these characters I will connect the expectations placed upon women within film, and how that is a reflection to their roles in society both physically and emotionally. Furthermore, I find the literary trope of rape-revenge stories to be crucial in the understanding of these characters and I will go through both the trope itself as well as the criticisms of it. In my analysis of the characters, I will apply several theories to create an objective framework to categorize the behaviors of female rage. Lastly, I will discuss why female rage films are connecting with such a large audience.

1.1 Women in Film and The Femme Fatal

The term “The Male Gaze” was coined by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. In it she builds upon the psychoanalytic theories of Freud to

showcase the portrayals of women in film and how filmmakers visually represent them and what kind of effect this has on audiences. Laura Mulvey prefaces her essay by stating that the “patriarchal society has structured film form.” (Mulvey 1989, 14) meaning that film is tainted by the views of patriarchy which negatively affects the portrayals of life and the portrayals of women and men. It is why “political use of psychoanalysis” as she calls it, can be used to analyze how the films we watch use and reflect on societal issues. By doing this we can reflect on the erotic relationship between cinema and its audience. Scopophilia is the term for deriving pleasure from looking. Laura Mulvey explains that Freud saw it as “taking other people as objects” (Mulvey 1989, 17), and that it was part of humans’ sexual instincts. It is closely related to voyeurism, where the pleasure of looking comes from the object being unaware it is being observed (Doughty and Etherington-Wright 2022, 180). This is where it can be tied in with cinema as the audience observes the characters not only during their most vulnerable but constantly and consistently.

Laura Mulvey describes the film form created by patriarchal society as “a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly.” (Mulvey 1989, 19). She explains this passive role as women being placed in an exhibitionist role to be simultaneously displayed and looked at (Mulvey 1989, 19). “Female figures in media do not represent women, but the needs of the patriarchal psyche” (Gledhill 1985, 10), explaining the catering to the male ideals of women in film. The films will sacrifice the progression of the storyline so that the female character can properly be looked at, freezing the flow of action so that the male characters and audience can achieve what Mulvey describes as “erotic contemplation” (Mulvey 1989, 20). This is done by combining the gaze of the spectator with the male characters, keeping the viewer engaged in the film. The view the audience and non-female characters share when perceiving women is what Laura Mulvey coined “The Male Gaze”. “ This term has fallen into the modern zeitgeist as a broad way to describe the way men view women and all aspects of femininity. In relation to this study, the focus will be rooted in Mulveys definition with notes of modernity. There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion” (Mulvey 1989, 26). Meaning that the gaze can be differentiated by who is looking at the woman. This can change the context of the looking

and in turn the perception the on-looker will have on the woman. No matter who the looker is, the object is still the woman. Her appearance is hardwired for a sexual and visual effect on the viewer; what Laura Mulvey coined her “to-be-looked-at-ness”.

In response to this, women sought after more nuanced characters with dynamic stories. Seeing as this cannot exist under “The Male Gaze”, thus ushered in the “Femme Fatale”. French for “fatal women” describes a seductive and beautiful woman who brings disaster to her romantic partners (Ostberg, 2023). A glaring example of such a character is Catherine Tramell from the 1992 film *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992), played by Sharon Stone. In the film she portrays a seductive and cold-blooded killer who uses her “feminine wiles” to manipulate the police and commit multiple murders. She is the lead protagonist of the film and the driving force for the majority of the story. She is allowed nuance as long as it does not compromise her erotic and visual presentation. She is the object of lust and desire for the male characters as well as a clear and present danger towards them. Her *to-be-looked-at-ness* is ever present within her character as she embodies the ‘dangerous seductress’, the *femme fatale*.

1.2 The Expectation of Female Emotion

Sandra Thomas PhD, speaks on the traditional view of female anger in her article titled “Anger Across the Gender Divide” for The American Psychological Association. Thomas states that “Girls have been encouraged to keep their anger down” and “Women usually get the message that anger is unpleasant and unfeminine.” (Dittmann, 2003). Equating anger with strength amongst men while simultaneously using it as proof of emotional weakness amongst women. A woman who cannot keep her feelings of anger to herself is inherently more emotional. The opposite side of the spectrum is sadness, an emotion that is socially accepted to be felt and expressed by women, while men have the burden of keeping it to themselves for fear of being labeled weak. This could be caused by a subconscious and at times conscious grouping amongst people that sadness is a feminine emotion and anger a masculine one. In the foreword of *Reel Knockouts: Violent Women in Movies* the authors mention this cultural expectation of the genders, stating “cultural standards still equate womanhood with kindness and nonviolence, manhood with strength and aggression.” (McCaughey and King 2001, 2). Building on that understanding of a patriarchal society’s expectations, one could say that women are shamed into suppressing their feelings of anger in fear of not conforming to

the societal norm and losing their perceived femininity and social status. Something that is not at risk when displaying sadness as what we consider femininity is preserved. Women who display anger are seen as bossy, unattractive, threatening to masculinity and thus unwomanly. This ideology of gendered emotion is a weapon of the patriarchal society as well as a contributor to the ongoing film trends.

Understanding the expectations of women is crucial towards understanding the appeal of characters that outwardly express their anger and frustration. It allows the audience to live vicariously through the women on screen. Knowing this, it is easier to discern when characters deviate from the norm, and categorize films and other media into the genre of *female rage*. A question that needs to be answered then becomes: what is female rage and how is it different from male rage? As previously mentioned, male rage is something that does not come with a social stigma like its female counterpart. Male rage symbolizes strength, aggressiveness and power, seen as inherent to masculinity. In film and media, it is often used to elicit those very traits. An example of a character like this is Fletcher, from the 2014 film *Whiplash* (Chazelle, 2014), the obsessive music director whose verbal tirades and violent outbursts are used to showcase his greatness and the respect he demands from his students.

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, the chair of the psychology department at St. John's University in New York conducted a study on anger between sexes. In his survey of 1,300 people, he found that men scored significantly higher on their physical aggression and impulsivity when dealing with their anger. Women however were found to be much less likely to express their anger as well as keeping their anger for far longer than men (Dittmann, 2003). Sandra Thomas, PhD, found the leading causes of anger for adult women were powerlessness and injustice (Thomas 2003, 505) "Women wanting someone or something to change and they could not make that happen" (Thomas 2003, 505). The incapability of enacting change due to the inaction of those who are capable while being kept from positions within the community that can. This leads me to form the conclusion that *female rage*, as portrayed in the media, can be called a response to systematic oppression stemming from a patriarchal society's expectation of compliance and subsequent shaming of women expressing their anger.

1.3 The Rape-Revenge Trope

Cinema has a long and illustrious history of using the brutalization of women as plot points in their films, films like *The Last House on the Beach* (Prosperi, 1978) and *The Virgin Spring* (Bergman, 1960) use it as narrative tools to drive the story. It is categorized as a subgenre of exploitation film as it is categorically exploitative in nature. *The Virgin Spring* is not the story of the woman who is raped and murdered, but rather her father's revenge and his relationship with his God in the wake of her death. *The Last House on the Beach* tells the tale of a gang of criminals who hide out in a beach house that houses a nun and several teenagers. The criminals rape and murder the teenagers until the nun fights back and enacts revenge. The exploitation of sexual assault as a narrative device is felt even more as the depiction of rape is less about the victim but more about the criminal's motivation. Without the necessary connection between the audience and the victim it can appear to be the rapist's story.

Historically there have been few films in which women are permitted to express anger through violence, whereas male counterparts kill and torment with impunity as a result of their anger. Female characters seemingly need to be "broken" or "dehumanized" through traumatic events before being permitted to act on their anger. *I Spit on Your Grave* (Zarchi, 1978) is a rape-revenge film that strips the genre into two defining factors, the rape and the revenge. The film also, as Alexandra Heller-Nicholas points out in her book *Rape Revenge Film: A Critical Study*, combining the traditional "hunter" and victim of the genre one character (Heller-Nicholas 2011, 73). Containing a brutal and prolonged gang rape scene that nears 25 minutes of screen time it exploits the victim by forcing the audience to endure the violent and depraved act. The films lead Jennifer Hills, played by Camille Keaton, following her sexual assault, attends church to beg for forgiveness for what she intended to do. She then spends the latter half of the film exacting her revenge, brutally mutilating and killing her abusers. It is a bare bones depiction of a rape-revenge story using these prolonged and uncomfortable depictions of violence as a statement on the actuality of sexual assault. "Horror cinema is useful to an analysis of rape-revenge film if only because of horror's particular treatment of the body." (Heller-Nicholas 2001, 81). Unlike films like *The Last House on the Beach* that neglect to represent sexual assault in any truthful way in terms of its impact on the humanity of its victims. Public reception of the film could be classified as generally negative at the time. Roger Ebert, well known film critic, opened his review of the film calling it "A vile bag of garbage" (Ebert, 1980). The initial criticism of the prominent

featuring of rape and the subsequent bloody revenge tour that Jennifer embarks on was later flipped and these aspects were praised by former critics. One of them Carol J. Clover wrote in 1992 book *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* that she grudgingly appreciated the way in which the brutal simplicity exposes a mainspring of popular culture (Clover, 1992), acknowledging the masochistic aspect of the audience's identification with Jennifer and allowing them to use the pain she endured as justification for her violent revenge. In his original review of the film Roger Ebert stated that a woman in the audience with him seemingly had a "feminist solidarity for the movie's heroine" (Ebert, 1980) an example of the appetite for *female rage* even when there was no description of the term.

2. Method

In order to understand how a *female rage* narrative can be told, I will analyze three different characters that fall into different archetypes. I will be dissecting the leads in three films: Carrie from *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976) - what I perceive to be one of the original embodiments of *female rage* in cinema - Jennifer from *Jennifer's Body* (Kusama, 2009) and Amy Dunne from the film *Gone Girl* (Fincher, 2014). I will continuously be working with theory and using examples from the films to establish clear similarities between the characters. I will connect Laura Mulvey's work on "The Male Gaze", the aforementioned three ways of looking, and how that affects the perception of the characters. Additionally I will focus on the presentation of the leading women, audience expectation and its connection to the divide in emotional expressions between genders.

3. The Violent Women

3.1 "The Original" Carrie White

Stephen King's 1974 novel adapted for the screen, *Carrie*, is the only film and character this analysis will cover that was both written and directed by a man. Featuring characters whose depictions were controlled by both men and women will give insight into the filmmakers' projection of "The Male Gaze".

Carrie, a shy 16-year-old girl, deals with ruthless high school bullies and an overbearing devoutly religious mother. After menstruating for the first time, she discovers telekinetic powers, and after one final over the top prank at the prom, she uses her power for revenge. The portrayal of Carrie's body and sexuality is something that deviates from a lot of

female driven revenge stories. Perhaps due to her young age the film does not attempt to sexualize her, at least not overtly. There is no erotic display or presentation of Carrie. Her body and sexuality are not weaponized, rather advantageous, far from the traditional “femme fatale”. Her menstruation is used as an element in the film, as prior to it she possesses no telekinetic powers and in turn no way to overcome her oppression. I argue that her menstruation is used as a symbol of her “womanhood” and that the bullying she receives from classmates as she first experiences a period is a demonization of the female body. Alongside this, her mother verbally abuses and shames her for experiencing her period and weaponizes her religion against it and Carrie. Her being punished by her mother for her perceived “sins” in line with the way rape-revenge films typically “ruin” a woman before allowing her to express her anger with violence. Carrie’s menstruation and subsequent shaming from those in her life branding her sinful and “not pure”. The villainization of such is reflection of societies sexualization and demonization of the female form.

A victim of abuse, both at home and at school, Carrie is powerless to stop them due to her social status and meek demeanor. It is not until she gains her telekinetic abilities that she has the tools to fight back against her oppressors. Her situation is one that is comparable to a lot of peoples struggles, as feelings of powerlessness and injustice are the leading causes for anger amongst adult women (Thomas 2003, 505).

While she does not endure a singular traumatic event that leads to her revenge, though being drenched in blood at prom is certainly a catalyst, Carrie is a victim her whole life. Her eventual retaliation came not from fear but from anger. Judith Halberstam in her essay *Imagined Violence/Queer Violence* argued that anger becomes a political space in popular films where unsanctioned violence is committed by subordinate groups upon powerful white men (Halberstam 2001, 247). Seeing as “powerful white men” is in reference to an oppressor, in *Carrie* her mother, and school peers would fit into this category. Her actions deriving from a place of anger would mean they are a response to the oppression she has endured as an individual in her community who is seen as “less than”. The violence in which her anger is expressed is a cathartic and cinematic release of emotion that empowers Carrie and allows her to obtain - in her eyes - justice. The audience is accepting of her violent actions because of the humiliation and torment they have witnessed prior. Carrie is presented as an innocent, sometimes naive, young girl. Her turn to violence can therefore be accepted as it can be seen more as a result of her abusers’ actions and less of a reflection of her character.

3.2 The Use of Jennifer's Body

Jennifer's Body is a film, unlike *Carrie*, that is both written and directed by a woman. In *Jennifer's Body* the title character is Jennifer Check, played by Megan Fox following her success as the sexualized "girl next door" in *Transformers* (Bay, 2007). She is a confident and popular teen who is manipulated by men much older than her on the guise that she is a virgin and is sacrificed in a satanic ritual that backfires. Jennifer is turned into a succubus, a female demon that seduces men through sexual activity (Grover, Mehra and Dua, 2018). She feeds off of young boys that she lures to secluded areas with the promise of sex. Her best friend Needy tries to protect the boys from Jennifer while simultaneously trying to save Jennifer. In the climax of the film Jennifer kills Needy's boyfriend causing Needy to kill Jennifer. During the attack Needy is then possessed by the demon entity, and is sent to a mental institution for the murder of Jennifer. The film ends with Needy breaking out of her mental facility and murdering the men who performed the original ritual on Jennifer.

Director Karyn Kusama and writer Diablo Cody - the creative forces behind *Jennifer's Body* - carefully designed a film that deconstructs the patriarchal view of women and how that is used to uphold men. Given Fox's previous role the film lures the audience in by catering to "The Male Gaze", presenting Jennifer as an attractive, hypersexual virgin. She promises to fulfill her victims' sexual desires, giving them control over herself and her sexuality. Her character is for the enjoyment of the audience, often leaving room for "erotic contemplation" as Laura Mulvey called the moment the story is frozen to allow the male characters and the audience to admire an erotic display of "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 1989, 20). The horror aspect of the film is amplified after the reveal that Jennifer is in control of her own body and sexuality, using it to murder the men that lust after her. The viewers can find themselves relating to the male characters as they share the "erotic contemplation" leading to a fear of what they presumed to be non-threatening "eye candy". Christine Gledhill wrote on the representation of the female body that the crux of the classic narrative text was "The function of the female figure as a representation both of the threat of castration and ultimate desire" (Gledhill 1985, 10). In the case of *Jennifer's Body* Jennifer's ability to both pose a threat with her body and be desirable for her body is an extremely important driving factor in the narrative text.

Jennifer's Body is not a *female rage* story simply because a woman is killing men, though it could be a reason for its retroactive popularity. It is attributed to this genre because of the way it flips the script on who is in control of a woman's sexuality. Considering the film is made by women, I would argue that the subsequent playing to "The Male Gaze" by featuring Jennifer in the traditional exhibitionist role, is less about adhering to it and more a way of using it for the theatrical effect. Jennifer is not powerless and incapable of seeking justice because she is a woman in a society that marginalizes them and reduces them to objects of desire, it is precisely because of that. Jennifer uses her sexuality as a weapon to destroy men which is in direct conflict with patriarchal ideology. While the film is fictional and the events depicted are improbable, it does deliver on the imagined violence and role reversal that can be found in female rage stories. Powerful woman that can act freely without the traditional restraints on her actions, allowing her to live out a fantasy of revenge and expression of rage.

3.3 The Cool Girl

"Men always say that as the defining compliment, don't they? She's a cool girl... Cool girls never get angry; they only smile in a chagrined, loving manner and let their men do whatever they want. Go ahead, shit on me, I don't mind, I'm the cool girl." (Flynn 2012, 21).

Gone Girl starts from the point of view of Nick Dunne, played by Ben Affleck, who comes home to find his wife Amy missing, presumably kidnapped. While he is worried and confused the police suspect him of the murder of Amy. As more is revealed in the case, the police and general public point their fingers at Nick. With a lengthy monologue airing out the toxic marriage and suffocating lifestyle of the Dunne's, we come to find out that Amy is alive and well, having just framed her husband for her murder. She is intending on committing suicide to ensure he is sentenced to death. Revealing that Nick was having an affair with a college student she explains "You think I'd let him destroy me and end up happier than ever? No fucking way. He doesn't get to win!" (Fincher, 2014).

Amy Dunne's story is, in part, a rape-revenge story. While she is not sexually assaulted, she is mistreated in a way that is absolutely unacceptable to her. She believes Nick's behavior as a bad husband is on par with ruining her life and taking something from her, she will not get back, her youth. This utter betrayal is enough to make her want him dead, so much so that she is willing to die to get her revenge. As her revenge does not go according to plan due to Nick being able to spin public perception of himself more positively, Amy abandons her plan of

suicide. To believably save her story of kidnapping she pretends to seek refuge with an ex-boyfriend, Desi Collings, whom she later murders and frames for her kidnap and rape. In order to do this, she appeals to this ex's *male gaze*, presenting herself as a damsel in distress needing to be saved. She manipulates him into helping shelter her, while sheltered she uses a wine bottle to simulate being sexually assaulted before acting traumatized for the security cameras, bringing believability to a lie. Amy seduces Desi and through his *male gaze* Amy is not a threat, he views her as an object of desire and lust, in that moment Amy slits his throat. Covered in his blood, with self-inflicted wounds, she appears at Nicks door. Playing the damsel in distress, this time appealing to both the police and the medias *male gaze*, as they cannot comprehend the beautiful white woman as anything other than a victim.

Amy Dunne wanted revenge, not for any particularly traumatic event, she wanted revenge against her husband for ruining her life. That's the way she sees it. In her words "Nick Dunne took my pride and my dignity and my hope and my money. He took and took from me until I no longer existed. That's murder. Let the punishment fit the crime." (Fincher, 2014) Her marriage is failing and without it she could be left with nothing as she sacrificed her wishes and her life for her husband who ungratefully cast her aside for a younger woman. Her trust betrayed and with no way of getting the justice she demands; she takes it into her own hands to get revenge. Her situation is quite common, a study from The Austin Institute indicates that women are more likely to be in unhappy marriages as amongst the 1500 adults surveyed, 20% of women stated they had thoughts of leaving their husbands in the past year (Hillin, 2017). Women then being sympathetic towards the character is understandable when so many can relate. Even women who are not in unhappy marriages can still be able to relate with the feelings of oppression, betrayal and powerlessness that Amy Dunne fights back against. Amy's rage is understandable and relatable. Her way of enacting revenge on her husband is aggressive and, in what is a very common situation, an overreaction. Still her actions are defended. "Is Amy a psychopath, is she a feminist? I honestly think she is both and I love it!" (Fearon-Melville, 2020). I would argue that the reason she garners so much support and sympathy would be is because she is living out an imagined violence, a fantasy. Many women share the same anger as Amy, having stayed quiet about their anger through their lives as to not upset the status quo. Seeing someone express their rage, albeit in an extreme way, is admirable to a lot of people.

4. Conclusion

In this bachelor thesis I applied feminist film theory as well as studies on female emotional expression, specifically anger, to analyze three film's female leads. I researched how women are viewed in cinema and broke down the feminist virtues of rape-revenge films, the *femme fatale* as well as their many criticisms to apply them to the chosen films' narratives. Using studies to address the expectations women face I found correlations to how it affects the way female roles are written. As mentioned in my introduction, the question for this thesis is "What makes a film a "female rage" film, and how is it evident in the motivation of the lead characters". What I discovered is that a *female rage* film focuses on the emotional expression of the feminine lead, how they manifest within the designated world, and how they are both a correlation to and rejection of patriarchy. I argue that these films and characters have mass appeal, specifically amongst women, as the expression of their emotion is an opportunity for the audience to receive catharsis. They stand opposed to the traditional role of women in film, that they are not the passive object of both looked at and displayed (Mulvey 1989, 19), but rather dynamic and nuanced. The female rage heroines have justified anger, opposed to their male counterparts, as the audience comes in already subconsciously informed of the pitfalls women face. These films express female rage in a way that creates space for their anger and allows it to move a story, without being villainized and seen as irrational. The anger depicted is expressed through traditionally masculine avenues such as violence and blind rage, it feels earned. Men have been benefactors of feminine oppression so seeing a woman fight back in a way truest to herself instills integrity into the story. The characters analyzed elicit these qualities and have massive following because of them. The effects of patriarchy will forever yield female rage.

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Filmography

Basic Instinct. Directed by Paul Verhoeven. 1992; United States: Carolco Pictures and Le Studio Canal+. 128 Minutes.

Carrie. Directed by Brian De Palma. 1976; United States: Red Bank Films. 98 Minutes.

Promising Young Woman. Directed by Emerald Fennell. 2020; United States: FilmNation Entertainment and LuckyChap Entertainment. 113 Minutes

Gone Girl. Directed by David Fincher. 2014; United States: Regency Enterprises and TSG Entertainment. 149 Minutes.

I Spit on Your Grave. Directed by Mier Zarchi. 1978; United States: Cinemagic Pictures. 102 Minutes.

Jennifer's Body. Directed by Karyn Kusama. 2009; United States: Fox Atomic and Dune Entertainment. 102 Minutes.

Killing Eve. Created by Luke Jennings. 2018-2022; United Kingdom: Sid Gentle Films and BBC America Original Productions. 40-43 Minutes.

The Last House on the Beach. Directed by Franco Prosperi. 1978; Italy: Magirus Film. 85 Minutes.

Pearl. Directed by Ti West. 2022; United States: Little Lamb and Mad Solar Productions. 102 Minutes.

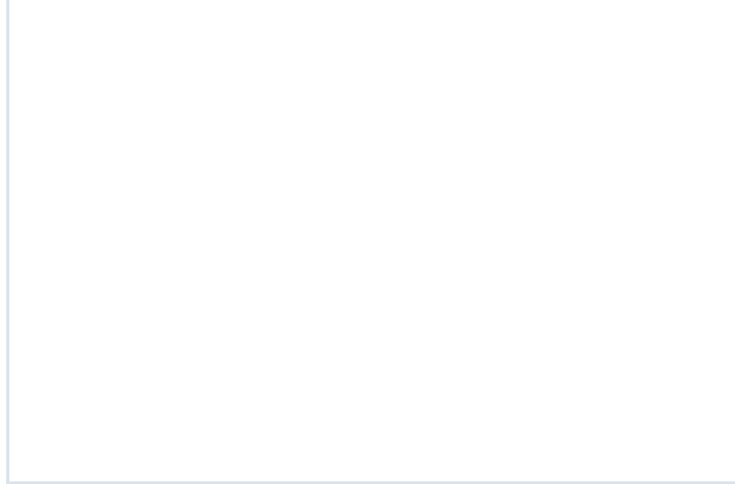
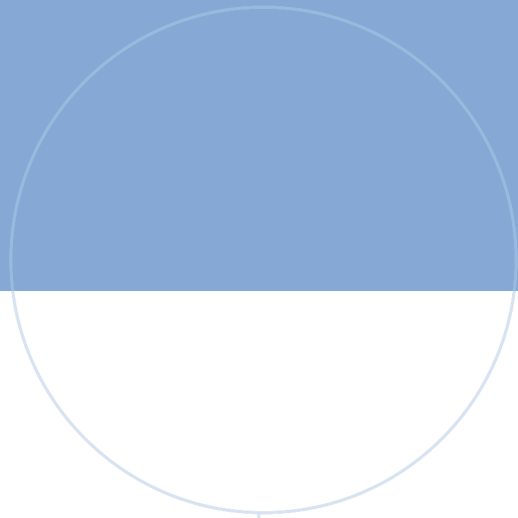
Raw. Directed by Julia Ducournau. 2016; France: Petit Film and Rouge International. 99 Minutes.

Transformers. Directed by Michael Bay. 2007; United States: Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks Studios. 143 Minutes.

The Virgin Spring. Directed by Ingmar Bergman. 1960; Sweden: Janus Films. 89 Minutes.

Whiplash. Directed by Damien Chazelle. 2014; United States: Bold Films and Blumhouse Productions. 106 Minutes.

X. Directed by Ti West. 2022; United States: Little Lamb and Mad Solar Productions. 106 Minutes.



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