

American Reinvention: Nordic Noir and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, 2011)

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The label Hollywood remake is accompanied with ever-increasing criticism, being described as the “dirty word in cinema” (Hoad). However, the film industry has consistently released adaptations based on novels, as it is understood that well over “half of all commercial films have come from literary originals” (Andrew, 29). This stigma taints many adaptations originating from America, as if it is thought that these adaptations are *Americanised*, then justifiably, there was concern over the Hollywood adaptation of the Swedish novel, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Larsson, 2005), so soon after the Scandinavian adaptation (Oplev, 2009). The plot follows the story of a female computer hacker, Lisbeth Salander (played by Noomi Rapace in 2009 and Rooney Mara in 2011), and a disgraced financial journalist, Mikael Blomkvist, who accepts an invitation to investigate a forty-year-old murder on behalf of the victim’s uncle. Meanwhile, Salander is hired to investigate Blomkvist, discovering the conspiracy that disgraced his journalistic career. Additionally, as a supposedly vulnerable, dependent female with a violent past, Salander’s Guardian rapes her twice, to which she responds later with brutality. The couple meet through unlikely circumstances to solve Blomkvist’s complex mystery, revealing an insidious serial murderer and rapist that endangers the pairing. It is the rape and revenge scenes that define Salander’s character as a feminist and independent female that transgresses the boundaries between novel and film and the English and Swedish languages.

Adaptation in cinematic terms refers “to a film that relies for some of its material on a previously written work, and the word [adaptation] differentiates such films from films produced from an original screenplay” (MacCabe, Warner, Murray, 3), making *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* an intriguing example of both an *adaptation* and *remake* of the Swedish novel and film. It is understood that given traditional Hollywood concerns “to appeal to a mass audience” (Boozer, 5), Fincher’s American film threatened to simplify the novel and Swedish film adaptation by transposing it to an American setting, due to the view that the Hollywood film industry is associated with “efficiency and clarity in story and characterisation” (Boozer, 5), and this would simplify the complex female character. Indeed, the Danish programme *The Killing* (DR, 2007-2012) drew criticism for such simplification when AMC remade the narrative in Seattle, fitting the complex narrative into only thirteen episodes (Hale). Simplification of original sources is a crucial criticism of Americanisation, suggesting the extent to which the term is viewed negatively, thus, Fincher’s adaptation of particularly gender and genre could possibly be affected by Americanisation, as the film concerns itself with sexual violence.

Americanisation is utilised as a dismissive term, a description which suggests simplification and commercialisation. Generally, Americanisation is best understood “by reference to the growth of mass production, mass consumption and mass mediation” (Campbell, Davies, McKay, 9). Thus, it was easy to label Fincher’s remake as a product of mass production by Hollywood’s film industry (Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, 95). Furthermore, Americanisation, negatively speaking, “serves in a discourse of rejection to point to the variety of processes through which America exerts its dismal influence on European cultures” (Kroes, x). This “dismal influence” raises issues of a potential attempt to reform and change the original creations from Scandinavia.

It is crucial to understand that Fincher’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* exists both as an adaptation and a remake. Adaptation and remake are fundamentally different; the defining factor being the medium of which the said film is based upon. A remake “is generally considered a version of *another film*, whereas one of the principal arguments of adaptation theory is concerned with the movement between *different semiotic registers*, most often between literature and film” (Loock, Verevis, 6). Additionally, it has been argued that adaptation is a “trans-positional practice... an act of re-vision”, as well as an “amplification procedure engaged in additional expansion” (Sanders, 18), and this can be said for a remake. Therefore, Fincher’s film may well

produce a cultural re-vision of Nordic noir, utilising a sharp aesthetic and development of Salander for American and English-speaking audiences, expanding what is already understood about her character from the novel and original film. Fincher's cinematic history suggests that he is not a typical Hollywood director, but rather an *auteur* renowned for creating modernised characters and genres, subsequently evident in *Gone Girl* (Fincher, 2014). Fincher's cachet in Hollywood thus suggests that his adaptation would be capable of retaining complexity and originality; as such, this article uses an analysis of Fincher's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011) to argue that it is not an Americanisation of the novel by Stieg Larsson or the Swedish film by Oplev (2009) of which Fincher takes inspiration, mainly due to Fincher's directorial influence. Fincher has previously been involved in Noir crime drama (*Zodiac*, 2007), which indicates that Fincher is capable of re-envisioning the Scandinavian genre to an American context. Furthermore, Salander is an essential character depicting a strong feminist figure, reinventing the female detective, within the noir narrative. Fincher also has experience of strong female protagonists in *Alien 3* (1992), potentially revolutionising the female for American audiences through Larsson's character. Thus, the Hollywood adaptation is more than just a question of Americanisation, but of artistic vision and reinvention.

Additionally, what is vital for discussion is sexual violence, which is critiqued throughout Larsson's novels and is crucial when discussing the adaptation of Nordic Noir and gender reinvention of Salander in the American film. These elements of Fincher's reputation in conjunction with Larsson's Nordic noir narrative and Salander indicates that the American adaptation is a further expansion of this genre and of femininity, within international and Hollywood film. In order to discuss issues of female representation and sexual violence, the primary extracts highlighting the transformation from the weak female to a dynamic character are presented in two identifiable scenes. Firstly, the rape of Lisbeth Salander by her Guardian Bjurman, which critiques the traditional cinematic perception of women. Secondly, the revenge on Bjurman by Salander, inferring an independent, complex characterisation. These scenes indicate numerous conflicts in gender dynamics that are fundamental to reinventing the crime drama female to an English audience. Evidently, Fincher has reworked a Scandi-related genre into an American context, without creating a wholesale Hollywood adaptation.

Subsequently, these creations have caused “a current international fascination with ‘Nordic noir’” (Peacock, 37). Nordic Noir refers to the ways in which film and television producers “employ colours in the blue and grey end of the scale, climatic elements such as rainy cold autumn days, and bleak urban cityscapes” (Jensen and Waade, 262). This global success of Nordic Noir and its incorporation in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011) may be one of the many reasons why it has caused audiences and critics to reconsider Hollywood adaptations and the expectations of crime drama. This has furthered the view that Nordic Noir has become aesthetically valuable and viewed as high culture, aiding its popularity worldwide. Nordic noir, including *The Killing* and *The Bridge* (2011), has re-evaluated the traditional noir genre, which incorporated a strong female, the femme fatale, who seduces the male character, often defeated by death or marriage, reaffirming the kind of “male ownership of women” (Hedgecock, 202), often seen in other genres. The female character is often depicted as not being able to balance a career and a family, ultimately becoming a problematic dichotomy. This dichotomy derives from the stereotypical female police officer, who had to “take orders from other cops and even civilians, or got shot for their efforts to enter male territory” (Rafter, 78). Nordic noir has re-invented this dichotomy by favouring strong female characters, who do not pose an outright threat to masculinity and society, but are intellectual, independent and resourceful.

Fincher’s track record of depicting powerful females allows him to transform a potentially weak female victim to a strong vengeful woman. In order to study adaptation, it is important to explore “the source of power in the original by examining the use made of it in adaptation” (Andrew, 30) to illustrate any aspects of reinvention. Thus, there needs to be an identification of “the purpose of the text on the basis of an analysis of the communicative elements” (Helder, 25), to determine the “conveyed meaning” using semiotics (Innis, 102). Fincher embraces the reinvention of both Nordic Noir and gender within his adaptation. The subjects his films have incorporated suggest that he is not a director who disregards the kinds of unsettling themes often expressed within Scandinavian crime drama; on the contrary, his films are characterised as “distinctive and often disturbing” (Browning, vii), including strong female figures (*Panic Room*) and dark noir narratives (*Zodiac/Fight Club*). This indicates that Fincher’s remake culturally extends the Scandinavian originated female character as a re-vision within American cinema, with additional attributes exposed through dialogue and directorial aesthetic. Fincher’s film may well be “the new,

culturally enlightened face of US remakes” (Hoad), one which re-evaluates the Nordic noir female in an American Idiom.

The theme that is prominent in all forms of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and Nordic noir is violence against women. Although, what is surprising is that a novel that deals with sexual violence as a main issue should be based in a country that takes pride in its egalitarianism, an ideology “embraced by most Swedes through generations of reform efforts” (Dominelli, 239). Nevertheless, Larsson’s Millennium Trilogy has inequality at its heart, which in turn is brought to new audiences through the remake. Within Hollywood there can be an objection to films which “link sex and violence, including rape and sado-masochism, particularly where sado-masochism appears to be shown as pleasurable, acceptable and even glamorous” (Wistrich, 116). Therefore, it may be difficult to present such scenes of sexual violence within *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* as morally wrong, potentially inviting a male gaze, and ultimately depicting a weak female which undermines the power of the Swedish original. Such issues of translation surrounding Fincher’s revision make the film a complex adaptation obliged to navigate a number of complex issues surrounding American conventions and censorship, issues which risk distorting the gender representation of the original, instead of expanding and extending the understanding of Salander. The scene in which Salander is raped may not be bearable to continue watching after such horrific actions, nonetheless, it is important to “address women’s issues in the real world” (Rooney, 74-75) in order to alter perceptions. However, for the American adaptation to gain a large audience, the scene could have been downplayed to prevent offending audiences, evidently producing a negative cultural re-evaluation of a Swedish original and, as a consequence, reasserting the fear of continuing the stereotype of women in Hollywood, where they are the “goal for the hero” (Tudor, 92) instead of expanding on the Nordic noir creation. This raises issues of Americanisation and commercialisation of Larsson’s novel and the Swedish film, negatively depicting gender for a global audience, instead of culturally reinventing the female stereotype for the twenty-first century. Consequently, it is crucial to examine this theme of sexual violence in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* as a potential victim of Americanisation.

A major scene in the film that comes under scrutiny is the rape of Salander by her Guardian, Bjurman. Although vital to establishing Salander, it is also a scene that could be neglected, due to the sensitive subject. This is not an exclusive issue for the American remake, as the Swedish adaptation also faced this particular hurdle. The

rape scene raises many concerns of feminism and male authority, which risk simply re-producing the male gaze, which Mulvey defines as a projection of “fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey, *Visuals and Other Pleasures*, 19). There is the risk, subsequently, that an American adaptation would reproduce the male gaze of the female body, which would undermine the meaning of the Nordic noir female. This is due to the fact that Hollywood always restricted itself to “reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema” (Mulvey, *Visuals and Other Pleasures*, 15), relying on spectacle and voyeurism of the female body. This is evident in the classical noir femme fatale who was “defined by her desirable, but dangerous, sexuality — which brings about the downfall of the male protagonist” (Kuhn and Radstone, 154), a convention which Nordic noir has reconsidered and altered. Thus, Fincher’s adaptation/remake can be considered a “citation” of the original film, of which the surrounding context becomes the United States, exceeding the previous version with new meanings (Loock, Verevis, 7). In classical Hollywood cinema, the woman is “deprived of a gaze, deprived of subjectivity and repeatedly transformed into the object of a masculine scopophilic desire” (Doane, 163). For that reason, if Fincher’s adaptation was subject to Americanisation, there would be evidence of the male gaze and spectacle of the woman. Furthermore, “sexual concerns are the driving force behind film censorship” (Wistrich, 74), as a result, Americanisation could originate in the form of censorship of scenes of sex and sexual violence. This would evidently betray the source text, devolving the Scandinavian genre to the traditional American, Hollywood film noir.

There is an Americanised threat to Nordic noir when feminism and sexual violence are prominent in a film’s narrative such as *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Wistrich states that films may often present sado-masochism, such as the rape scene and the revenge scene, as “pleasurable, acceptable and even glamorous” (116). Consequently, despite Fincher’s reluctance to glorify the rape scene, there is to some extent an acceptance of Salander’s actions towards Bjurman. Fincher incorporates the rape scene in Salander’s narrative with dignity, offering evidence of a new way of approaching the representation of women in crime drama, potentially exceeding the Scandinavian film in terms of its feminist standing. In figure one, the framing is focused on Salander’s face which is central. The camera is also placed at her level,

encouraging identification with Salander, and not her attacker or traditionally the male, demonstrating no objectification of Salander. This is similar to the depiction of the same



Fig. 1: Salander tied down by her guardian, Bjurman



Fig. 2: Swedish Adaptation uses similar angle as American



Fig. 3: American adaptation's use of handcuffs



Fig. 4: Swedish adaptation's use of handcuffs

scene in the Swedish adaptation in which the focus is centred on Noomi Rapace's face (figure two), achieving the same effect. The handcuffs used in both versions (figure three and four) signify the conventional Hollywood notion that women are "bound by symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic comment" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 15); this defies the traditional femme fatale who is often seductive and sexualised. Furthermore, her mouth is restrained with material, symbolising "the silent image of women" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 15). The fact that she cannot scream reinforces this metaphor of the masculine being in power and woman as silent spectacle. Through the rape scene, there are numerous longer shots that distance the audience from the action. The Swedish original attempts to achieve similar distancing through a dissimilar method. Oplev's film skips sections of the developing rape, missing the tying up of one of Lisbeth's legs and the moment

Bjurman climbs on top of her. This relieves the audience from watching the full extent of the rape, which is a familiar set up in the American remake. In figure five, Mara's Salander is still central in the frame, emphasising her importance, however, she is significantly smaller compared to Bjurman who dominates the left half of the frame. Salander is overtly helpless reaffirming her "place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 15), due to her lack of power and control as the



Fig. 5: Bjurman stands over Salander



Fig. 6: Camera moves away from the door

male character dominates the action, which subconsciously critiques American classical film noir, as patriarchal. This metaphor illustrates a profound critical statement of the treatment of women in society and film, indicating how Fincher's remake involves the cultural reinvention of gender by also reinventing the view of American adaptation and the crime genre. However, Fincher uses these longer shots, and one travelling away from the bedroom door (figure six), to allow a

distancing from the disturbing sexual violence. It is not necessary to view or create an attractive vision of this scene. Fincher allows for disgust on the part of the viewer, but there is no sexualisation of the female body and evidently this subverts the independent female construct which traditionally “threaten and distort the social order” through “sexual threat” (Hedgecock, 142), in a similar way to Larsson's novel and the Swedish film — a trait traditionally belonging to the femme fatale. This revision adopts traits from the original culture in order to subvert traditional gender elements of Hollywood cinema. Larsson conversely describes handcuffs that “close around her wrist” signifying the dominant patriarchy, nevertheless, the difference is that Bjurman “stuffed [her] knickers in her mouth” (Larsson, 233). This takes feminine sexuality and turns it into humiliating silence, ultimately this addition continues Larsson's statement about male brutality, silence being a trait of the masculine action hero (discussed later). Fincher's reduction of this makes Salander less vulnerable to male brutality, which suggests that Fincher's Salander resembles her television equivalents in *The Killing* and *The Bridge* which depict strong and silent female detectives. Salander is not necessarily a detective but surrogates the role, placing her in a narrative position of superiority over Blomkvist in both the American and Swedish films. Nevertheless, overall, all versions of this event critique masculine domination and the suppression of women, as Salander plays both the victim and the investigator. Crucially, Fincher does not attempt to censor this scene, but embraces it by illustrating a fundamentally feminist statement without sexualising Lisbeth or diverting from the Nordic noir genre. This is crucial as its inclusion is necessary because the rape and subsequent revenge help mould Salander's characterisation, which does not reduce her to a classic femme

fatale or weak female victim, but a culturally relevant Nordic noir independent character.

Wistrich argues that the “suppression of the one kind of manifestation of crude sexuality in films will hardly help the emancipation of both men and women, but will reaffirm the view that men are coarse beasts whose brutish instincts must be repressed” (82). There is, therefore, recognition that violence towards women is a global issue, explicit in the Nordic noir genre. Its inclusion in popular novels, films and cultural adaptations will allow for a cultural change in society, through dealing with real life issues within fiction. The fact that Fincher includes the rape scene promotes awareness of sexual violence, suggesting that this adaptation is not Americanised or subjected to the censoring of sensitive material. Johnston supports this, stating that Fincher “does not attempt to smooth over the more disturbing elements of Larsson’s book”, implying that the American adaptation is not a product of Hollywood, but of Scandinavian egalitarian culture, altering the expectations of the female investigator and victim. Consequently, Fincher’s remake/adaptation stays loyal both to Larsson’s novel and Oplev’s film, incorporating sensitive themes that are crucial not only to Swedish society, but internationally and to his own oeuvre and directorial style. Fincher has directed numerous disturbing and noir genre themes including serial murder in *Zodiac* (2007) and schizophrenia in *Fight Club* (1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that Fincher would not shy away from problematic scenes of rape; drawing the threads together, such a continuity supports the earlier argument that Fincher’s remake was not an Americanised Hollywood version but a Fincherian reworking of the Nordic noir and its representation of femininity.

Nevertheless, the Hollywood cinematic form is at risk of (re)producing the male gaze, hence resorting to the traditional, cinematic, objectified female in scenes depicting sexual acts. It has been suggested, in Mulvey’s classic argument, that the “male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure” (Mulvey, *Visuals and Other Pleasures*, 19), meaning that female characters in film noir and Hollywood are “seen as an object for both the male characters within the film and the spectator watching the film” (Yahya et al, 26). Mulvey has further discussed this structured gaze, arguing for the existence of a specific structure objectifying women in traditional Hollywood cinema in which the woman “falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his



Fig. 7: Salander meets Blomkvist.



Fig. 8: Swedish adaptation's Salander meeting Blomkvist.



Fig. 9: American offensive t-shirt



Fig. 10: Salander silhouette during a sex scene.

property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics” (Mulvey, *Citizen Kane*, 28-29). Furthermore, the traditional femme fatale, “undergoes a phase of transition through her marriage” (Hanson, 68), evidently subduing the strong female character. Salander, in Fincher’s adaptation, subverts these conventions as initially Lisbeth is seen in large t-shirts and jeans and her clothing attempts to reject the classic glamour of the femme fatale, illuminating the fact that crime drama helps to “shape the ways we think about these issues” of society (Rafter, 3). In particular, in her first meeting with Blomkvist, her clothing is ripped and her hair is undone (figure seven) suggesting a refusal to embody the persona of a glamorous female protagonist, and a strong female protagonist who does not succumb to an objectified female codification. Rapace’s Swedish depiction of Lisbeth embodies the same absence of glamorous, feminine tropes (figure eight),

illustrating how the American revision adopts the Scandinavian traits of its original, slightly subverting this by utilising a more ripped and offensive t-shirt (figure nine). This demonstrates that the female or the femme fatale “is heterogeneous and does not simply arise in one cycle (the crime film), nor serve a single function” (Hanson, 5), indicating there is a process of evolution through reinvention which is continued by Fincher’s American adaptation, evolving the female detective. This is evident in *The Killing* where Sarah Lund escapes the confines of a marriage to focus on a case.

Thus, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* introduces a new configuration of femininity in crime noir, one who originates from Scandinavia but who is also a globalised translation of the Nordic noir detective for a new American idiom. Nonetheless, it could be argued that there is an element of objectification within the numerous sex scenes

between Salander and Blomkvist. Figure ten presents an almost silhouetted body portraying the curves of a female which sexualises Lisbeth's character as she may be seen as an object courting a male gaze, thus distinguishing her as a sexually desirable femme fatale. However, the Swedish adaptation of Larson's novel also lapses into moments of voyeurism in scenes depicting sex, in which the camera focuses on the body of Lisbeth and her tattooed back (figure eleven), indicating that this is not an "Americanised" aspect in Fincher's film. Furthermore, as the narrative in both cinematic forms progresses, Lisbeth "falls" for Blomkvist, risking the same process identified by Hanson in which the "domesticated" female becomes subjugated as the property of



Fig. 11: Swedish adaptation focuses on the female.



Fig. 12: Swedish adaptation- Blomkvist left behind.

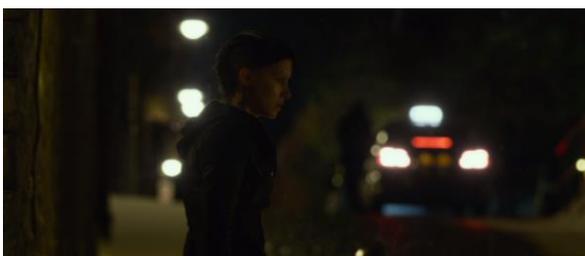


Fig. 13: Salander is rejected by Blomkvist

the man. However, Fincher avoids such complete submission to the male paradigm by retaining Larsson's and Oplev's refusal of a happy ending between the couple. Although it is the Swedish adaptation that subverts Larsson's novel and it is Blomkvist that is left behind, while Salander walks away (figure twelve). The American adaptation follows the novel, as Blomkvist fits back into his old life and Lisbeth is left isolated, represented visually through the empty spaces in front of Lisbeth (figure thirteen), mirroring the space left in front of Blomkvist in figure twelve. Here the mise-en-scène offers a visual parallel of the framing of Bjurman in the rape scene, it represents the potential domination of Blomkvist over Salander which is subsequently defied. Ultimately,

although Fincher's adaptation evidently includes an aspect of male domination, as a whole, it attempts to subvert this traditional Hollywood convention through Larsson's cultural modern noir narrative, by its refusal to succumb to a romantic, male dominated ending.

Salander is a strong female character in all versions of the Millennium trilogy. As one of the main protagonists, identification is a vital reason why she is admired; audiences “admire” and “identify” with her for her strength (Denby). Her strength as a dominant female investigator is most apparent in the revenge scene after she is raped by her Guardian, constructing a liberal, feminist context. It has been argued that the possibility of political action against patriarchy “requires an account of the masculinism’s flaws, a dissent from the way in which it seeks to situate and dominate femininity” (Rooney, 73), which is evident in the Scandinavian detective. Thus, Fincher’s *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* illustrates that, as a remake, it is “less interested in its fidelity” than in the “potential” to generate cultural production (Loock, Verevis, 7), attempting to recreate the influential depiction of the prior Salander by Noomi Rapace. This is represented through Rooney Mara’s Salander, who rebels against masculine power in order to become empowered herself. Salander embodies “masculinism’s flaws”, which incorporates a dissent from patriarchal society, raising the feminist issue of escaping masculinity through embracing femininity, or in fact embodying masculine traits. As a result, there is the concern of reinforcing masculine structure, through the embodiment of these traits in Salander. On the other hand, she embodies the flaws of masculinity, evidently criticising patriarchal traits which reinvent the female in crime drama as an independent construct, no longer dependent on the male. Conversely, Easthope argues that the “male is the mover of the narrative while the female’s



Fig. 14: Salander subdues Bjurman

association with space or matter deprives her of subjectivity” (167). Salander subverts this norm, as she is often in control of events, particularly when she exacts her revenge on Bjurman, reinventing the female character in the

crime genre from a victim to a strong female. Furthermore, it is debated in film noir whether any “independent female sexuality... is used to enhance not only the female sexual killer’s dangerousness but also male fantasy directly” (Aaron, 74). Salander subverts this through her revenge on Bjurman, breaking a fantasy, thus expanding the understanding of her character from Larsson’s novel, as masculinity fails to “defeat” her.



Fig. 15: The shot closes in on the door and the action inside



Fig. 16: Salander takes revenge on Bjurman.



Fig. 17: Swedish adaptation does not use the blackening of the eyes

In Fincher's revenge scene, there is a reversal in comparison to the previous rape scene. In figure fourteen, Bjurman is at the centre of the frame in a similar bodily position to that of Salander on the bed. Additionally, Salander dominates the right hand side of the frame, looking down on Bjurman, reversing the roles that were seen in the previous assault (figure five). The downwards angle suggests Salander's power over Bjurman and subsequently, the audience is able to look down on a villainous character. This parallel illustrates the bedroom door again as Fincher's shot moves closer to the door before the inside is revealed (figure fifteen). There is no distancing from the scene, implying a ruthless, even sadistic, element to her vengeance; nevertheless, Fincher's framing underscores Salander's

essential "dangerousness" as argued by Aaron. Ultimately, the scene embraces the punishment, and invites the viewer into a sympathetic identification with Salander herself through, for example, a close up of Salander's face (see figure sixteen), in which her eyes are almost directly looking into the camera, creating a tension between her hostile expression and the audience. Surrounding Salander's eyes is black colouring—a deviation from the novel, which nevertheless adds to the intensity of her threats and which ultimately resists her objectification as a typically vulnerable female in film noir. The line "I am insane", delivered almost to camera, thus becomes more significant in its deliberate provocation of the audience as well as the characters of the film. This not only subverts Larsson's novel but also the original cinematic adaptation, in which Salander does not infer insanity, but intelligence and thoughtfulness without the black colouring of the eyes (figure seventeen). Furthermore, the Swedish original continually refers to rules and the desire to be released from guardianship (figures eighteen and nineteen), and thus, although Rapace's Salander produces fear in



Fig. 18: Mentions of freedom of guardianship



Fig. 19: References to rules



Fig. 20: Celebration of the tattooed Bjurman



Fig. 21: Salander's character is softened

Bjurman, there is no threat of life or an insinuation of psychopathy. However, there is a celebratory display of her punishment of Bjurman (figure twenty), when her tattoo on his stomach is revealed. In Larsson's novel, it emerges that Salander spends a night researching the psychopathology of sadism, finding that sadists (like Bjurman) "specialise in people who were in a position of dependence" (Larsson, 236). Salander alters her behaviour in this revenge scene, therefore, portraying her intelligence and control to subvert his view of her. Through her transformation, then, it is no longer possible for Bjurman (and the audience) to dismiss Salander purely as a victim.

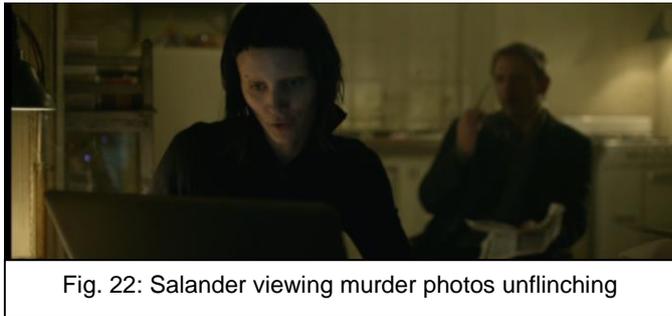
It has been suggested that the camera in film is "obstinately literal" (Furbank, 105) and this potentially causes problems for the re-vision of Lisbeth Salander. Fincher incorporates a softened Salander in the closing scenes (see figure twenty-one); Mara's expression exposes the emotions

inside, when she begins to enjoy Blomkvist's company. In this case, the camera is a literal representation of identity and thought. For that reason, Mara's Lisbeth is "no longer Noomi Rapace's feminist avenging angel" (Hoad)—this is a Salander "truer to the book" (Hoad). Therefore, there is the implication that—even when betraying the source text—Mara's version is in fact more faithful to Larsson's novel than the original Swedish film. Consequently, it can be argued that Fincher's adaptation in terms of Salander is not an Americanisation of the Nordic female investigator or femme fatale, but a more loyal translation of the source text, as Salander cannot be labelled. Evidently, through the many translations that this narrative has undergone, Rooney's portrayal of Lisbeth Salander has been praised for imprinting her "own design on Lisbeth, her wan, open face capturing each contradictory emotion roiling inside"

(Graham). Ultimately, it has continued the exposure of Nordic noir, contributing to its success transnationally.

The revenge on Bjarman presents a strong and capable female character, equivalent to the Scandinavian female detective with elements of the femme fatale and investigator. Fincher's adaptation conforms to the themes of Larsson's novel representing liberal feminist values through embodying the empowering aspects of feminism as well as subverting the gender stereotypes of the femme fatale evident in films like *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992), ultimately transforming the character beyond the traditional Hollywood film. Evidently, this has caused a circular evolution from the traditional Hollywood woman to the Nordic noir film, which has in turn been translated within an American context. Subsequently, this translation instigates a "dissent from the way in which [masculinity] seeks to situate and dominate femininity" (Rooney, 73). Nonetheless, it may equally be suggested that Salander herself embodies masculine traits that present complex issues for Fincher's adaptation through this revenge scene, traits which resist the depiction of an empowered female protagonist by their dependence on (and thus reiteration of) traditionally male gender norms. Hence, this may suggest that in order to create a strong female protagonist, there must be to some extent an embodiment of masculine traits. This may have caused the American interpretation of Salander to be reduced to a stereotypical male action hero, ultimately preventing the revolution of the crime noir genre offered by Scandinavian culture.

Neale cites Willemsen, arguing that there is an "unquiet pleasure of seeing the male mutilated... and restored through violent brutality" (Cohen and Hark, 13). This trait is incorporated through Salander's violent rape and subsequent brutal revenge. Nevertheless, there is no invited "pleasure" in watching Salander being raped, whereas the framing outlined above is clearly an invited pleasure in viewing her punish Bjarman. This notion of voyeurism may present an issue of spectacle in Fincher's adaptation, as the audience celebrates Salander's strength as much as they would an American action hero, differing from the female in Nordic noir, tying it into similar tropes adopted by masculine action heroes such as *Rambo* (1982-2008), which is a trope marked "not only by emotional reticence, but also by silence" (Neale, 12). Salander incorporates this trait of verbal silence throughout Fincher's film, a trait which is also present in both *The Killing* and *The Bridge*, televisual examples that the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*



follows. Salander's television counterparts, Sarah Lund and Saga Norén, both reflect the same verbal reticence throughout the respective series. For instance, when greeted by other characters, Salander will simply not reply. Emotional reticence is seen continuously when discovering gruesome images of murder, not flinching (figure twenty-two), also consistent with Nordic noir females, Sarah Lund and Saga Norén. However, this silence is broken in the closing scene with Martin, as Salander asks Blomkvist, "May I kill him?" (Fincher, 2011). This does not feature in Larsson's novel or Oplev's adaptation raising issues about this additional dialogue and Americanisation that does not conform to the Nordic noir female characterisation where the heroines "are determined and committed" (Kennedy). This could potentially undermine Salander's feminist characterisation, devolving the Scandinavian original, as she asks permission from a male character, reinforcing masculine domination over femininity. This suggests that Mulvey's argument that Hollywood restricts itself to "reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 15) is in fact a valid observation when analysing this aspect of the remake. Therefore, there is an implication that Hollywood has had an effect on Fincher's Nordic noir adaptation/remake, although not to a substantial extent.

Americanisation can be understood as "articulated best by the right-wing think-tank" (Campbell et al, 299) and American cinema has further been associated with "increasing conservatism and artistic decline" (Williams and Hammond, 153). *Dragon Tattoo*, as a result, risked incorporating this ideology, diluting the Scandinavian genre. This would evidentially transpire in censorship, as "sexual concerns are the driving force behind film censorship" (Wistrich, 74) within Hollywood. However, Fincher's reputation of creating disturbingly complex films allowed it to stay loyal to the Nordic culture produced by Larsson. The fact that neither of the scenes are disregarded or softened is testament to Fincher's adaptation, and evidently exposes the absence of Americanisation. This is due to his directorial influence, as Fincher has experience at putting a "heroine at the centre of a battle to the death" (Browning, 24). Subsequently, the "critic must therefore be alert to the tensions between the directorial personality and the material with which the director works" (Stam, 89). As a result, because *Dragon*

Tattoo is a liberal construct, it is suggested that it defies the notion of Americanisation, indicating this remake is a cultural reinvention of not only the American adaptation but femininity within the noir genre.

Overall, it is evident that the theme of sexual violence and feminism has not been a major victim of Americanisation in this revision, it is in fact a reinvention and consistent adaptation of a Scandinavian narrative translated to English. This is profound as it has been argued that cinema “is almost always conceptualised in the masculine mode” (Easthope, 163). Therefore, feminism is arguably a concept that film does not embody. There are some aspects of Fincher’s film that oppose feminist ideology, including the male gaze and the masculine traits of strong female characters, however missteps that are also present in the Swedish original. There was also the casting of the unknown Rooney Mara in contrast with internationally successful Daniel Craig and Stellan Skarsgard, implying a certain male domination over the female protagonist, due to the notion that names can “be foregrounded in relation to identity”, leading to an “expectation” (Dyer, 122) of actors playing certain characters. Nevertheless, Salander proves to be perfectly cast as she expresses power over numerous male characters, similarly to Larsson’s creation and her Nordic noir counterparts.

Fincher’s film, however, has come under attack for his inclusion of the sexual abuse and Salander’s revenge, scenes which have been criticised as a “stumbling block” which are “tonally out of whack with the rest of the story, where the light is low, the temperature is below zero and the horrors are hidden from view” (Collin). Although this is consistent with what is understood as the definition of Nordic Noir declared by Jensen and Waade, such a claim dismisses the importance of these scenes to the wider social issues of violence towards women, which is a prominent theme in Larsson’s Nordic noir trilogy and is still crucial to Nordic noir generally. Fincher’s directorial style complements Larsson’s ideological stand points as he “creates a persuasive ambience of political menace and moral despair” (Scott), evidently continuing the cultural style of Scandinavian film and television, which in turn has separately reinvented the female crime drama character to American Hollywood and cinematic landscape.

This shift, emerging as a result of a translation which attempts to reproduce not only the surface, but the underlying ideologies, produces a revolutionised female, originating from Scandinavia, within a conservative Hollywood. The fact that neither of the two scenes discussed here are disregarded or softened is a testament to Fincher’s

adaptation, and evidently exposes a resistance to overt Americanisation, due to his directorial influence. Fincher has experience of putting women in a “battle to the death” in *Alien 3* (1992) and *Panic Room* (2002), both of which correspond with the characterisation of Salander. Fincher’s history of working with disturbing and violent themes implies that his involvement with the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is justifiable. He approaches these disturbing themes with precision and dignity, reinventing the Nordic narrative and unique female within an American context, subverting traditional Hollywood noir through a cultural revision.

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