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A MODERN REVENGE: A CASE STUDY OF *PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN* (2020)

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Abstract

*This paper discusses the idea of anger and revenge as showcased in *Promising Young Woman* (2020) directed by Emerald Fennell, a movie that was released during a time of great political debate around sexual assault and women's rights. The movie aims to subvert the narrative of rape-revenge, but also to question the structure that maintains the culture of rape and how women navigate the dynamics dictated upon them. My discussion focuses on two main aspects in the film: social complicity in the violence inflicted on women, and the protagonist's complex use of her femininity to enact revenge. Thus, the use of feminist theory, such as an understanding of Rape Culture and the use of technology as defined by the fourth Wave feminism, will enable me to take a deeper look into how this modern rape-revenge narrative explores the protagonist's femininity as an expression of anger, how revenge as a motive becomes an all-consuming need for justice and how society contributes to the silence of sexual assault victims. All in all, this paper highlights how individual experiences can become an exploration for a deeper look into human behavior in society.*

Keywords: rape; revenge; trauma; feminism; cinema.

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1. Introducing the Genre: The rise of Rape-Revenge films

Throughout time, sexual assault was widespread and normalized in society. The women who verbalized their anger were deemed nagging or hysterical and had to face punishments and abuse as their abusers faced no repercussion. Indeed, literature and media played a key role in enforcing this ideology around women's role in society. Yet, the rise of the feminist movement called into question women's position in society and tried –as it still does—to overturn these structures that facilitate this culture of violence. In fact, the second wave feminism of the 1970s examines women's stereotypes and images of women in popular culture, leading to the rise of rape-revenge narratives.

While the First Wave focused mainly on the suffragette struggle for vote, the Second Wave was more interested in discussing private and public injustices in society. The core of these discussions revolved around issues of rape, violence against women and the desire to turn negative stereotypes into realistic and positive representations. One topic revolved around the idea of the gaze and how women in films are passive objects used for the development of the hero's journey. In fact, the Male Gaze is a concept developed by Laura Mulvey in her essay titled "Visual pleasures and narrative Cinema" where she claims that, "masculinity is empowered through the act of looking, while femininity is disempowered

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by being reduced to passively being looked at” (qtd. in Phoca, 2001, 47). Thus, the women are placed as the center object for male desire, being turned into passive objects used for the development of the hero’s journey.

Moreover, alongside the Second Wave, the elimination of the Hays Code in 1968² led studios and directors to be more experimental with their art. That is one reason why the 1970s gave way to the revenge narrative since as Neroni mentions in her book, *The Violent Woman*, “the violence that these women commit [...] is a direct result of the feminist movement of the time. Feminist consciousness-raising in the 1970s served to make women aware of their oppression and, at the same time, of their strengths” (Neroni, 2001, 33). One characteristic associated with masculinity is violence; instead of waiting for men to rescue them, female characters have begun to protect themselves using the violence that was frequently forced on them.

The violent woman became a maker of meaning and those movies started showcasing the violence women must resort to defend themselves. As a result, violence in movies reflected women’s anger. It strengthened the belief that it was their last resort for dismantling the patriarchal institution. The rape-revenge narrative, most often than not, features a rape –or an attempted rape—followed by the desire to seek revenge and bring justice through one’s own hands.

The enticing element of such films is that, since women are not allowed the liberty to experience anger in real life –without being shamed for it, these narratives mirror their frustrations with, “[a] resolute climax” (McCaughey, 2022, 2). Usually, the narrative follows a woman who has been assaulted and seeks justice against those who wronged her. Even though female protagonists kill their abusers in graphic displays of violence, these depictions remain comforting since it gives the female viewer a satisfying rewrite of reality through which they get to indulge and revel in vengeance. (Benson-Allot, 2021).

The early releases of these films immediately faced controversy. Although they voiced women’s anger, their brutal portrayal of violence became known as “video nasties”³. Society saw these narratives as a glorification of assault. However, it can be argued that these storylines –especially the ones directed by men—exploit the violence enacted upon women. Their depiction of the avenging woman turns into a fantasy targeted towards a male audience and the violence enacted on women becomes a spectacle.

Thus, The Second Wave feminist movement alongside with the political atmosphere of the 1970s allowed directors to experiment and navigate the complexity of rape-revenge films. Arguably, despite the laws of the time as well as the narratives taken, these movies still allowed their audience to explore violence from a female perspective and gave their female characters a voice alongside the ability to reclaim their power.

2. #MeToo, Breaking the silence and anger

The #MeToo phrase was coined in 2006 by Tarana Burke, an activist and sexual survivors’ advocate from New York, to empower women and create a sense of community. The initiative along with Time’s Up caught the media whirlwind in 2017 where women started speaking out against the obstacles they had to face to be in a position of power in media. This enabled women to be the centerstage in pop culture as they got to tell their stories as rape was not taken seriously nor were

² Maria Lewis, an assistant film curator, defines the Hays Codes in ACMI as, “The Hays Code was this self-imposed industry set of guidelines for all the motion pictures that were released between 1934 and 1968,” says O’Brien. “The code prohibited profanity, suggestive nudity, graphic or realistic violence, sexual persuasions and rape.” (Lewis, 2021)

³Newman notes in her article, ‘Vile VHS’, that the term “Video Nasties” refers to films that are usually low-budget horror. Moreover, these movies typically exploit or glorify rape on screen. (Newman, 2021)

women believed. The rise of #MeToo movement is a key part in the way media interprets angry women and their desire of vengeance.

The movement revitalized the rape-revenge genre since it showcases the issue of sexual violence in a framework that does not hesitate from including explicit depictions of sexual assault or denouncing society's involvement. Rather than waiting for the justice system to punish sexual predators and abusers, protagonists within this genre take the responsibility upon themselves, achieving their own justice. The allegations made, in 2017, against the powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein⁴ caused a shift in the film industry and discourse around gender politics.

The way rape was represented and discussed throughout media was reassessed and the figure of the violent woman became a manifestation of these frustrations as, "the violent woman appears at moments of ideological crisis, when the antagonisms present within the social order...become manifest" (Neroni, 2005, 18), consequently, the commentary post #MeToo attempts to subvert and reinterpret the history of the genre and the complexities it carries.

The case of sexual reports and society's lack of belief in women's stories were even more heightened with Donald Trump's dismissal of the sexual allegations against his supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh⁵. Indeed, one reason as to why assault takes time to be reported is how draining it can be for the victims as their stories are questioned by the public thus making women bear the responsibility for men's crimes.

This ideology showcases, as well, how men's sexual entitlement to female bodies is internalized by society and accepted. Moreover, as Boyle states, "wide range of male behaviour under scrutiny, this has been – in many ways – a moment when the feminist analysis of the continuum of men's violences has been at the forefront" (*The Sex of Sexual Violence*, 2019, 104). As a matter of fact, the author goes on to argue about how the moment sex is involved, it becomes extremely difficult to extract the violence from it: "sex makes violence invisible as such" (Boyle, 2019, 106). Undoubtedly, the view on how dismissible rape is to the public eye is deeply rooted and entrenched in the patriarchal view of women as passive sexual objects which is further showcased throughout the movie as Cassie utilizes her body by pretending to be black-out drunk in order to attract men (Lanier).

Additionally, victims are less likely to be believed if they are openly in tune with their sexuality, this lack of belief is highlighted in the movie *Promising Young Woman* (2020)—as Madison, a friend from university, states:

[...] It wasn't just me who didn't believe it! When you have a reputation for sleeping around then maybe people won't believe you when you say something's happened! I mean...it's crying wolf. [...] I don't make the rules, ok? If you get that drunk things happen! Don't get blackout hammered every night and then expect people to be on your side when you have sex with someone you didn't want to! (Fennell, 2020, 57)

This interaction between Cassie, the protagonist, and her college friend enables us to see how sex is interlinked with violence as well as how the responsibility falls on the women to constantly protect themselves from this assault and deal with the consequences of it.

Rape, therefore, tends to be seen less like a crime and more like a misunderstanding between two people. As society excuses and justifies the behavior of men, the danger of rape culture lies in the fact

⁴ The very first article by journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey broke the story of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's decades of sexual misconduct and how he silenced the victims alongside this, Ronan Farrow published his own investigative article in the New Yorker in which multiple actresses recounted their stories. Following that, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." Dozens of women stepped forward to publicly share the extent of the powerful producer's bad acts.

⁵ In response to the dismissal, the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport rose in popularity as victims shared the reasons why they took time to report and how draining it is for the victims to relive their trauma and be doubted. (Fortin)

that men fail to understand the politics of consent. This, arguably, is proved by Harvey Weinstein who released his apology letter in which he claimed to have misunderstood when to stop.

The #MeToo movement, as a result, shows how abusers and their defenders believe that their assault is merely a misreading of a situation instead of a criminal act that needs to be punished. That is why contemporary rape-revenge narratives go beyond seeking justice from their abusers. As Emerald Fennell states,

I grew up in a world where, in movies, it was normal to see men getting girls drunk to sleep with them or girls waking up not knowing what has happened the night before and going on a “walk of shame.” It was just part of the culture. It was always troubling to me, but now that I’m older I’ve become much more aware of how it was totally normalized on screen. Boys were completely protected, and the girls were just expected to shut up or laugh it off. (Nast, 2020)

Rape and sexual abuse, as a result, are not an individual act but rather a form of systematic injustice that is tolerated and excused by the public at large. As Ronan Farrow stated, the corrupted system is what silenced women (Spicer 39:09). Consequently, movies such as *Promising Young Woman* take a deeper investigative look into these corruptions imbedded within society and into how far the system can excuse and justify sexual trauma.

Moreover, I believe that this unjust culture is even more emphasized by the director as we reach the end of the movie and the only way for the rapist to be arrested is for the protagonist to die. Once again, proving that rape is not taken seriously by the justice system and the law. *Promising Young Woman* (2020) not only subverts the rape-revenge film narrative structure but also the idea around female heroines.

In fact, Fennell makes sure to comment on the expectations of this vengeful journey as Cassie is forced to carry the tragic death of her friend and feels the duty to avenge her. However, it can be argued that this tragedy is not hers and this trauma is not hers to carry, making her thirst for revenge dangerous as Beauvoir warns against the impossibility and failure of revenge on behalf of others (Kurks, 2012, 170).

3. *Promising Young Woman* (2020), a subversion of the genre

As I have previously discussed, sexual assault is rarely believed in modern society and women’s anger is constantly silenced and used against women’s trauma. In fact, according to the National Institute of Justice most college sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim, at a party and where alcohol is involved. Thus, trusted friends or known members of the community make the accusations harder to believe and that is why rape-revenge films use the opportunity to challenge the dynamics set into place. *Promising Young Women* uses this narrative to call into questions the sets of beliefs deeply rooted in society through its use of anger, the idea of rape culture and the filmmaker’s subversion of the genre.

Promising Young Woman (2020) was written and directed by Emerald Fennell. The movie deviates from the traditional rape-revenge structure by, firstly, never explicitly displaying the sexual assault which inspires the revenge. Secondly, the protagonist is enacting the revenge on someone else’s behalf. This film received five nominations at the 93rd Academy Awards, ultimately winning the category for Best Original Screenplay. Despite facing complications from limited capacity and closures of movie theaters due to COVID-19, *Promising Young Woman* still grossed \$10.195 million at the box office worldwide, (Mendelson, 2016), the movie managing to become mainstream.

The movie revolves around Cassie, a medical student drop-out, who works in a coffee shop while still living with her parents. Once a week, she takes on the persona of a drunk woman—by falling

downstairs or having mused lipstick and clothes— at different bars as she waits for the inevitable, that is, “nice guys”⁶ who would try to take her home. In fact, the opening scene establishes the dynamic and trajectory of these encounters throughout the whole movie. As the seemingly nice man takes her to his house for a drink, she pretends to pass out which escalates his unwanted sexual advances, despite repeatedly rejecting his advance. Once the viewers as well as Cassie realize that he will not stop, she switches back to her sober self and confronts him about his action. Therefore, from the first scene we understand that the protagonist’s revenge is clearly set on making these men question their actions and face the reality of who they are.

As Cassie begins a relationship with her former classmate, Ryan, he informs her of Al Monroe’s – Nina’s rapist—blossoming career and personal life. Thus, she decides to track down everyone who witnessed her friend’s tragedy. The film reaches its climax when the protagonist discovers a video which shows, along with Nina’s rape, Ryan’s presence during it. While confronting him, he offers similar “nice guy” justifications that make her hellbent on getting revenge. Pretending to be a stripper, Cassie goes to Al Monroe’s bachelor party and intends to serve a violent justice –it is important to note that this is the first time Cassie is shown carrying weapons—, but he murders her. Being prepared for that outcome, Cassie gave a copy of the video as well as a description of her plans to Al’s lawyer, the only man who showed true remorse about his actions.

Indeed, Jordan proves to be a character that goes against the structure of the rape-revenge narrative by getting redemption from his actions. By displaying guilt and the awareness of being the enabler of sexual violence, Jordan proves that there is a chance for redemption and change for institutions rooted in rape culture. That is why Cassie trusts him by the end of the movie to do the right and ethical action. It can be argued that, by killing the protagonist, Fennell achieved to project Cassie’s feelings into the viewer as they are thrown into the same headspace she is at the start of the movie, that is, a need to avenge her unjust and tragic demise. As a result, the movie passes the torch of anger to the audience so the anger and desire for justice turn into a call to action.

It is worth considering that the sexual assault of Nina is never displayed, simply implied throughout the movie. In fact, even the word rape itself is never mentioned so as to highlight how easily dismissed the act itself is, the only violence displayed is by the end of the movie as Cassie is being asphyxiated. *Promising Young Woman* (2020) uses non-violent tactics to force men to admit to their behavior as the aim of this movie is to showcase how predatory behaviors are so prevalent within society, that a character that could be seen as a romantic hero can be a date-rapist (Wittmere, 2021). Based on the movie, we can see how the idea of female friendship is primordial for the narrative. Indeed, this movie is about how women are all impacted by one another’s stories as they experience it in some way or other. The shift in the revenge narrative post #MeToo has allowed women filmmakers to explore female friendships but also highlight how deep anger runs. That is why I will try to highlight how *Promising Young Woman* (2020) perceives the rise of anger, questions rape culture and subverts the gender politics assigned to revenge.

Cassie dedicates seven years of her life to expose and honor the memory of her best friend by displaying the full extent of her anger against men and their enablers. Indeed, this sense of a revisited sisterhood highlights the deep connection between the two women. As Rodak describes in her article, “Sisterhood and the 4th Wave of Feminism”,

⁶ The term ‘nice guy’ is used in media and pop culture to describe men who expect sexual and romantic relationship from the women they were nice to. Rachel Hosie defines nice guys in her article, ‘The sinister logic behind the ‘Nice Guy Syndrome’’, as the men who hold the belief that basic human decency to women should be repaid in sexual relationships. (Hosie, 2016)

The two main characteristics of sisterhood emerging from the feminist discussion are the following: i) a concern with identity, exemplified by questions such as: who is the sister? What does it mean to be a sister? This represents the basis for the construction of a collective identity. ii) An emphasis on solidarity, declined into the acts of sharing, supporting each other, cooperating. (Rodak, 2020, 5)

The answers to these questions become quite obvious when watching *Promising Young Woman* (2020). As I mentioned before, the sister-like person is Nina, Cassie's friend since middle school. This bond is heightened throughout the movie as we see Cassie always wearing a necklace that was gifted to her in middle school with Nina's name on it and as we witness how she describes her: "I was just in awe of her. I couldn't believe she wanted to be my friend" (Fennell, 2020, 126). This bond solidifies the idea of a collective identity. Cassie becomes almost dead-like since Nina's passing. Her attempt of revenge is not simply about making the abusers pay, it is also about giving back Nina her voice as she states,

[...] It wasn't her name she heard when she was walking around, it was yours. Your name all over her. All around her. All the time. And it just...squeezed her out. [...] I wondered when was the last time someone had said hers. Or thought it even. Apart from me. [...] And it made me so sad. Because, Al, you should be the one with her name all over you. (Fennell, 2020, 126)

Her rage, therefore, is no longer personal. It is a reaction to past abuse inflicted on someone else, turning her rage into a collective identity and the trigger for change. As Cassie's anger consumes her, she progressively assumes the suffering of Nina as her own, unable to move on. Her world becomes a boiling pit of rage (Gilbert, 2020) where she has to continuously live through the experience of being a woman in a world where a man's reputation is more important than a woman's tragedy. Indeed, "It's every guy's nightmare to be [*accused*] like that" (Fennell, 2020, 125). In fact, by the end of the movie—as well as in real life—no admission of wrongdoing is made and the woman has to silence herself.

A woman's anger is always tampered with, yet Cassie uses hers for a bigger purpose. I would argue that her anger becomes a desire for recognition of her friend and other women's trauma. As previously stated, the people who inflict so much pain on the character are not the dangerous men, rather they are the ones part of the daily life, they are the ones who know how to wield and exploit power. Throughout the movie, Fennell is interested in the "he said, she said" allegations as she states: "what's so disturbing to me is that you so often ... find both [parties] are saying the same thing happened; they just felt very differently about it." (Gilbert, 2020). That is the crux of the society's issue, consent. Indeed, in a society so entrenched in male power, the concept of consent, thus, alters the obligations and the power dynamics between the parties involved.

Pascoe and Hollander understand that rape culture is not simply the act of assault, and that patriarchal culture reinforces the shared cultural views about gender and sexuality which lead to rape. In other words, when a man has the firm belief that a woman is consenting—no matter how wrong, he is—not only will the institution of rape defend his reputation, but it will also reinforce the oppression of women by making and enforcing strict gender dynamics. Thus, by raising women to both be feminine and to blame themselves, the threat of rape oppresses their capacity to resist and challenge society as they live their entire lives afraid of this violence.

This is best highlighted during Cassie's discussion with the dean about Nina's rape as she says, "[...] if Nina was drinking, if she couldn't remember fully, it's terribly complicated. [...] it isn't always a good idea to go back to a dorm room full of boys after a party. It gives them the wrong idea." (Fennell, 2020, 69). This discussion showcases how victims are less likely to be believed if they have a healthy sexual life. In fact, this idea is further emphasized when Maddison, Cassie's old college friend, states that she was *too* open with her sexuality. These dialogues highlight how the responsibility for this crime in a patriarchal society falls upon the woman. Rape culture oppresses women by keeping them fearful and in a state of constant vigilance. As best shown through the interaction between the lawyer, Jordan Green, and Cassie as he claims, "Just one drunk photo at a party and you wouldn't believe how hostile that makes a jury" (Fennell, 2020, 89), he goes on to say how much he gains every time he

gets a victim to drop a lawsuit. As such, we could argue that this is a gender-motivated violence against women that leaves men with a sense of entitlement over women's bodies. Moreover, men who try to protect women from this type of violence also feel a sense of entitlement over the victimized women as they expect women to give up their sexual autonomy as a sign of gratefulness. Again, this is highlighted through the diverse “nice guys” Cassie encounters as they repeatedly try to justify their actions by saying they are nice guys.

In fact, during the first scenes of the movie, Cassie –while acting drunk—encounters Jez who protects her from his friends, helps her get up the stairs and onto a cab as he drives her to his place and attempts to force himself on her while still believing that she is safer with him (Fennell, 2020, 10). Furthermore, I would argue that the movie questions men's predator-like behavior through Cassie's encounter with Jeff. This, in fact, proves how women are objectified by men and turned into simple vessels made to carry out male fantasies.

Figure 1. Cassie reveals to Jeff she is not drunk



Source: *Promising Young Woman*, 2020

Fennell flips that objectification during the opening scene of the movie as close-up shots focus on men and parts of their bodies, a call back to comedies where shots of women's bodies are shown, as Fennell goes on to say, “That is the beginning of a lot of movies,” she said. “Women in general are just bodies. And in movies like this, they're bodies that don't have lines.” (Cohen, 2020). Furthermore, even when a man is non-violent, he still benefits from the masculine and patriarchal violence. As Neroni states, “even if a man purposefully avoids engaging in violence and disdains it, his identity is still formed in opposition to violence. In this sense, his non-violent actions accentuate the importance of violence all the more” (Neroni, 2005, 45). As previously shown, the men that Cassie encounters are non-violent men, they are men who believe to be nice and –in fact—they use that status of non-violence as a tool to obtain access to women's bodies, thus committing violence themselves.

Rape culture makes it so that Cassie believes that only violence can end violence as the crime is not committed by only one person, rather the entire society is responsible for it. Cassie understands that the only way for people to stop being voluntarily blind is to make them go through the same violence as the victim did. In fact, radical feminism believes that simply putting women in positions of power is not enough; since the institutions themselves are created and made for men, they can only maintain the patriarchal ideology (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2018, 374). That can be seen in *Promising Young Woman* (2020) through the Dean of the faculty who, although in a position of power, chooses to believe the men as she tells Cassie that she cannot jeopardize the men's lives over simple allegations.

Moreover, as violence is one of the ways men differentiate themselves from women, rape-revenge narratives enable women to breach that difference and exploit it against them as they understand that the law will not protect them. Indeed, “no one else can be more responsible for a woman's right to

safety than women themselves.” (Heller-Nicholas, 2021, 31). In other words, since women don’t feel protected by the system, they feel that they must bring justice to themselves. However, older rape-revenge narratives were defined by protagonists who lost their femininity in their quest for revenge. Rather, they detached themselves from it to be empowered or as Creed mentions, “when women react with violence toward the loss [...] of their femininity, they do not regain their femininity, but instead position themselves even further from [it] and their complimentary relationship with masculinity.” (*The Return of the Monstrous-Feminine*, 2022, 92). I would argue that Cassie in *Promising Young Woman* (2020) does the opposite, she exploits and uses her femininity as a weapon.

One way in which she uses her femininity is through the changes in her appearances. As I previously mentioned, Cassie uses her sexuality as a capital to manipulate the men around her. As Whisnant argues, “The feminine body is marked by hesitancy, relative weakness, delicacy, and restraint—qualities that in fact render women more vulnerable to violence—and yet the woman or girl is taught to view her sexual body as dangerously provocative because inherently “rapable” (Whisnant, 2017). That is how Cassie subverts the expectations. Indeed, since she puts on pigtails and wears pink, she is deemed vulnerable and that is how she is able to trap men.

Additionally, Fennell wished to subvert the narrative by making it inherently more feminine: “to feel like a woman’s journey... So much of what we’re used to in these kinds of movies is seeing women behave and [be filmed] ... like men. [...] You can like Britney Spears and multicolored manicures... and still be dangerous.” (Gilbert, 2020). I would argue that the protagonist reclaims her femininity as an armour to draw and terrorize men. Cassie is able to extract her revenge, not through extreme displays of violence, but rather through more feminine acts, showcasing the true power that women hold within their hands. This is how society underestimates them.

Nonetheless, Beauvoir distinguishes between types of crimes, the abominations, and the lesser crimes. For her, the abominations are the ones where one “entirely refuse[s] to acknowledge the subjectivity of the other person, treating him/her as a mere thing or object in the world rather than as a consciousness aware of what is being done to them” (Ince, 2022, 114). As I have attempted to show, vengeance is needed when all else fails, as it re-establishes the power dynamics between abuser and victim. Yet, all too often the main goal is unobtainable or if it is, the victim loses herself. As a matter of fact, throughout the movie, we can note how Cassie slowly loses herself in her quest, her anger takes over her life and she no longer knows how to extricate herself from Nina’s tragedy, “This whole thing is starting to feel horrible. Pointless.” (Fennell, 2020, 91). As a result, we can see how Fennell is subverting the genre by questioning it and its limitations. After all, Cassie is a woman who is living with her trauma and unable to move out of her trauma.

4. Conclusion

Considering all these elements, *Promising Young Woman* (2020) manages to not only subvert the narrative of rape-revenge, but also to question the structure on which it was based. Additionally, the movie highlights the failure of society and how the system is made to uphold men in power while oppressing women. Indeed, anger and a deep understanding of rape culture serve only to call society to action. It should be noted that this movie allows for a deeper exploration into the psychological impact of collective trauma. Furthermore, *Promising Young Woman* (2020) discusses the dangers of appropriating someone else’s trauma to extract revenge. In rape-revenge narratives, revenge results in more harm than good as it prevents victims from moving on.

Moreover, what is interesting to note is the fact that, although the film reflects on survivors’ trauma and critiques rape culture, Nina –the woman who was subjected to this trauma—is absent from the movie. Thus, her absence highlights the ways society silenced her voice, but it also deprives us from empathizing with her and having her tell us her own story. Furthermore, although Al Monroe is arrested by the end of the movie, it still took for both friends to die for society to act. As I discussed in the preceding sections, Cassie is devoured by her need for vengeance and not only loses herself in it but psychologically dies alongside her best friend, leading to her own physical death.

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