

# A Variety of Thrills

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*Thrillers and different ways of approaching them*

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Semester 2, 2012-2013  
January 25 2013

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Film Genres, Thrillers

## **Abstract**

Thriller is a broad genre. This genre is constructed by the use of different people involved in the movie process; the producers and advertisers, critics and consumers. They all have different reasons to call a thriller a thriller. I did a discourse analysis on three movies to see whether the use of the term “thriller” is used by all this parties in the same way and how this will construct the genre. The three movies in that are analysed are *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), *Black Swan* (2010) and *Hide and Seek* (2005).

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## Introduction

Thriller is perhaps the most popular and widespread movie genre there is.<sup>1</sup> A good thriller can haunt you in your dreams and makes you sweat when you are watching it. It is searching to make you feel uncomfortable during an activity that usually makes you feel comfortable. Why would people want to feel uncomfortable? The excitement, or thrill, that every thriller reader [or watcher] demands, is the moral sympathy for the hero in his struggle against evil. It is seeing things through his eyes. Heroism and conspiracy are then the essential elements.<sup>2</sup> Morally this is true because the viewer identifies the hero as the source of good in the world and wants the hero to succeed.<sup>3</sup> That's why the viewer usually doesn't see things through the perspective of the villain.

Thrillers already existed in early literature according to Palmer. It is often suggested that the thriller hero in literature is no more than the medieval knight in shining armour, minus chastity, plus technology. So that would mean the hero in the thriller has evolved from the knight and is the one viewers look up to. This is similar like literature that has evolved in theatre and later in movies. A thriller could be the evolution of the knight story. The term "thriller" is used as a single entity, that means there are characteristics in them that justifies placing these movies all in one category. The basis of the genre theory is: the components or aspects of an individual work which are responsible for its belonging to a particular genre are also the components which control its aesthetic impact. The dominant element in the thriller is the combination of mystery, in the form of criminal conspiracy, and competitive individualism. Both of these elements are to be found outside the thriller, it is their combination that is specific. The intrinsic fascination of crime changes its meaning. In thriller, it is because it's a disruption of an orderly world, and prompts the hero to action.<sup>4</sup> Charles Derry also says that nonprofessional and/or victim protagonists are essential to the suspense thriller because they are placed in unfamiliar situations that enhance their vulnerability and thereby produce greater suspense.<sup>5</sup> Actually, Palmer, Derry, Harper and Rubin agreed that thrillers take place in a normal world with an absurd thing happening. Things which aren't absurd at all can also be part of the story, that's why it's such a broad genre. It doesn't matter what happens, as long as it's absurd and creating chaos in the lives of the main characters in a suspenseful way. Harper says no other work of fiction depends so heavily on mood and situation as the thriller. The true thriller aims to involve the reader's [or viewer's] feelings in the situation, and the reader [or viewer], wants to be involved, and resents being misled. The essential difference, Harper says, between a thriller and any other kind of fiction is put into words by John Buchan: "*Now I saw how thin the protection of civilization is. ... there were a dozen ways of spiriting one out of this gay and bustling world*". In a thriller exists chaos and the reader [or viewer] would like to know what it feels like to live in chaos, Harper says.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the reader or viewer must be triggered

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<sup>1</sup> Rubin, M. (1999). *Thrillers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Voorwoord.

<sup>2</sup> Palmer, J. (1978). *Thrillers*. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, London. Page 82

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem. Page 59

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem. Page 10

<sup>5</sup> Rubin, M. (1999). *Thrillers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Page 10.

<sup>6</sup> Harper, R. (1969). *The World of the Thriller*. The Press of Case Western Reserve University Cleveland. Page 61-62

by the unexpected, because it can't be controlled. So is life. Palmer: *"Predictability or unpredictability have little to do with it, though it's quite true that mediocre thrillers do depend to a great extent on would-be unexpected twists and turns in the plot, usually in the most bizarre circumstances imaginable. ... Much of the reader's pleasure derives from what is presented as the unpredictable."*<sup>7</sup> Rubin says the thriller involves a combination of feelings: *"[It] makes us laugh and scream, the thriller often works to double emotions, feelings, sensations: humour and suspense, fear and excitement, pleasure and pain."*<sup>8</sup> This creates ambivalence because the viewer will be pulled in different directions during the film. For instance: at first, the viewer can laugh about the main character and the situations the main character falls into. After a few scenes the viewer has a connection with this character and suddenly bad things happen to him. The viewer feels sorry for him and wants to help, but all he can do is watch and see how the main character deals with his problems on his own.

David Slocum says genres function like contracts between film makers, viewers, and critics that enable a circumscribed set of stories to be repeated in different films and to constitute a popular cinema. He thinks the challenge arises in trying to identify the terms of the generic contract and says it has proven notoriously difficult to define a given genre and to develop an understanding of how viewers or producers rely on the repetition of familiar elements even as they strive for novelty and variation. Martin Rubin says: *"The concept of thriller falls somewhere between a genre proper and descriptive quality that is attached to other, more clearly defined genres – such as spy thriller, detective thriller, horror thriller. The thriller can be conceptualized as a meta-genre that gathers several other genres under its umbrella and as a band in the spectrum that colors each of those particular."*<sup>9</sup> I'm wondering if this is visible in the talk about movies which are defined as thriller. It is the deal between the producer and the viewer which defines the genre, even in such a broad genre. The consumer has expectations when he's going to the cinema to see a movie, the producer has to make sure he fulfils this expectation.<sup>10</sup> This is thus a discursive construction. They both correspond about what a movie must have to become a thriller.

Rick Altman says genres are very good things. They offer a financial guarantee: generic movies are in a sense always pre-sold to their audiences. Someone who likes to watch thrillers will go and see the next promising thriller. According to Altman, genres must be understood discursively, as language that not only purports to describe a particular phenomenon, but that is also addressed by one party to another, usually for a specific, identifiable purpose. We are taught how to talk about cinema by the studio-financed statements like advertisements, posters and trailers. These sources rarely offer much training in the meaning and use of genre vocabulary. Our primary knowledge of genres comes instead from our culture's commitment to comment on and conserve cinema. Whereas studio discourse has only short-term memory and is always primarily forward-

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<sup>7</sup> Palmer, J. (1978). *Thrillers*. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, London. Page 58

<sup>8</sup> Rubin, M. (1999). *Thrillers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Page 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem. Page 4.

<sup>10</sup> Slocum, D.J. (2001). *Film/Genre/Film Genre 2000/Genre and Hollywood (Book Review)*. Cineaste; 2001, Vol. 26 Issue 2, page 56, 2p.

looking, criticism and categorization are typically turned toward the past. Any understanding of genre terminology must begin with the critics and compilers who constitute our major source of genre terms.<sup>11</sup> Critics don't need to sell the movie, they only need to be fair about it so they are reliable in what they're doing. Studios try to sell as much as possible and Altman compares them to candidates for political office: try to get as much people as possible to your side. The goal is of course to attract those who recognize and appreciate the signs of a particular genre, while avoiding repulsion of those who dislike the genre. When studios would attract the latter, the studios would receive bad reviews because they already didn't like the movie before watching. The desire to aim publicity at a wide range of narrowly defined audiences in turn puts pressure on producers to conceive films as a mix of as many genres as called for by targeted audiences.<sup>12</sup>

Conclusion: Film makers are giving a wide genre to reach as many consumers as possible. Critics are fair in their naming of a genre. This is why I am going to compare what they both said and which one is picked up by the audience. I'm going to investigate whether it is true that different subgenres in the umbrella genre thriller will lead to different approaches and choices by the film makers, audience, advertisers and comments by audience and critics. So in short, how does the use of the term "thriller" construct the genre?

I will focus on three subgenres, which aren't very comparable, to find out whether the film makers use the same approach to get the audience enthusiastic for their movies. Who is using the term thriller and for what reason in which time? Who labels the movie as a thriller? Does the consumer agree with the term which the film maker gave? I'm going to do a discourse analysis of what is said in the media and on the internet by people with different interests in the three movies I've chosen. I'm focussing on the film makers, the audience, the critics and the advertisers. I will check out blogs, official websites, interviews with directors and things that are written and said in the media about the movies. I will compare whether the film makers have used specific approaches to set up these movies and if they are received this way by their audience and the critics. Since the film makers want to make as much profit as possible they want to keep the genre broad, but is this clever? Do their consumers, the ones who generate their profits, still recognize the given genre? I've decided to focus on thrillers of the last ten years, because G.K. Chesterton says that the thriller characteristically takes place in modern times. It is situated in the mundane, realistic world, not in a marvellous realm of dragons and genies.<sup>13</sup> So if I would compare movies that differed greatly in year of production, this would create an unrealistic view. The ways of communication for advertising and reviewing became different in the past century with the addition of the internet.

The first movie I've decided to analyse is *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011). It is a popular movie and had a lot of media attention in the past two years. This movie is based on a bestseller novel, has a well-known director and male lead. At first sight this

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<sup>11</sup> Altman, R. (1999). *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute Press. Page 111-124

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem. Page 127-129

<sup>13</sup> Rubin, M. (1999). *Thrillers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Page 14.

movie is no thriller, but a crime. But when mystery appears this fits to the thriller Palmer described. The subject in this movie is a malicious society in Sweden in which things are getting out of hand. Murder, rape and censorship are not uncommon.<sup>14</sup> Are consumers approaching this movie differently because it's made in a country which for the most viewers is not their home country? And what will the Swedish version of this movie change in the comments of critics and consumers?

I've chosen to take a horror thriller as second subgenre. I chose for a horror thriller because these contain a story which is possible in a real society, but it's certainly not common. Therefore it's an opposite of the society based *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and yet a normal world with absurd things happening. Not a distinct thriller, but still a thriller. The movie I'm going to analyse is called *Hide and Seek* (2005) and it's about a father and his daughter who live together after the death of his wife. The daughter has an imaginary friend called Charlie, but Charlie does terrible things, which often result in murder. This is shown with blood and frightening texts, where *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* shows nothing cruel or scary. The movie is defined as horror, suspense and mystery by the producer Fox.<sup>15</sup> This thriller will attract a different audience which is also interested in horror, and will lead to different approaches in advertising and talking about the movie. Will the audience approach this movie more like a thriller or more like a horror movie?

The third movie I've decided to analyse is the psychological thriller *Black Swan* (2010). This movie is different because of the approach to the story. This movie contains lots of special effects which are worth the label sci-fi. The storyline is comparable to *Hide and Seek* with a psychological disturbed main character. But in *Black Swan* you already know that she's done all the crazy stuff. There is no major plot twist. Indick says a psycho thriller is a combination of the psychological thriller, the horror picture and the science-fiction film. In these films are three elements which define the genre: A lead or significant supporting character with a psychological disorder or a person who treats psychological disorders; peculiar or in some way significant psychological abilities as a significant aspect of the lead character's role or the plot; overtly psychological themes as significant aspect of the plot.<sup>16</sup> This movie attracted a lot of consumers, so I'm wondering why they are attracted. What did the film maker and his advertisers do to create this attraction?

## Discursive Approaches

### Producers

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is directed by David Fincher. By choosing this director the producers already made a decision because the director has a reputation that he

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<sup>14</sup> Dessaix, R. (2008). *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. The Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved 2012-11-20

<sup>15</sup> Fox. (2013). *Hide and Seek*. <http://www.foxconnect.com/hide-and-seek-blu-ray-widescreen-11388.html>

<sup>16</sup> Indick, W. (2006). *Psycho Thrillers, Cinematic Explorations of the Mysteries of the Mind*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc. Page 3-4.

"makes kind of pervy movies that are sort of dark, who's a little uncompromising when it comes to how stuff gets presented and who's really not afraid to offend anybody". What really fascinated Fincher was not "the pulp thriller side" of the book but the peculiarity of the bond between the main characters. *"The way they fit together; the way that he hurts her; the way that she allows him to hurt her – all that stuff."*<sup>17</sup> So he wanted to pull attention to the development of their relationship.

The director of *Hide and Seek*, John Polson, wanted to create a movie which wasn't made for an eleven year old who would sit with his bowl of popcorn on the couch. He thinks the adult audience would appreciate it, a movie which is directed to them.<sup>18</sup> He thinks the movie is different from other thrillers because it has a human aspect. *"It's really a story about a father who cares greatly about his daughter and is trying desperately not to lose her to the trauma that she's suffered."*<sup>19</sup> He liked this aspect, but also the scares in the second half of the movie. He was trying to bring up the horror aspect without losing the human, emotional aspect. Polson: *"I wanted to make a story that was kind of interesting in an emotional level. But at the same time bring the audience ... hopefully a scary ride and just, you know, scared people at the best I could."*<sup>20</sup>

The director of *Black Swan*, Darren Aronofsky, said: *"I'm not really much of a genre guy. ... I think [you] don't need that anymore, where you just have a very specific genre. Audiences are very sophisticated. As long as it's fun and entertaining, it's okay. That's what I was trying to do. ... We were going for something that just keeps you excited, keeps you going and hopefully is memorable, so that you talk about it to other people."*<sup>21</sup> So Aronofsky also wasn't focussing at the thriller side of the movie, but wanted fun en entertainment. This is also the reason for the spectacular special effects.

Overall we can see that these directors agree not to put the emphasis on the given genre. Altman already said it: film makers are like politicians in the race for elections; they don't want to exclude possible consumers. The movies got a genre because it is needed; generic movies are in a sense always pre-sold to their audiences according to Altman. Thus movies will receive a lot more consumers when this is done broadly.

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<sup>17</sup> Secher. B. (2011) David Fincher interview on The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo. December 20. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/8958706/David-Fincher-interview-on-The-Girl-With-The-Dragon-Tattoo.html>

<sup>18</sup> Fischer. P. (2004). Exclusive Interview: John Polson for "Hide and Seek". *Dark Horizons*. January 31. <http://www.darkhorizons.com/features/494/john-polson-for-hide-and-seek>

<sup>19</sup> Murray. R. (2005). Interview with the Director of "Hide and Seek," John Polson, John Polson on Directing De Niro and Thrillers. *About.com*. January 25. <http://movies.about.com/od/hideandseek/a/hidejp012505.html>

<sup>20</sup> BBC interview with director John Polson [http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/ondemand/films/interviews/ram/johnpolson1?bgc=FF6600&nbram=1&lang=en&bbram=1&ms3=10&ms\\_javascript=true&bbcws=1&size=4x3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/ondemand/films/interviews/ram/johnpolson1?bgc=FF6600&nbram=1&lang=en&bbram=1&ms3=10&ms_javascript=true&bbcws=1&size=4x3)

<sup>21</sup> Radish. C. (2010). Natalie Portman & Director Darren Aronofsky Interview BLACK SWAN, *Collider*. November 28. <http://collider.com/natalie-portman-darren-aronofsky-interview-black-swan/60669/>

## Advertisers

The trailer of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* has heavy music with quick shots of the most suspenseful parts of the movie, but shows also the main storyline. In this way the advertisers put focus on both characteristics of the movie; suspense and relationships. The trailer of *Hide and Seek* is a lot slower than the two other trailers. It shows long pieces of scenes and it is making you believe that the daughter is causing trouble. Every time she's on screen is combined with heavy music. The trailer emphasises on the scary parts of the story and not that much on the relationship between the father and the daughter. The father is barely visible in the entire trailer, while this was the focus of the director. The trailer of *Black Swan* is mostly focused on the storyline and the most important scenes of her psychological disorder. The first half of the trailer is slow and with soft music, but during the trailer the music swells and the shots are getting more curious and faster. This follows the storyline of the movie. So the advertisers really wanted to follow the flow of the movie in their advertising. They are honest in their focus and not pretending it is a sweet ballet movie.

All three movies have had several posters circulating. Bush, cited by Rhodes gives the reasons for posters: *"It is evident that the mission of the poster is to attract people. The poster must bring the people across the street. Secondly, having gotten them there, you must tell them in as few words as possible what they will see when they get inside. You must excite their curiosity sufficiently to make them part with their nickel, dime, or quarter. Thirdly, you must appeal to their artistic sense, and managers are apt to underrate this quality of the general public's mind."*<sup>22</sup> Having several posters gives film makers the possibility to show a broader vision of the movie and attract more consumers. You can use more sides of the movie and with this make the audience more interested in the movie. This is also what the producers did for *Black Swan* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Two posters have circulated in advertising for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Only the first (see below) was presented at first, but after a while the second came out too. The first poster contains the two leads, which Fincher wanted to focus on, and the snowy Swedish landscape. Adding this landscape will give an impression of the atmosphere in this movie. In this movie the landscape is covered with snow, which is typical for winter in Sweden. This corresponds with the idea of showing Swedish society. The second poster has to do with the raping and how the relationship between the leads will make the female lead feel comfortable again. He's protecting her which also is visible in his grip. By adding this poster the advertisers let the audience think the movie will contain a lot of nudity and sex, which will attract a broader audience. The marketing department for *Black Swan* first released a few art-house posters in the United States, afterwards they came with an international poster. They said: *"it's taking a different tack to the traditional and art-house posters we've seen thus far. This one is simple but very effective focusing on Portman and her shattered existence as ballet dancer Nina."* On the poster you see the broken face of Nina, the main character. It characterises her broken soul and the problems she's having with herself.

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<sup>22</sup> Rhodes. G. (2007). The origin and development of the American moving picture poster. *Film history*, Volume: 19, Issue: 3 (November 6, 2007), pp: 228-246

The other posters are really focused on the ballet in the movie, which actually isn't the main point, but the use of black and red in the poster show the grim side of the movie.

*Hide and Seek* has multiple movie posters, all of them dark, black and red or orange. The first has an opened door to a room, but it's not clear what's behind the door. You do see the daughter standing in the doorway on the first poster and in the window on the last. This pulls attention to her 'badness'. By using movie lines advertisers are creating more suspense. They want the consumer to wonder what "whatever" means and what is going to catch you when you run. So by using black and red, scary movie lines and suspenseful images they are creating posters which are more likely for a horror movie than a movie about the relationship between a father and daughter, especially since the father isn't visible at all on the posters. This is different from the posters of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *Black Swan*, because they both show their main characters on the posters. Also, this is the only movie with almost identical posters. The emphasis in this movie is mostly on the scary parts, this is the same in the posters. The posters of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* are also about only one part of the movie, but the setup is too different because of the connection between the male and female lead in the second poster, compared to the first.

The posters reflect the approach of the film maker. Fincher wanted to show the relationship. The second poster was only fixed on that, the first poster showed the more general atmosphere. The first poster is the most effective one for attracting a broad audience, because it shows the relationship, and the atmosphere, which is also visible in the use of black and white. Polson has multiple posters, which are look-a-likes. They all put emphasis on the atmosphere in the movie and nothing at all of the storyline between the father and daughter. The approach to show art-house posters first by Aronofsky puts emphasis on ballet, the dark colours gave a feeling of the general atmosphere. The international poster did show the story. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo's* All movies have dark posters, I can conclude this is a thriller movie poster characteristic.

## Critics

(Note: Quotes of critics and consumers are to be found in the attachments)

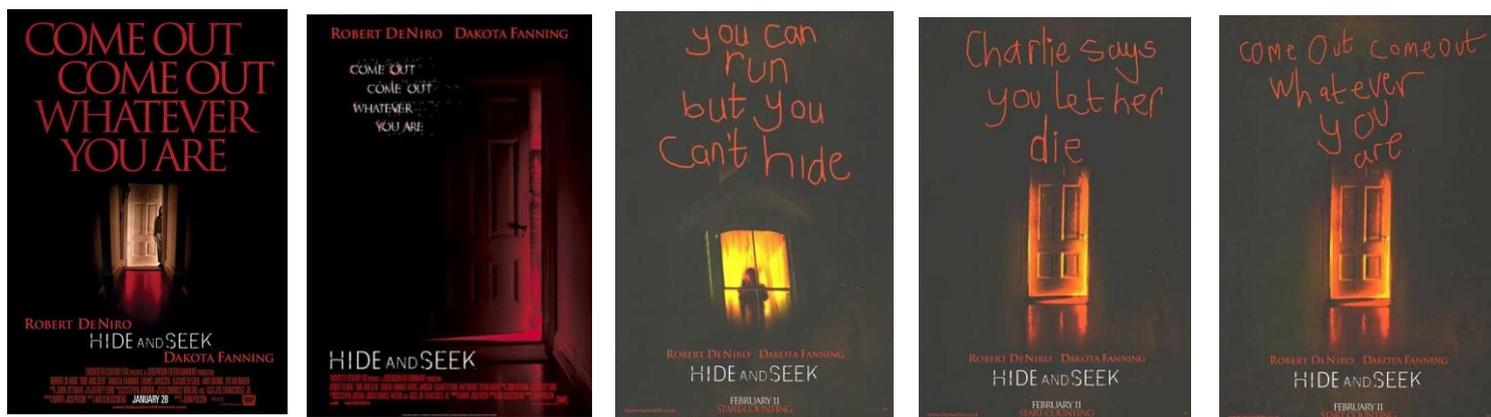
*The Guardian* is into the way of making a thriller in the way Fincher does. Although they call it film noir, they also note the characteristics of a thriller. They confuse them and it seems that they can't define the term thriller exactly, however they also use the term 'thriller'. They hold on to the genre given by the producer, since the movie satisfies the definition of thriller, there won't be a reason to restrain this. According to the writing in *New York Times*, Fincher did a great job by showing his (and Larsson's) intentions. He knows to keep the viewer thrilled by not showing everything and keep the terrors unexpected, which is important according to Palmer. *New York Times* described the movie as the absurdity in the normal world, as the authors above also mentioned. The absurdity in this movie is the real deal in Sweden, according to *New York Times*. Mystery and criminal conspiracy are to be resolved by the male and female lead, which both aren't in their own environment. This makes them more vulnerable. A lot of thriller



Movie posters *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*<sup>23 24</sup>



Movie posters *Black Swan*<sup>25</sup>



Movie posters *Hide and Seek*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> IMDB.com.inc (2011)The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1568346/>

<sup>24</sup> THR Staff. (2011) 'Girl With Dragon Tattoo' Star Rooney Mara's Racy New Poster. August 6.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/risky-business/girl-dragon-tattoo-star-rooney-196292>

<sup>25</sup> (2011). Advertising and marketing for *Black Swan*. *Lorking Film Studies*. January 19.

<http://lorkingfilmstudies.wordpress.com/2011/01/19/advertising-and-marketing-for-black-swan/>

<sup>26</sup> (2005). *Hide and Seek* (2005). *Imp Awards*. Updated February 14.

[http://www.impawards.com/2005/hide\\_and\\_seek\\_ver5.html](http://www.impawards.com/2005/hide_and_seek_ver5.html)

characteristics are mentioned in this movie review. This means that the producers used the broad genre thriller and this is accepted by the critics.

The critics of *Hide and Seek* are very divergent in their commenting. Where one likes the movies with all its horror movie clichés, another thinks they are terrible. The critics agreed that there isn't much left of the thriller aspect of the movie and it focuses on the horror side. But he didn't make a good horror, according to most of the critics. They call it a thriller, but most of them don't see these thriller aspects. *Chicago Sun* calls it a thriller with all the aspects of a horror movie. This movie falls just between and it seems according to the critics that it is rightful to attach both genres to it, but since the horror side of the movie is received so badly, they should change it. They should put emphasis on the thriller side.

The critics are especially writing about the absurdity in *Black Swan*. But the absurdity is not the one as described in thriller characteristics. Their absurdity is the one found in the special effects in the movie. This makes the movie scary and gives it horror features according to the critics. They actually don't speak about thriller in the sense of a normal thriller. I've seen for instance melodrama and horror, but this movie is not described as thriller. The absurdity in this movie is in Nina's head, she's not vulnerable because of the world she lives in. She has a weakened personality and is not hero struggling against crime. There are a few unexpected things, but these aren't really twists. So this is not the normal thriller way of showing things. Gladly, it wasn't Aronofsky's intention to make a wonderful thriller, because all reviews I've read were positive about this movie.

The critics are fair in their naming of the genre. Only *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* got the rightful genre with the best results, but this is the broad umbrella genre. The critics also agreed with Polson for *Hide and Seek*, only the horror side of the movie wasn't the best side. For the best results from advertising, he would only use the thriller genre. *Black Swan* was approached in different ways; when a critic puts focus on the special effects this movie is a horror, when he puts focus on the storyline it's drama, but altogether this is a psychological thriller. They agree with the producers, because the genres belong to the thriller genre.

## Consumers

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* reviewers often compare the Hollywood version to the Swedish version. These consumers are familiar with the story and sometimes do know that it is hard to make a different movie when it is based on the same novel.<sup>27</sup> Still, the critics don't make this comparison, so they seem to be more objective. The consumers are more concerned with the way the movie was a remake of the Swedish version. They are discussing the Swedish aspect in this movie, but the ones who can look around that are objectifying and see the storyline, the actors and the setting. They call it a thriller because of the mystery parts<sup>28</sup>, the dark atmosphere of Swedish people<sup>29</sup> and the

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<sup>27</sup> Insignificance. (2012). December 26.

<http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/600#messages>

<sup>28</sup> Notsub, Ibendb. (2012) December 28.

<http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/600#messages>

intention to show it horrible and threatening has worked<sup>30</sup>. They consumers have seen this movie is a thriller and call it a thriller for the right reasons. Of course, not every consumer has the right reasons. But since some of them can see the point of the thriller, they are disagreeing with the major information source for many movie viewers, *IMDB*, which calls it “crime, drama, mystery”. These genres are included but since the movie has the characteristics of a thriller, this movie can fall under this umbrella.

There is a division between the consumers in *Hide and Seek* reviews. There are those who liked the movie, these often use the term “thriller” when describing the movie. Those who didn’t like it usually describe it as “horror”. That’s why a broad genre as thriller/horror will lead to a disappointment for the consumers who are more into horror. The consumers who are generally more interested in thrillers do like this movie. They don’t like the way in which horror clichés are used but the way in which these great actors play makes up to a lot.<sup>31</sup> Consumers who are negative mostly don’t understand the clue of the story. They are questioning things which are obvious if they understood the storyline. This has also to do with the difference between the horror viewer and the thriller viewer. This was also mentioned by a reviewer: it didn’t make his expectations true for a horror movie.<sup>32</sup> Horror movies are more flat and obvious; thrillers need more time to think it over. A thriller is based on mystery; the mystery will lead you to one way and then suddenly change with a plot twist. That’s why movies in this genre most of the times need a second look for the clues. In a horror movie the viewer will know after a short while who’s the bad guy and then the viewer will notice the obvious clues which are used for this person or thing. This is a reason why good education about genres is important for the best movie experience.

The consumers found the trailer of *Black Swan* interesting, this triggered them to watch the movie. Consumers noticed the second half of the trailer was very different from the beginning; they said this second part was “sick” and that’s a reason why they couldn’t wait to see the movie. This was the intention of the advertisers. After seeing this movie, consumers said it was beautiful or (almost) perfect. They think the camerawork is done well, it contains shocking moments and the lead acted great. The consumers did talk about psychological thriller, but I doubt if they know what it means, so they just used the term the producers used. On *IMDB*, this movie is named drama, mystery, thriller. This will lead consumers to say thriller, while producer Fox called it a psychological thriller.<sup>33</sup> It’s odd the consumers use the term “psychological”, since most of the critics don’t use this, *IMDB* doesn’t and so several other movie databases don’t. After seeing the movie they could’ve understand this term. But still, I couldn’t find any source from Fox that focussed on the term psychological thriller, not in the movie posters nor in the trailer. The only possible way is the use of the term in the media by noncritics.

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<sup>29</sup> Soom. (2012). Febraury 5. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/420#messages>

<sup>30</sup> Maerk. (2012). Febraury 6. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/420#messages>

<sup>31</sup> Elineloves, Jessenownt. (2012). February 26, February 27. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/330#messages>

<sup>32</sup> Greeneyelady1. (2012). January 24. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135/info/300#messages>

<sup>33</sup> Fox. (2013). Black Swan. <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/blackswan/>

So since these movies are different from each other and all have a thriller as given genre. Notably, *Hide and Seek* consumers don't like this movie, because the given genre is too broad to live up to the expectations of horror consumers. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *Black Swan* consumers mostly do agree with the given genres by the producers, but these are quite evident in the movies and the critics also agreed. *Hide and Seek* makes clear that viewers are disappointed when a genre is too broad and the movie will get negative attention. This is something for film makers to think over.

## Conclusion

I've focused on the question how the use of term "thriller" constructs the genre. Because the genre is a very broad genre all three movies are different interpreted by the parties in the process. The directors had different approaches in making the movies, they did not specifically focus on "making a thriller". The directors didn't put emphasis on the genre, to keep it as broad as possible and attract as much consumers as possible. The advertisers mostly put emphasis on the focus of the director with multiple posters; showing multiple sides of the movies, also to attract as much consumers as possible. This way they attract people who actually don't like this genre and usually watch movies of other genres, like horror. The movie will get negative responses from the critics and the consumers because they actually don't want to see this movie. So I would advise the film makers to think it over when they want to reach a broad audience. If the genre they are making a movie in is broad enough, they will make enough profit with good work. And if not; make a movie which contains more genres in a very good way! Producers and advertisers are using the term thriller for their movies, because the genre is very broad. Critics usually use minor genres which fall under the umbrella of thriller, this is because they are more focussed on a specific piece in the movie. Together they construct the genre, as Altman noted, because the consumers are relying on both of them to get a good overview and are taught to rely on them. They are the ones teaching the consumers how to talk about movies according to Altman.

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## Attachments

## The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

### Critics

X. Brooks, The Guardian, December 2011:

*“David Fincher turns the film noir white with this steely, stealthy adaptation of The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo. Taking the thriller genre's staple ingredients of murder, sexual sadism and familial corruption, he casts them into the cold, throwing the action across a remote private island, where big pale houses sit against a big pale sky.”*

*“If only more high-concept Hollywood thrillers were as supple, muscular and purely gripping. In less experienced hands, this would surely have wound up as lurid, trashy pulp.”<sup>34</sup>*

A.O. Scott, New York Times, December 2011:

*“It must be said that Mr. Fincher and the screenwriter, Steven Zaillian, manage to hold on to the vivid and passionate essence of the book while remaining true enough to its busy plot to prevent literal-minded readers from rioting.”*

*“He has always excelled at evoking invisible, nonspecific terrors lurking just beyond the realm of the visible.”*

*“Mr. Fincher honors Larsson's muckraking legacy by envisioning a Sweden that is corrupt not merely in its ruling institutions but in the depths of its soul. Lisbeth and Mikael ... swim in a sea of rotteness.”<sup>35</sup>*

### Consumers

*“David Fincher takes things up a notch. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo is two hours and 40 minutes long, slightly longer than the Swedish version, but it is tighter, more interesting and, as expected from a Fincher film, visually arresting.”<sup>36</sup>*

*“The Swedish one was a masterpiece. I expect nothing less of this one too”<sup>37</sup>*

*“Onbegrijpelijke keuze trouwens om deze film toch in Zweden te laten afspelen. De personages zijn Engels maar alles ademt wel Zweden. Heeft een komisch effect wat niet de bedoeling kan zijn. Waarom niet verplaatsen naar de Amerikaanse maatschappij?”<sup>38</sup>*

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<sup>34</sup> Brooks. X. (2011). *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo – review*. December 16.

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<sup>35</sup> Scott. A. (2011). *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo (2011) - Tattooed Heroine Metes Out Slick, Punitive Violence*. December 19. [http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/movies/the-girl-with-dragon-tattoo-movie-review.html?\\_r=0&pagewanted=2](http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/movies/the-girl-with-dragon-tattoo-movie-review.html?_r=0&pagewanted=2)

<sup>36</sup> Samdahl. E. (2011) *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2011) - Movie Review*.

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<sup>37</sup> Corey. W. (2011). 2 years ago. <http://www.movieweb.com/movie/the-girl-with-the-dragon-tattoo/FTGEMgln2QOpKH>

<sup>38</sup> Jawaddadadde. (2012). December 8. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135>

*"In tegendeel, dit is juist de kern van het hele verhaal. Zelden was een subplot zo intrigerend, dankzij dit originele, aparte personage van Lisbeth."*<sup>39</sup>

*"Ik kon niet genoeg krijgen van het karakter van Lisbeth. Na een half uur kijkgenot begreep ik nog niet goed waarom de film de naam had gekregen van die hoofdpersonage maar al verder kijkende snapte ik het steeds meer. 2 geweldige acteurs en een apart sfeertje zorgen er voor dat deze film in mijn persoonlijke top 10 staat."*<sup>40</sup>

## Hide and Seek

### Critics

D. Thomson, Washington post, January 2005:

*"'Hide and Seek' knows the rules. But here's the key: It plays them very well. ... There's almost always a point in these movies at which you say to yourself, 'Oh, this is stupid,' ... The good thing about 'Hide and Seek' is that this exit point comes extremely late."*<sup>41</sup>

M. Clark, USA Today, January 2005:

*"And by now, even casual moviegoers know full well the caliber of major-studio releases that get dumped into January, when the multiplex competition is all those tantalizing November-December releases competing for the Oscars. ... There's not a cliché that isn't nailed."*<sup>42</sup>

M. LaSalle, San Francisco Chronicle:

*"A thriller without thrills. It's also a thriller that cheats. The story is stretched to feature length only by having the film's incidents arranged in such a way as to reveal as little as possible."*<sup>43</sup>

R. Ebert, Chicago Sun – Times, January 2005

*"This is a setup for a typical horror film, but for the first hour, at least, 'Hide and Seek' feels more like M. Night Shyamalan and less like formula. ... 'Hide and Seek' is not really interested in its situation, except as a way to get to the horror ending."*<sup>44</sup>

### Consumers

*"Ja, ik vond dit ook een sterke thriller en ben het met de meeste recensies oneens. Niet de meest originele film, dat wel, maar wel één die de spanning er de hele lengte in weet te houden. Wist me ook lelijk te misleiden met de vreemde burens van David en Emily*

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<sup>39</sup> Dalman. Y. (2012). August 25. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135>

<sup>40</sup> Noroja. (2012). November 22. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/77135>

<sup>41</sup> Thomson. D. (2005). A Familiar Game Of 'Hide and Seek' January 25. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41659-2005Jan27.html>

<sup>42</sup> Thomson. D. (2005). A Familiar Game Of 'Hide and Seek' January 25. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41659-2005Jan27.html>

<sup>43</sup> Metacritic.com. (2005) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382077/criticreviews>

<sup>44</sup> Ebert. R. (2005). January 27. <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050127/REVIEWS/50119001/1023>

*waardoor ik dacht dat Charlie misschien de geest van hun overleden dochtertje kon zijn... en dat niet alleen. Eigenlijk had ik geen idee met welke ontknoping de film zou afkomen. De acteurs spelen geweldig.”*

## **Black Swan**

### Critics

P. Bradshaw, The Guardian, January 2011

*“Black Swan is ionospherically over the top, and some of its effects are overdone, but it is richly, sensually enjoyable and there is such fascination in seeing Portman surrender to the madness and watch her face transmute into a horror-mask like a nightmare version of Maria Callas. It is exciting, quite mad and often really scary.”<sup>45</sup>*

R. Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times, December 2010

*“Darren Aronofsky’s “Black Swan” is a full-bore melodrama, told with passionate intensity, gloriously and darkly absurd.”<sup>46</sup>*

D. Denby, The New Yorker, December 2010

*“Darren Aronofsky’s “Black Swan” is a luridly beautiful farrago—a violent fantasia that mixes the tensions of preparing a new production of “Swan Lake” with sex, blood, and horror-film flourishes”<sup>47</sup>*

### Consumers

*“Ik vind het ook geweldig, vooral de tweede helft, erg ziek. Ik kan niet wachten”<sup>48</sup>*

*“Naar mijn mening een misschien wel (bijna) perfecte film, gisteravond in de bioscoop gezien, was overdonderd en heb genoten. Ga hem in de bioscoop zien en niet thuis.... het is het waard.*

*Volgens mij is het meer een psychologische thriller en drama, en juist niet een horrorfilm”<sup>49</sup>*

*“Wat een film, wat een schrikmomenten, wat een acteerwerk van Natalie: magistraal”.<sup>50</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Bradshaw. P. (2011). *Black Swan – review*. January 20.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jan/20/black-swan-review>

<sup>46</sup> Ebert. R. (2010) December 01.

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<sup>47</sup> Denby. D. (2010). *FANCY FOOTWORK - “Black Swan” and “Love and Other Drugs.”* December 06. [http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/12/06/101206crici\\_cinema\\_denby](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/12/06/101206crici_cinema_denby)

<sup>48</sup> Annalouisa. (2010) August 18. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/68071/info/30#messages>

<sup>49</sup> NarcissusBladsp. (2011) February 09.

<http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/68071/info/660#messages>

<sup>50</sup> Kikujiro. (2011). February 11. <http://www.moviemeter.nl/film/68071/info/720#messages>