

Femme Fatales in Movies



by Armando Simón

“Why, do you suppose they will hang a woman? Do you suppose they will be so barbarous as that?”

“I wasn’t thinking of that—it’s doubtful if a New York jury would find a woman guilty of any such crime.”

—Mark Twain, *The Gilded Age*

If you think about it, literature and films almost always portrayed women as syrupy-sweet, in other words as one-dimensional characters. This fed into many women’s self-image. Even when the films or books portrayed a murderess, she was portrayed sympathetically, as being forced to kill someone

because of circumstances. Curiously, even in real life, when females have carried out a crime, there is always an effort to attribute the criminal behavior to the evil influence of (of course) a man.

My favorite absurdity is when Hollywood portrays a character's ex-wife as caring, sweet, and understanding. In reality, most men's experience with their ex-wives is that they become rapacious, voracious demons who should have a stake driven through their hearts, their heads cut off and their bodies set aflame.

At the same time, feminists, who have been exceedingly active with propaganda, have saturated our culture with the notion that all women are Victims of men. Camille [Paglia](#), that brilliant anti-feminist feminist, has pointed out that, in this, the Victorians and the radical feminists have more in common than they would like to admit since the Victorians saw women as both Victims and as the guardians of the better feelings in human beings.

We see this entrenched attitude throughout the "patriarchal" justice system. Women receive comparatively lighter sentences for crimes than men. This is particularly the case with women who are discovered having committed statutory rape. And we also see this in cases of false accusations of rape/sexual assault; instead of men being assumed innocent until proven guilty, the reality is that men are presumed guilty until proven innocent—and even after being proven innocent—since it is always assumed that teenage girls have no interest in sex, a delusional belief that is out of touch with reality.

Having said all of that, let me also say that there have been a handful of films that have been produced which demonstrate that, like some men, some women are evil and commit despicable crimes to male victims. They are exciting to see not just because of the plots and acting but because of the novelty. Considering the hundreds of films cranked out by Hollywood,

numerically they are few. Some of these are:

Play Misty for Me (1971). Clint Eastwood is a radio DJ who has a fan that likes to call in and request *Misty* to be played. He meets her, they have a fling, and he discovers that he now has a violent psychotic stalker on his hands who derails his life (having once been the target of a stalker, I am glad that my stalker never went to this height).

Black Widow (1987). Debra Winger works in the Justice Department and investigates a woman who targets rich men, kills them somehow while she is away on a trip, and inherits their money. A cat and mouse game ensues when they meet.

Fatal Attraction (1987). Michael Douglas is a married lawyer who meets editor Glenn Close. They have a one-night stand that she refuses to end and becomes increasingly irrational.

Poison Ivy (1992). A poor teenage Drew Barrymore is befriended by a wealthy girl and is slowly introduced into the latter's family, finally moving in. She kills the mother and has sex with the father. Perhaps the 1950s song by the same name inspired the movie.

Basic Instinct (1992). Michael Douglas continues to become attracted to the wrong kind of women. In this instance, he is a policeman investigating a murder and a possible suspect is a beautiful, manipulative Sharon Stone who sets her sights on him. A very erotic movie.

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle (1992). A woman accuses her obstetrician of sexual assault and he commits suicide. His widow is devastated. She changes her name and takes a job as a nanny with her husband's accuser and begins to systematically destroy the family.

Death Becomes Her (1992). Two psycho women for the price of one in this surreal movie. In it, Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep have had a decades-long rivalry. The latter steals away Hawn's

fiancé and marries him and over the years castrates him. Hawn then returns looking even younger than she did before and plots with him to murder her. The plan becomes problematic when it is discovered that Streep is immortal.

Single White Female (1992). A software engineer focusing on fashion advertises for a roommate. A girl responds to the ad and moves in; she had a twin sister who died in childhood. Over time, the roommate begins to copy the engineer's looks, and deaths ultimately result.

Swimfan (2002). A high school boy is an athletic swimmer who is preparing for a meet where there will be scouts from Stanford. He has a girlfriend whom he loves. A new girl in school zeroes in on him, corners him and seduces him and his guilt alters his athletic performance. When he tries to break off, she has another other plans.

Monster (2003). Charlize Theron gained 30 pounds in order to accurately look like real life serial killer Aileen Wuornos. It's interesting that Wuornos' criminal behavior was blamed on an abusive man in childhood, not on her own choice of behavior.

Gone Girl (2014). Ben Affleck has grown distant from his wife and has an affair with one of his students. His wife disappears and the house's furniture is upturned and bloodied. Everything points to him killing his wife. Except she has arranged it to look like it. The film is also a scathing indictment of journalists when they turn to jackals.

You Get Me (2017). A teenage boy has a girlfriend that he loves. They have not had sex. In a party, another young man recognizes her and informs him that she was quite the slut in San Francisco, where she exhibited a talent for fellatio. The couple break up and he is picked up by another girl at the party who does have sex with him that night and becomes obsessed with him. The boy and Miss Fellatio reconcile but

Miss Obsession pursues him, stalks him, ultimately reveals everything to the girlfriend, whereupon Miss Fellatio breaks up with him. The usual plot follows.

It is refreshing to see films that are realistic in portraying these admittedly unusual women other than the usual two dimensional syrupy-sweet characters, or as Victims. There are other films out there which I may have missed. If so, leave in the comments below.

Armando Simón is a retired forensic psychologist, author of [*Wichita Women*](#), containing short stories where several of the women are villainesses and the men their victims.