
Beyond Killer/Victim: Re-Inventing Monsters in Israel Luna's Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives

By Evelyn Deshane

Israel Luna's 2010 horror film *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* marks a distinct change in the representation of transgender people in both horror film and mainstream media. When TIME's Bureau Chief and journalist Katy Steinmetz declared the year 2014 to be a "Transgender Tipping Point," she spoke to the seemingly sudden uptick in the representation of transgender characters in TV shows which characterised a larger social atmosphere that was beginning to take seriously the social issues facing transgender people in the US.^[1] Since Steinmetz's *Time* article, the transgender tipping point has tipped further with Caitlyn Jenner's coming out and the Gavin Grimm case in US headlines. But what the transgender tipping point fails to recognise is that transgender people have consistently been staple characters in the predominantly American horror genre of the Slasher film.^[2] The Slasher film, according to horror scholar Carol J. Clover, is "the immensely generative story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived."^[3] Many of the killers in these Slasher films, such as Norman Bates from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Buffalo Bill from Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), are gender-ambiguous, effectively conflating monstrosity and transgender identity.^[4] The "transgender monster"^[5] in these films has become so influential to horror that decades later Dafydd Goff, the culture subeditor of the Guardian UK, would remark that the 2012 film *House at The End of the Street* relied on "stock shocks and convoluted plot twists"^[6] of the standard gender reveal which these earlier Slashers popularized. Indeed, transgender scholars, such as Joelle Ruby Ryan and Julia Serano, have criticised 'the gender-ambiguous killer' for being so influential as it has propped up and perpetuated the myth in Western culture of the transgender woman as predator, rather than a victim who is often targeted.^[7]

What makes Luna's film, *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*, different from recent horror films like *House At The End of the Street* is that he subverts the normative script provided to transgender characters by effectively fusing the victim and killer roles on-screen. Instead of utilizing the transgender killer as a plot device to reveal criminality, his transgender characters are the main characters who prevail at the end of

the narrative. Furthermore, he uses the horror subgenre of the rape-revenge exploitation film (where victims seek revenge on their abusers) in order to demonstrate the real-world issues that transgender women face. By the end of his film, Luna has managed to recast the role of the “Final Girl” in horror film as that of a transgender woman, thereby making transgender women the main focus of a genre where they have regularly been cast as a villain. In this article, I use Patricia White’s concept of ‘retrospectatorship’ in order to effectively demonstrate how Luna infuses his horror film with memory and affect, thus creating a new perspective on older tropes that no longer resonate with the current culture on transgender storytelling. I examine the film’s relationship to the exploitation genre through its evocation of the hate speech ‘tranny’ and the violence that goes with hate speech through the film’s “missing reel”[\[8\]](#); I then follow that analysis with a history of the transgender monster archetype in the Slasher film, and document how, through the inversion of the binaries of male/female, killer/victim, and cis/trans in the rape-revenge subgenre of the Slasher, Luna creates *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* as an homage to past horror film while also providing new roles for transgender women on-screen.

‘Tranny’ and The Missing Reel

The plot of *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* is simple. The film opens with the five main characters, all of whom are transgender women, talking to each other at a club they work at as drag performers. Rachel Slurr (William Bellini) and Emma Grashun (Erica Andrews) flirt with two men, Nacho (Kenny Ochoa) and Chuey (Geraldo Davila). When they learn of a third man, Rachel and Emma invite Bubbles Cliqot (Krystal Summers) along as his date. Her date ends up being a man named Boner (Tom Zembrod), whom she had met before; their previous date ended in her rape when he realised she was a transgender woman. The three men soon attack Rachel, Emma and Bubbles until Pinky La’Trimm (Kelexis Davenport) and Tipper Sommore (Jenna Skyy) come to help. The trans women are overpowered and the screen cuts to black. Bubbles wakes up in the hospital with Pinky and Rachel, only to realise that Tipper and Emma have been killed. After Bubbles recovers, their friend Fergus trains the three of them in martial arts and plot revenge. The rest of the film documents their successful attacks on each of the men, leaving Boner for last. Luna divides his film into five reels which act as five chapters, mimicking the three-act structure of most rape-revenge exploitation films from the 1970s.[\[9\]](#)

As a genre, exploitation film is meant to exploit the viewer for quick profit, but also the actors and identities being portrayed on the

screen.[10] Luna is highly cognisant of the identity issues informing this particular genre, as he is on record for wanting to make *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* as a response to the “Fight hate with love” and “Love the bashers” campaigns he’d seen around LGBTQ hate-motivated violence.[11] He chose to focus his story on transgender women particularly because he realised that while they were often the victims of violence, their stories were not told on the news.[12] Effectively, Luna wanted to depict the precarious nature of transgender identity on the screen, exploit that instability through an act of dreaded and anticipated violence, and then use the following revenge as catharsis. His use of the word ‘tranny’ in the title demonstrates this affective framework most succinctly.

Tranny is a slur in the transgender community since it is often used in a derogatory fashion. Similar to the term ‘she-male,’ tranny has often been used in pornography to fetishise the trans (especially pre-operative) body, which works at dehumanising it.[13] Because of this, the word itself has been seen as emblematic of a violent act to the point where to say it is violence, especially for those outside the community.[14] The word ‘tranny’ in Luna’s title is one of the major reasons why Luna’s film was protested on release.[15] As a cisgender man (someone who identifies with the gender he was declared at birth)[i], he was seen as someone who could not use the word and was using it too callously since it was removed from its violent history. However, I posit that Luna’s use of ‘tranny’ was a deliberate attempt to draw attention to the term’s violent history because extreme violence is *precisely* the point of the exploitation film.

The film’s entire plot is constructed around two main acts of transphobic violence: Bubbles’ previous rape and the attack on the five transgender women. Bubbles’ rape happens before the beginning of the movie while the majority of the attack on the five women happens on a “missing reel” of film that the audience does not see.[16] By sparing the audience from witnessing the sexualised violence inflicted on Bubbles as well as the death of two transgender women, but keeping the word ‘tranny’ intact and often used by the attackers, Luna manages to make the word the violent act. Those who use the word “tranny” are those who facilitate acts of violence. This association does not stop for the transgender women, either. By having the women take the slur back as their own term, becoming the ‘ticked-off *trannies* with knives’ the violence that makes them the victim is evident—but so is their power to fight back. The word tranny becomes a weapon against the transgender women, only to be reclaimed by them in the second half of the film, while remaining equally as powerful. Whether the transgender women use it—or the attackers—the word itself becomes a way to demonstrate the everyday violent oppression of transphobia in action. Luna does all of this so well

that he even dubs his particular rape-revenge grindhouse film a type of “transploitation.”^[17] Through this term, he draws reference to the history of exploitation cinema and how the transgender body has been exploited on-screen.

At the beginning of each chapter in *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*, the screen flashes to black and the new chapter is announced, for example: “Chapter Three: Boo!”. At the height of the fight scene between Bubbles and Boner, the screen fades to black and leaves the audience with the unsettling image of Boner holding a baseball bat about to strike Bubbles’ head. Instead of announcing a new chapter, however, the message display reads: “The following film may contain one or more missing REELS. Sorry for the inconvenience.—Theatre Management”^[18] This missing reel disrupts the viewing experience, which makes the audience aware they are in a physical place (“theatre”) and that they occupy a passive position to this violence. By drawing attention to the film’s inadequacies, Luna roots his film in the physical place where exploitation films were shown *and* enables the affective experiences that exploitation films demand.

During the 1970s, theatres known as ‘grindhouses’ emerged in the US as a way for the theatres to make quick and easy money with a “continuous *grind* [of] programming” and spectators.^[19] Though scholar Glenn Ward acknowledges that the genre of “‘grindhouse cinema’ and ‘grindhouse film’” never really existed as a solidified genre, the popular use of the term and the nostalgia associated with the filmmaking aesthetics led to a commonly held association of what the term meant.^[20] Grindhouse cinema was “sleaze” “retro” and “trash” that was shown in a particular place during a particular time period—in the “cinemas of New York 42nd street [that] specialized in exploitation films” during the 1970s.^[21] The term ‘grindhouse’ is something that re-emerged in modern day retellings of this particular era; it is a memory as well as an associated style that never solidified as such during its peak. I bring up this term’s complicated cultural history to demonstrate how, when people like director Quentin Tarantino refer to grindhouse, they are evoking less of a lived reality and more of a shared fantasy of the exploitation genre. It is a low-fi production film with an allure of cultural “trash”—but its memory also evokes a physical place where people used to watch movies.

It is easy to see Tarantino’s influence on *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*. Along with the evocation of the grindhouse theatre through the misplaced reel, and Luna’s documented fascination with Tarantino’s *Grindhouse* (2008)^[22], the training scene after the attack visually alludes to Tarantino’s film *Kill Bill* (2003) through a similar relationship between the master who imparts wisdom onto the women who have been abused. Luna’s cultural citation links his film to a genre that is both rooted in the

physical and affective realms, which codes his filmmaking process with a layer of nostalgia. Because he draws from Tarantino's work as a source text (through the films of *Kill Bill* (2003), *Grindhouse* (2008), and *Jackie Brown* (1997)[ii]), and because most of those films were nostalgic looks back on exploitation cinema to begin with, Luna's act of new filmmaking bears resemblance to Patricia White's concept of "retrospectatorship." [23]

White defines retrospectatorship as a viewing experience which "is transformed by unconscious and conscious past viewing experience" meaning that "[c]ultural texts 'outside' the subject participate in th[e] structuring [of the film], and each new textual encounter is shaped by what's already 'inside' the viewer". [24] For White, this concept was useful to define lesbian cinema during the Hays production era which prohibited lesbian desire on-screen, but still utilised certain "cinematic codes" [25] to signal lesbian plotlines that viewers could interpret, which radically transformed their spectatorship practices. Similarly, scholar Rachel Carroll has characterised White's concept as a "subjective fantasy [that] revises memory traces" of a previous experience. [26] In Luna's case, he attempts to participate in a film genre that arguably never existed, thereby creating an almost dream-like pastiche, a grab-bag of associations that have something to do with the "sleaze" [27] of exploitation cinema, making his former spectatorship of the genre a retrospectatorship when he makes his own film. Luna must approach filmmaking as a spectator affected by memory and fantasy, blurring the genre of the grindhouse into something both real and imagined. Retrospectatorship, according to Carroll, "offers a valuable framework within which to conceptualize repetition, as a mode of cultural experience, and its relation to memory and affect" [28] and in this way, it is fundamental to the adaptation—or perpetuation—of a genre. As Ward argues, grindhouse may have never existed, but that does not matter, since the feelings it evokes are still real, and it is those feelings and cinematic codes which audiences interpret. In Luna's case, he used the memory of the grindhouse/exploitation cinema to radically alter transgender representation.

'Transploitation' and Transgender Monsters

The 1970s marked a large period of cinematic visibility for transgender people, typified by what I would deem the quintessential 'transploitation' film, Doris Wishman's *Let Me Die a Woman* (1977). *Let Me Die a Woman* contains many different scenes/techniques common in exploitation film, making it a seemingly endless array of subgenres. The endless gore through surgery shots align it with horror gore; it purports to be a mondo

film[[iii](#)] that informs its audience about a topic; there are several soft-core sex scenes with a transgender character and the film was penned by Wishman, a prolific writer of sexploitation films. *Let Me Die a Woman*, along with other trans films from this era like John Dexter's *I Want What I Want* (1972), Irving Rapper's *The Christine Jorgensen Story* (1970), and Michael Sarne's *Myra Brekinridge* (1970), solidified the filmmaking techniques surrounding the transgender body on-screen. Graphic images or details of surgery; a *mise-en-scène* that displays the transgender person's pre- or post-op genitals; excessive montages and/or shots of cross-dressing, especially images of nylon stockings; and close-up shots framing the transgender person's emotional confession are a few of the filmic tropes that solidified as "cinematic codes"[[29](#)] during this era.

Trans theorist Julia Serano, along with Joelle Ruby Ryan and Casey Plett, have also noticed these distinct discursive practices when it comes to current transgender representation. Trans people are either deceptive or pathetic,[\[30\]](#) "mere fantasies"[\[31\]](#) or they are stereotypes used to move the story forward.[\[32\]](#) A repeated trope in horror films involving transgender people is that of the transgender killer, psychopath, or monster—something of which Joelle Ruby Ryan studies in depth. She defines the "transgender monster" as:

"A recurring stereotype in the transgender media canon, most commonly seen in slasher films but occasionally in dramas, suspense and action films as well. While previously the demarcation between animal and human was cast as monstrous, historical developments and the tastes of audiences changed this. Audiences began to fear not some mythical animal-human hybrid creature that does not exist in reality, but the very real people who live right next door."[\[33\]](#)

As K.E. Sullivan documents, the "very real people who live right next door"[\[34\]](#) facet of this monster archetype stems from the real-life arrest and interrogation of Ed Gein, a Wisconsin farmer.[\[35\]](#) Author Robert Bloch would use Gein's possible cross-dressing and mother obsession for his depiction of Norman Bates in *Psycho* while Tobe Hooper, director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), would come to depict the character of Leatherface as Gein's obsession with making household items out of skin.[\[36\]](#) The most famous incarnation of Gein is notably in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), where he was the model for Buffalo Bill. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jame Gumb (birth name of Buffalo Bill) is referred to as a transsexual, though Gumb is rejected from surgery by John Hopkins University and then by Hannibal Lecter;[\[37\]](#) Gumb's subsequent need to make a "woman suit"[\[38\]](#) without the help of doctors demonstrates how much the doctor's narrative of gender affirmation surgery intertwines with the transgender person's identity. Scholar Jay Prosser notes that transgender patients must "tell a coherent story of

transsexual experience” and only after the doctor accepts the story will the surgery be performed.[39] This narrative construction always puts the transgender person on display, either physically through their body or through their life story and proper articulation of their gender identity.[40] Buffalo Bill, like the trans women in *Let Me Die a Woman*, are exploited on-screen through a “big reveal”[41] shot of their genitals, which, in the case of Buffalo Bill, also links transgender identity to monstrosity.[42] Since the creation of Buffalo Bill, the character has come to represent the quintessential trans monster,[43] an embodiment of transmisogyny,[44] “gender dysphoria gone horribly awry”[45] and an enactment of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performance as nothing but surface artifact.[46] The character’s impact and cultural legacy still lingers today in both what it means to be a transgender person on-screen and what it means to *reveal* a transgender killer on-screen, as *House at the End of the Street* and Goff’s[47] review attests to. In the horror genre, the desire/revulsion of the transgender body is demonstrated through “stock shocks”[48] where the transgender body is exploited and their gender identity is seen as a “convoluted plot twist.”[49] No matter the era, the goal of the trans killer as symbol is to point out an aberration in hegemonic masculinity and then destroy it so the social order is re-established.[50] The transgender monster became a repeated staple in the 1980s and especially potent once it was paired with the “Final Girl.”

In Carol J. Clover’s discussion of the Final Girl in *Men Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in Modern Horror Film* (1992), she remarks that the “surprise [of the Slasher film] is often within gender,” and refers to the films *Psycho* and Brian De Palma’s *Dressed to Kill* (1980) as examples of the gender-reveal occurring at the same time as the killer is revealed, effectively fusing these two identities together.[51] “In a striking number of cases,” she also writes, the gender surprise is “*across* it.”[52] Since the Final Girl character is often gender-ambiguous as well, the pairing of these two identities takes on another layer of the “surprise”; whereas the gender ambiguousness of the killer links them to monstrosity, the gender ambiguousness of the Final Girl seems to save her, since she is taken out of the sexual dynamics of the film through her tomboyish appearance and mannerisms.[53] “The gender-identity game” that these two figures face off against is actually an “integral element” of this genre.[54] The Slasher film becomes a play of binaries working together—male/female and victim/killer—until the Final Girl re-establishes order and becomes the hero through her annihilation of the deviant trans woman killer.[55]

This annihilation of the transgender monster has repercussions in real life. As Joelle Ruby Ryan notes, one of the main reasons why there is overkill in hate crimes involving transgender women is because of the revulsion/desire the (pre-operative) transgender body inspires.[56] Luna also echoes Ryan’s observation in his interview with Daniel Villarreal:[57]

transgender women are in a precarious position when it comes to their representation on-screen and off because while they are often highly sexualised in a violent manner, they seem to remain utterly invisible from news coverage about their deaths.[58] When Luna turns to the exploitation genre to better represent transgender women, he does so with the history of transgender bodies being exploited and highly sexualized in mind; he performs yet another “retrospectatorship” on the genre.[59] In this instance, though, *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* becomes an exploitation film in aesthetics only; it is a pastiche of the genre, but *not* of transgender people. Unlike the transgender killers who have come before them, Bubbles, Pinky, and Rachel cannot—and do not—fall under the same trope of the aforementioned transgender monster or psychopath. Instead, Luna uses the rape-revenge subgenre of exploitation film to subvert the violence done to transgender bodies, and give voice back to transgender women who have been exploited.

Rape-Revenge Predators

Carol J. Clover views the woman at the centre of the rape-revenge storyline as an extension of the Final Girl trope since “the Jennifers[iv] of the rape-revenge films come closer than the Final Girls of slasher films to being ‘heroes,’ taking, as they do, the long remainder of the movie to calculate and then execute revenge on their assailants.”[60] As she documents in “Getting Even” her chapter devoted to the rape-revenge genre, the extended sequence of violence and trauma in these films allows for the typical male viewer to understand and then sympathise with the victim.[61] The rape-revenge genre “shocks not because it is alien but because it is too familiar, because we recognize that the emotions it engages are regularly engaged by the big screen but almost never bluntly acknowledged for what they are.”[62] Clover focuses on the point-of-view shots from Jennifer’s perspective in *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) as they allow for the audience to take her side. Moreover, because the film offers no explanation and no redemption arc for the rapists, the audience is allowed “no outs” and no other social apparatus (such as the law) to help us with “intellectual displacement” of their violence; instead we must bear witness to the crime as it is.[63] Other rape-revenge films embody similar motifs, even those that do not have the woman surviving her rape (such as in *The Last House on The Left* (1972)), since the justice that is sought for the victim at the hands of parents or other loved ones still aligns the audience with the victim’s struggle.[64] The Final Girl is simultaneously both victim and killer—but her violence is coded as heroism, especially in the genre of rape-revenge. Even if her “Final” status may only be in memory in some rape-revenge genres, her existence is symbolic of something much greater: she is “the

great equaliser of slasher films, the woman who, in outwitting the killer, forced male viewers to see themselves in her.”[65]

Because of her equaliser stance, she has been seen as a feminist icon—but not without some contention. In Andi Zeisler’s summary of rape-revenge, she pays homage to Carol J. Clover’s progressive assessment of the Final Girl, but quickly dismisses Clover since it was “men who made up a large share of its audience [and they] got plenty of pleasure out of seeing women terrorized, sexualized, and killed.”[66] Alexandra Heller-Nicholas and Linda Williams, however, tend to side with Clover’s stance that the rape-revenge genre can be subversive and transgressive since it allows for the audience (especially women) to “bear witness to her own powerlessness in the face of rape, mutilation, and murder.”[67] I rehash these opposing sides, not to necessarily pick one over the other (though I tend to fall more on Clover’s perspective), but to display the ways in which the discussion on rape-revenge in film is split along gender lines, but only as it pertains to *cisgender* identity. This is a battle between male perpetrators/spectators and female victims/characters; transgender identity never enters into these debates, even though the Slasher film has plenty of gender ambiguous characters.

As the horror film genre has progressed, there have been some counter-readings to Clover’s concept of the Final Girl as not precisely a girl, but as a “conceptual figure”[68] free of binary gender, but I have yet to find any theoretical framework that takes the gender ambiguousness of the Final Girl and reinterprets her as a transgender man. The closest that Carol gets to perhaps positing a stand-in for a transgender man in a horror film is through her analysis of the possession film, where a prepubescent girl’s body becomes the perfect vessel for Satan, who effectively makes her “macho”[69] especially in scenes where she speaks with a “male voice.”[70] This absence of trans-masculinity is significant since there have been multiple readings of the gender ambiguousness of the Slasher killers as trans women. To me, what this absence points to is another hidden binary in the horror genre and the culture of analysis around these films; not only is identity drawn around binary concepts of male/female and killer/victim, but *cisgender/transgender* as well. More than that, this battleground seems to pit transgender women and *cisgender* women against one another, which mirrors the radical feminist debate in the 1970s.[71]

In 1979, second wave radical feminist Janice Raymond released a book entitled *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of The She-Male* (1979). The book documents Raymond’s stance on an issue that had been erupting in the radical feminist movement for some time: whether or not to include transgender women in women-only spaces. For Raymond, trans women should not be accepted in these spaces as they are not women;

they are men appropriating an identity to make a mockery of women, or they are only in disguise so they could enter these safe spaces and harm women.[72] While not every single radical feminist sought to delegitimise the transgender movement, there has been a continuous dissent among some radical feminists (often referred to as TERFS; trans-exclusionary radical feminists) about this issue. As Julia Serano documents, these exclusionary practices still occur today and function around the same issues of viewing transgender women as imposters and/or predators.[73] The myth of the transgender woman as predator stems from these radical feminist disagreements of the 1970s; it's what influenced the "deceptive"[74] trope in cinema and what administrators still think of when they attempt to prohibit or limit transgender bathroom use.[75] Transgender women are repeatedly cast into the role of the predator-rapist[76] because they are not seen as 'real' women and it is assumed that they disrupt safe spaces with the threat of their male body. In the Slasher film, when a gender-ambiguous killer (who is often read as a trans woman) enters an assumed safe space—like a camp, a house, or teenage girl's bedroom—to attack young women, and is only defeated/survived by a Final Girl who is boyish but is decidedly *not* transgender in cultural readings, the horror film itself seems to act as an adaptation of radical feminist politics. The implicit reading of the binaries in this cis/trans battleground is that the killer is trans and the Final Girl is cis, meaning that trans women, yet again, must be annihilated. This annihilation validates what TERF feminists think trans women are capable of (that they are rapists/murders) *and* it also gives them what they want (trans women out of safe spaces). In the most extreme sense, the Final Girl can be held up as a *radical* feminist icon because she makes both of these goals possible.

What this means for the horror genre is that the Final Girl/cross-dressing killer as a binary pair has persisted in films like *House At The End of the Street* while the "Jennifers"[77] of the rape-revenge genre do not change since heroism itself is still associated with cisgender womanhood. Transgender women, in spite of being an active part of the feminist movement,[78] have not been seen in the rape-revenge genre because they have always been seen as the rapist in both film and in some radical feminist discourse.[79] *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* manages to take both of these notions—that the trans woman is only a killer and that the final emblematic idea of survival is cisgender—and subverts their meanings. Luna's film discards the transgender killer trope by subjecting the lead characters to oppression-based violence and demonstrating that they, as trans women, are the ones who need protecting. But instead of having cisgender authority figures swoop in and resolve the issue (as other heteronormative films have done)[80] Luna has the remaining trans women rally together as a community and take out the men harmed them. There is "no out" or "internal displacement"[81]—no law and order that

will help the trans women because Luna is cognisant of the fact that not only do hegemonic structures (such as the news, the law, political campaigns) not care about transgender women—neither does the radical feminist movement which actively works on excluding them.[82]

The ‘knives’ in Luna’s title can then be read as referring to the trans women’s method of killing their attackers, while also referring to the long cinematic history of treating the gender-ambiguous killer’s penis as a phallic weapon[83], which also mirrors the long history of treating transgender women as rapists/killers who use their penises as a weapon in feminist and lesbian safe-spaces.[84] Bubbles, Pinky, and Rachel are coming with their knives-as-weapons and taking back their knives-as-penises at the same time, since it was precisely their ‘knives’ (as in the pre-op body) that caused them harm in the first place. Bubbles was raped by Boner because he did not know she was trans until he, presumably, saw her penis; now she takes back her body through her knives (penis and weapon) and uses both to annihilate *him*. Through the final battle, the film overwrites the original fight scene where two transgender women died; now we have three transgender women surviving and three cisgender men dead. The final act of the rape-revenge has consistently worked by inverting the power structure of victim/killer and male/female,[85] but with *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*, the power dynamic of cis/trans are also inverted. By surviving to the end of the film, these three trans women manage to become the “final girls” since “in outwitting the killer,” they force “male viewers to see themselves in her.”[86]

Conclusion

The last scene of *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* has the three remaining transgender women standing over the body of Boner. With their mission now over, they all sigh before Pinky laughs.

Pinky: You know the difference between us and them?

Tipper and Bubbles: No. What?

Pinky: Me either.[87]

Pinky’s ending line communicates what Luna has been articulating all along: there is absolutely no difference between transgender women and their killers—which means that transgender people are just like cisgender people. They are no more the victim than they are the killers in this story, but since transgender people have been systematically oppressed for

decades, *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives* represents an ending where, for once, they can prevail and survive.

Luna's 2010 film marks a critical juncture in transgender cinema and exploitation film. Indeed, Luna's film can only be understood by analysing both genres that have come before it through an affective framework of 'retrospectatorship' of the grindhouse era and a critical attention to the ways in which transgender bodies have been represented on screen and through the radical feminist movement. Luna's transgender characters are not monstrous transgender bodies that a Final Girl can annihilate in order to re-establish hegemonic order; they *are* the Final Girls who survive in spite of violence and force a cisgender audience to see them as just like themselves. Pinky, Rachel, and Bubbles are women dealing with sexual violence like any main character of a rape-revenge film—but by including these trans characters alongside women like Jennifer of *I Spit on Your Grave*, Israel Luna presents a film that subverts the typical discourse surrounding trans women and grants them space and validation on the screen. For the future of the horror film, there need to be many more directors like Luna so that transgender women and their representation can continue to survive.

Notes

[1] Steinmetz, Katy, "The Transgender Tipping Point," *Time Magazine*, 29 May 2014, (Accessed: April 9 2017).

[2] Ryan, Joelle Ruby, "Reel Gender: Examining the politics of trans images in media and film," (PhD diss, University of Ohio, 2009), 180.

[3] Clover, Carol J, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender In Modern Horror Films*, (NY: Princeton University Press, 1992), 21.

[4] Ryan, Joelle Ruby, "Reel Gender," 180.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Goff, Dafydd, "House at the End of the Street - review" *The Guardian*, 24 September 2012, (Accessed: April 1 2017).

[7] Ryan, Joelle Ruby, "Reel Gender," 180.

[8] *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*, Dir Israel Luna, (US: La Luna Entertainment Company, 2010).

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- [9] Heller-Nicholas, Alexandra, *Rape-Revenge Films: A Critical Study*, (Toronto: McFarland Company, 2011), 6-7.
- [10] Brottman, Mikita, in *Offensive Films: Towards an Anthropology of Cinema Vomotif*, (Toronto: Praeger, 1997), 39.
- [11] Villarreal, Daniel, "Gay Director Israel Luna is sick of Bashing Victims Sucking It Up. So he made a movie where they stab their attackers to death," in Queerty.com, N.D. (Accessed: April 1 2017).
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman On Sexism and The Scapegoating of Femininity*. (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2007), 253.
- [14] Lowder, Brian J, "The 'Tranny Debate' and the LGBTQ Movement" in *Slate*, 30 May 2014, (Accessed: May 2017).
- [15] Bolcer, Julie, "Tribeca Protested for Ticked off Trannies With Knives" *The Advocate*, 07 April 2010, (Accessed: April 1 2017).
- [16] *Ticked-Off Trannies with Knives*, Dir Israel Luna, (US: La Luna Entertainment Company, 2010).
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[i] The Latin prefix *cis* means 'on the same side', signaling that a cisgender person is someone who identifies with (is on the same side of) the birth gender they were given.

[ii] Like the film *Jackie Brown*, the character of Pinky can be viewed as a mixture of blaxploitation tropes. For more on blaxploitation, see Mikel J. Koven for more information.

[iii] A mondo film is one that presents real-life events, similar to a documentary, though it is mostly viewed from a sensational perspective. See Mikita Brottman for more information.

[iv] Jennifer is the main character from *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978)

Notes on Contributor

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