



## More than Tattoos: Rhetorical Discourse and Autism in Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

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### Abstract

Identity formations inscribed in language are rhetorical constructions. A cultural artifact exemplifying this idea is the movie, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and its main character, Lisbeth Salander. She displays evidence of “difference” in her on-screen behaviors, although in many instances her difference is a strength, not a weakness. Recently, there has been a proliferation of movie and television characters indicating popular culture’s attempts to define neuro-atypicality. Close analysis shows that the interactions of these characters illustrate a unique emphasis on specific rhetorical phenomena, such as invention, memory, and repetition. The rhetorical phenomena surrounds the idea of difference — and is encoded with the “different” person both in literature and film. The nature of the coding essentializes characteristics of identity not accurately reflective of difference, but there has been some progression in recent artistic endeavors. This is seen in *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Lisbeth exemplifies some of the concerns people have about representation, either filmic or descriptive that rely on specific rhetorical strategies to either compensate or survive. In addition, Lisbeth is a new breed of character where the difference is not a deficit but also strength. Studying these particular strategies is informative and relevant to both audience notions of difference as well as creation of identity.

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