

Intercultural Adaptation, Globalization, and Risk

Ways of Adapting: Revenge Logic in *Wild Tales* (2014)

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This paper examines the representation of revenge and its logic in *Relatos Salvajes* (*Wild Tales*, dir. Damián Szifron), an Argentine film composed of six shorts about revenge. The 'revengers' in the film, to use a Elizabethan term, include a man murdering everyone who has wronged him by crashing an airplane carrying his victims, a cook killing a loan shark with rat poison followed by a dagger, two strangers killing each other in a series of violent acts of revenge against each other excited by their road rage, an explosive expert bombing up a government office after his Kafkaesque bureaucratic encounter and becoming a hero on social media, a husband axeing a driver who is arrested for a hit-and-run which killed his wife, and a woman's reaction to her husband's infidelity by having sex with a random man.

There are two distinguishing aspects in the film: the tone is comic, however violent and tragic the content of the stories become, and the revengers are no Hamlet, but ordinary people being pushed to extremes. The culture of logic revenge exhibited in the film shows an intermingling of different systems of idea about justice, legal system, and ways of dealing with the past. These shorts, city-based and modern, feature public displays of excessive brutality, acts of 'wild justice,' a general distrust of the state and legal system, and a turning away from the eye-for-an-eye logic of revenge. Interestingly, the use of such primitive forms of aggression as human excrement, rat poison, and axe as weapons to humiliate or to harm are anachronistic, dating back to Elizabethan revenge plays. This paper traces the comic tendency of the film, comparing it with what may be called 'revenge comedy' – *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Tempest*, to name a few – attempting to establish a way of understanding subjectivity in what Ulrich Beck calls a risk society which the film is set: This paper argues that these aggressive acts which are called revenge, are ways of regulating risk, or ways of 'adaptation' to a society in which legal systems are no longer trusted, and divine justice is not demanded anymore.