



[Salt](#) and [Salander](#) - Heroines on film
reviewed by [Anne Ryan](#) in August 2010

In the last week film-goers in Manchester have had the opportunity to see two contrasting views of heroic female protagonists on the screen.

The eponymous Salt – as played by Angelina Jolie and the return of Stieg Larsson's damaged computer geek – Lizbeth Salander in 'The Girl Who Played With Fire' – the second part of his best-selling trilogy.

Fans of the Swedish productions may view the forthcoming Hollywood adaptation with apprehension and gain some lessons from 'Salt'. Originally written for Tom Cruise – the inhumanly beautiful Jolie is a new super-heroine. If watching 'Superman' we believed a man could fly – 'Salt' will convince us that a woman can out-run police chases, jump from the tops of trucks hurtling down the freeway and finally, indeed, fly from a helicopter. And all this while continually looking more desirable than any human being should.

By contrast Noomi Rapace often resembles a battered, homicidal child. The cast of 'the Girl . . .' look like real people – Lizbeth's love interest has a discernible tummy and our heroine does not shave her armpits (and unlike in the original novel, she does not use her new-found wealth to buy new breasts!). But she too verges on the superhuman – undergoing physical abuse, but fighting back with courage and her computing skills.

Both films involve the tail-end of the Cold War but Salander operates in a recognisable world – all too recognisable if one believes Christopher Hitchens, whose sources argue that Larsson was writing lightly disguised reality and recent revelations of the dark side of the Swedish dream, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/01/goran-lindberg-sweden-crime-palme>. Salt acts in a cartoon existence where she can overcome any odds – including effectively disguising herself as a man, using the plastic face pieces familiar from Mission Impossible.

I left Salt feeling that I could drop-kick any Russian spy – I left Salander's story recognising that the world is a corrupt place and we must hope for the goodness of ordinary courageous mortals.