

#Time'sUp on Patriarchal Narratives of Rape on Screen:
The Potentialities of a Female Gaze

by

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Abstract

In this research I utilise critical feminist media theory to examine the various discourses of rape presented in televised fictions of sexual violence. In undertaking a Foucauldian discourse analysis I explore patriarchal discursive manoeuvring, the enduring presence of the male gaze, and the emerging potential for feminist discourses of sexual violence alongside a female gaze, as a political endeavour and opportunity for social change. This feminist project is borne out of my recognition of the ubiquity of rape as central to the storyline of many British prime-time television dramas over approximately the last five years in an era post-Savile scandal, and now post-Weinstein also. As the majority of programmes that I analyse involve representations of the criminal justice system, I discern how critically they portray the trial and punishment of rape in law, which aspects of rape culture such televisual narratives highlight or reinforce, and likewise which rape myths they dispel or perpetuate. In my overall examination of the genre of sexual violence focussed programmes from 2013 to 2018, I argue that just as a continuum of men's violence against women has been conceptualised, a continuum of televisual discourses of rape can be conceived. From the data, I identify the use of traditional patriarchal discourses to punish archetypal 'postfeminist' women in ITV's *Liar* and BBC's *Apple Tree Yard*, as well as programmes which co-opt feminism alongside the presence of visual misogyny as in BBC's *The Fall*. Conversely, I also determine the emergence of dramas which centre feminist standpoints, as executed in drama series such as Channel 4's *National Treasure* and ITV's *Broadchurch*. I conclude by examining the potential impact of televisual representations of sexual violence by means of a female gaze, such as that arguably demonstrated in Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake*.

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Introduction:
Televsual Representations of Sexual Violence
in a Postfeminist, Post-Savile, Post-Weinstein Era?

It is particularly productive to analyse the relationship between ‘real’ rape and representations of rape at the current historical moment, when media representations are deeply enmeshed with cultural practices through which we make sense of everyday lives and of lived experience. (Ferreday, 2015: 23)

Whilst this analysis is productive, timely, and adds to the feminist project, in this research I am nonetheless analysing and reflecting from a significantly different historical moment than Dr Debra Ferreday was only a few years ago, so fastmoving are the changing cultural and media landscapes, post-MeToo. In the introduction to my undergraduate dissertation in 2017 I noted how the focus of my work, an examination of the discourses found in programmes centred around the crimes of Jimmy Savile, was necessary in an age in which the viewing public had so many sex abuse scandals of which to make sense. I reflected on the playing out of misogyny and power on a global stage concerning several women’s claims of sexual assault against the then presidential candidate Donald Trump. And so, only 18 months after the submission of my work on the Savile scandal (Yates, 2017), there has been, and continues to be, an unprecedented tsunami of revelations regarding the sexual violence and crimes of men in the public eye. Whilst the most infamous case is that of Harvey Weinstein, millions of ‘everyday’ harms against women are being relayed and shared as a result of the global #MeToo and #Time’sUp movements (Bates, 2014; Cobb and Horeck, 2018).

Likewise, other long-overdue steps have played out on a predominantly US-centric stage; Roman Polanski has finally been somewhat excommunicated from the film

industry by means of the self-reflection and perhaps also self-preservation of the Academy of Motion Picture for his long-acknowledged rape of a 13-year old girl, alongside the removal of Bill Cosby following his numerous convictions for sexual assault (*The Guardian*, 2018a). And yet for so long, Polanski, in a similar manner to the power and position of Woody Allen, had and undoubtedly still has the support of the film industry, actors and directors, male and female. As Alison Phipps (2014: 25) observes, 'the significance of Polanski's artistic contribution appear(ed) to dwarf his crime'. And now, much more recently, women claiming to have been sexually assaulted by US judge, Brett Kavanaugh, were given an opportunity to speak out about their experiences for the first time, only to see him appointed to the Supreme Court (St. Felix, 2018). Likewise, by the time I have finished writing this thesis I have no doubt that another long-buried scandal of men's insidious violence against women will be rightly brought to the world's attention via news media. But again, whether justice is done seems to be another matter entirely.

And so, in 2018 a *post-MeToo* culture is already being heralded, indeed a moment and age 'post-Weinstein' (Cobb and Horeck, 2018; Marghitu, 2018), such is the nature of the constantly shifting battle lines between patriarchal society, rape culture and (popular) feminist interventions (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2017). Rape culture has been defined as one in which 'women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women and presents it as the norm' (Buchwald *et al.*, 2005: XI). And whilst the 'extreme' or possibly 'overstated' language of the term *rape culture* has been remarked upon and defended by feminists (Harding, 2015), never perhaps has this definition seemed more apt, its usage seemed more appropriate. Likewise, Buchwald's (2005) use of

the term 'terrorism' is significant in an age during which the strategic, cyber-enabled networking of so-called 'incels' is coming to light; a self-given appellation adopted by the organising of men claiming to be victims of 'involuntary celibacy', who wish to seek vengeance specifically on the world of women who are seen to have spurned them (Wright, 2018).¹

Moreover, words are productive and as such produce discourse, claims to knowledge and truth, and are, in turn, claims to power (Foucault, 1978); and so the words often attributed to men's harms, crimes and violences against women and children, the way in which we wield them also as feminists, matter (Spender, 1980; Boyle, 2018). As Karen Boyle (2018) describes, nowhere is language perhaps more difficult or more important than when trying to accurately and adequately reflect and describe men's sexual violence against women... 'and girls', or 'and children', and so forth. And so whilst I am striving to deconstruct patriarchy's obsession with the storytelling of men's raping of women in particular, I do not also want to fall foul of this singular fixation. Some of the programmes I analyse in this project do not just feature rape, but also the related and wider crimes of grooming and sexual exploitation of children, girls, such as *Three Girls* on the BBC, and the first series of *Top of the Lake*, as well as crimes relating to rape such as murder following sexual assault, and even necrophilia as portrayed in BBC's *The Fall*. Therefore, I undertake this work, which does focus on and scrutinise the presence of rape on television, but rather, in line with Liz Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence theory, acknowledging the interconnectedness of a range of abuses. Similarly, through my analysis of the various strategies of discourse found in these programmes I employ

¹ In April 2018 a terrorist attack was carried out in Toronto, Canada in which a van was driven into a crowd by 28 year old Alek Minassian, who identified on social media as an 'incel'; he claimed his attack was inspired by previous incel terrorists in the so-called 'incel rebellion' (BBC, 2018).

'continuum thinking' (Boyle, 2018) to conceptualise the genre as a whole, and argue that a continuum of mediated discourses of rape on television can be theorised.

The genealogical focus of this research, and the period of television I am analysing, begins where my last piece of research finished at the end of 2012 and the months during which the televisual exposés of Jimmy Savile's numerous crimes and deceits were aired (Yates, 2017), and continues up to this current ambiguous, already hailed post-Weinstein, post-MeToo moment of 2018. Whereas my previous work deconstructed the discourses found in documentary, in this research, from a feminist sociological perspective, I investigate the unabating recurrence and recent proliferation of fictional television dramas which feature rape as a central storyline, in order to understand how such fictions relate to wider societal rape myths. Whilst the combination of the sexual objectification of female bodies and men's violence against women has long been a feature of Hollywood films, not isolated to the horror and thriller genres alone (Projanksy, 2001), I argue, that over approximately the last five years there has been a renewed appetite, vigour and arguably market for both portraying and confronting the issue of sexual assault on British television. In my analysis I am interested in how the narratives and discourses that are replicated and represented in these specific television programmes link to what we already know; what sociologists, feminists and socio-legal scholars have theorised about existing narratives of masculine and feminine sexualities, male and female sexed bodies, the mythology of rape, sexual assault, and harassment, the malevolence and harm that law inflicts upon women (Smart, 1989; 1995). I ask if these storylines challenge hegemonic discourse or conversely, do they undermine feminist discourse, achievements and anti-rape activism?

In this work I examine how media representations reproduce and contribute to patriarchal discourses of rape. I also seek to provide an understanding of how fictional dramas utilise a male gaze alongside narratives of sexual violence. Laura Mulvey (1975: 6) argues that the male gaze of film is the result of 'the unconscious of patriarchal society'. It is the invisible and almost natural way that we, men and women, look at, appreciate, desire, sexualise, and seek pleasure in watching women's bodies. Alongside my discourse analysis, I also remark on the presence of either the male gaze in the programmes, or in some cases an absence, where in its place we may find a female gaze (Soloway, 2016). This research is partly influenced by director, Jill Soloway's keynote speech at the 2016 Toronto Film Festival, where they² advocated a re-visiting and re-examination of Mulvey's (1975) male gaze and a desire as a queer, feminist filmmaker and television producer to see a newly conceptualised female gaze. In the speech Soloway, perhaps best known for the Amazon series *Transparent* (2014-Present), asked:

What is the Male Gaze? Um, well, everything. Pretty much everything you've ever seen, most TV shows, all movies, super hero and action movies, of course horror movies and torture movies, movies intended to objectify women, like Wolf of Wall Street and James Bond, and well intentioned movies like Her or Ex Machina that dream up women who ooze ether...Did I say everything? Pretty much everything.

In Chapter One I analyse the discursive elements of the programmes *Liar* (ITV) and *Unspeakable* (Channel 4), fictional dramas which I argue blatantly perpetuate the rape myth of false rape allegations and the supposed danger in believing women's accounts. This ideological message is conveyed both in terms of individual scenes and dialogue, as well as through the overarching discursive message of entire programmes. In these dramas women are portrayed as irrational and untrustworthy,

² Soloway's preferred pronoun as a non-binary person.

whilst feminism is framed as hasty and rash; women and feminism alike are shown to be too quick to suspect, judge and ruin the lives of men. Chapter two focuses on postfeminist televisual texts (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007), which entangle feminist discourse with numerous punishments of the archetypal postfeminist woman. In perpetuating a male gaze, punishing female sexuality, and most significantly using graphic visual misogyny as a form of gratuitous entertainment, these programmes, *Apple Tree Yard* (ITV) and *The Fall* (BBC), eroticise both the sexual objectification of women, and men's violence against them.

In chapter three I analyse two programmes, *National Treasure* (Channel 4) and the third series of *Broadchurch* (ITV), that present, I suggest, nuanced narratives of rape alongside a wider examination of other behaviours on a spectrum of men's violence against women. These include depictions of the viewing of pornography, soliciting of prostitutes, the sharing of images by mobile phones in what is sometimes referred to as 'revenge porn', to name but a few. As such, these programmes are informed by feminist discourse and research, which highlight the linked nature of men's behaviours that can harm women and children in a myriad of ways (Kelly, 1988). In the penultimate of my data chapters I examine recent challenges to hegemonic discourses of rape in the form of female scripted, directed and produced television, namely the much-acclaimed televised dramatization of the real-life Rochdale sex abuse scandals, *Three Girls* (BBC, 2017), and Jane Campion's award-winning drama series *Top of the Lake* (BBC), a creative, feminist critique of systemic misogyny and patriarchy.

My fifth data chapter is optimistically forward looking in its synthesis of the potentialities of a female gaze, and Hélène Cixous' (1976) understanding of *écriture féminine*, 'women's writing'. In Chapter Five I continue exploring how these female-

written and produced programmes can perhaps be thought of as examples of the women's writing that Cixous proposed; feminist narrative shaping here is a way of altering the dominant discourses, by creating media and art according to women's accounts, through the lens of a woman's perspective. Soloway's (2016) keynote inspired me to examine some of their visions and hopes for a female gaze, specifically in the context of challenging patriarchal narratives of sexual violence. I hope to demonstrate throughout my whole analysis of the data how inextricably linked and significant the ideological persuasion found in all of these programmes can be regarding popularly held views of female bodies, men's power and sexual violence, and therefore the establishing of truths and myths regarding rape. I conclude that the female gaze, or perhaps a plurality of gazes, represents the much-needed radical and feminist-informed shift required in popular culture and media, if we are to begin to reduce and eliminate the pervasive problem of men's raping of women and children.

Literature Review:

The Ubiquity of Rape (in Popular Culture)

My research seeks to unravel the ways in which sexual violence against women is discursively produced and focused on, in line with the attitudes and judgements of existing discourses of rape, by producers of prime-time television dramas. I am concerned with the complexities and sophistication of these narratives which not only aim to entertain audiences through familiar detective and investigation storylines, but excite them with psychological thrillers, and educate them about real-life scandals, by means of storylines which centre around sexual violence. Long before the second wave of feminism and up until the present moment, the rape of fictional female characters has remained a recurrent trope in mainstream popular culture (Projansky, 2001), arguably all the way back to antiquity and enduring mythologies, such as the rape of Persephone (Beard, 2017). But writing of her decision to analyse the period of fifteen years of American prime-time television from 1976- 1990 and storylines of rape, Lisa Cuklanz (2000) explains that she wanted to chart the way in which rape was represented on screens during some of the main years of the feminist anti-rape movement. Interestingly, Cuklanz (2000) concludes that until 1990 she finds televisual portrayals of rape to be not only patriarchal but formulaic, and it was only from the 1990's onwards that she interprets a new complexity and nuance in storylines. And yet, despite this very slight amelioration in narrative sophistication, the academic literature shows that the prevalence of rape and sexual violence on television has increased considerably, a trend which shows no sign of abating (Harris and Bartlett, 2009). Patriarchal discourses of domination and fear, depicted through portrayals of violence against women continue to be propagandised through mediated screens (Custers and Van den Bulck, 2013). Likewise, despite the strides

of feminism and 21st century claims to our ever-improving status and equality, women remain largely underrepresented, marginalised and disproportionately victimised in both film and television (Thornham, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2017).

Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'

Regarding the representation of women on screen, in this research I utilise the concept of Laura Mulvey's (1975) 'Male Gaze' to discern how the spectatorship and sexual objectification of female characters contributes to the discourses of sexual violence represented in contemporary television. At the crest of the second wave, the year 1975 not only gave us Mulvey's seminal essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, but also Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*, a ground-breaking and extensive feminist theorising of rape from which arguably most other feminist writings on sexual assault have evolved. Brownmiller is commonly referred to as the first writer to use the term 'date rape', which later became 'acquaintance rape' and yet the term retains usage into the 21st century with regard to substances used as 'date rape' drugs. In her analysis of 'Mulvey's Legacy' Yvonne Rainer (2006: 168) notes that the *Screen* essay 'released a *cri de coeur* that was echoed in protests on both sides of the Atlantic against cultural practices that diminished and marginalized women'. There is therefore, inherent value in re-visiting these classic feminist texts in order to establish how relevant such theories may be to my individual project and the ways in which they continue to inform feminist thinking.

Mulvey (1975: 8) unequivocally positions her work as a political manifesto, in her affirming: 'It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it'. That is arguably the intention of her article; to deconstruct and destroy the power of the male gaze. She highlights how cinema, film and culture are both a representation of society and

a part of it. Thus, referring to the Hollywood of old, with directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, she comments that 'unchallenged, mainstream films coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order' (Mulvey, 1975: 7). Her essay is in many ways comparable to Hélène Cixous' *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) (I provide more in-depth analysis of this essay in chapter 5), an uncompromising, militant call to arms; 'the satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked' (Mulvey, 1975: 8).

Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (ibid: 6), was presented as 'a theory and a practice which will challenge this cinema of the past'; so buoyant on the achievements of the second wave, Mulvey hoped male-gazing in film was almost historic and that women, feminists, had started to halt their being objects, and admired for their '*looked-atness*'. In this current moment so many things are starting to become exposed and unacceptable regarding how society treats, perceives and looks at women and yet still they are all linked in this way to a male gaze and men's perceptions and treatment of women. We are concurrently witnessing women making stands to stop such objectification and dehumanisation in all areas of the media; the #MeToo movement, the #TimesUp campaign, the toppling of Harvey Weinstein, the revisited discussion of Woody Allen and his actions which continue to be glossed over (Phipps, 2014), as well as occurrences such as the BBC correspondent Carrie Grace who stepped down over pay, and the decision to stop having formula one 'grid girls'. Thus, there is a continued relevance and significance to Mulvey's male gaze theory, which can be applied to television with a focus on gendered and sexual violence, but also as a sociological analysis of cultural events and depictions of gender, that we are as Mulvey writes, all too often still 'unconscious' to, even in this so called 'post-feminist' age (McRobbie, 2004).

In 2015, *Feminist Media Studies*, dedicated an issue of the journal entirely to the 40th anniversary of the publication of Mulvey's essay (1975) with articles focusing on her theory's continued relevance; its application and relevance to an examination of gender on television rather than cinema (Smit, 2015), in relation to the erotic spectacle on television screens, computer screens and phones (Wheatley, 2015), as well as articles regarding the way in which the intersection of media and activism achieve social change, with feminist activists and filmmakers at the forefront (Mayer, 2015). In her examination of 'The Spectator Side of the Screen' Alexia Smit (2015) applies Mulvey's theory specifically to domestic television, describing the proximity between spectator and screen in this space in which television is watched socially with others, families, groups, a shared experience which creates an intimacy to television viewing that differs from cinema and creates 'an empathetic engagement with onscreen subjects' (2015: 893).

Rape on screen

Regarding specific studies of rape in television and film, Sarah Projansky's 2001 book '*Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*' provides a comprehensive account of discourses, representations, and examples of rape in popular culture, including details specific to the context of the United States during slavery, the continued relevance of racialised narratives of rape post-slavery, and second wave feminist rhetoric and activism on sexual violence. She details the role of representations of rape in 'post-feminist' popular culture by means of film and television from 1980 up until publication in 2001. Whilst this work is now 17 years old it nonetheless provides an invaluable reference point around which to reflect on the changing nature of television and cinema viewing habits, the narratives of rape produced in film and television over the first two decades of the 21st century, as well

as the change in studio power dynamics and the diversity of voices that production companies under the Amazon and Netflix umbrellas have allowed for (Smit, 2015). Like my own research, Projansky's (2001: 16) work makes the 'poststructuralist theoretical assumption that public discourses have material effects and that representations are as important to understanding what rape and feminism 'are' as are laws, theory, activism and experience'.

Tanya Horeck's (2003) *Public Rape*, offers a thorough analysis of the male gaze in films such as Academy-Award-winning '*The Accused*' (1988), whilst also discussing the paradoxical nature of rape as a private and shameful act which is nonetheless given a high profile in public discourse and culture. Horeck (2003: 4) interrogates rape from the perspective of 'the nature of its public status', often considered a 'public event'. Meanwhile, Jacinda Read's (2000) work '*The New Avengers: Feminism, Femininity and the Rape-revenge Cycle*', examines the so-called empowerment given to female victims of rape on-screen in the form of vengeance; a theme that I have identified in several of the television programmes that I analyse, with the death of the rapist occurring in at least two, if not three, of the texts in accordance with this trope.

The work of Lisa Cuklanz (2000; Cuklanz and Moorti, 2006) and Susan L. Brinson (1989; 1992) provides a useful starting point for tracing a specific genealogy of depictions of rape on prime-time television, from the 1970's into the first decade of this millennium, alongside a description of feminist efforts to reframe understandings of rape and attitudes towards victims of sexual violence. These texts are concerned with how rape on television is a reflection of cultural attitudes towards rape as well as how programmes act to both reinforce or sometimes oppose popular rape myths

held in society. Likewise, Molly Ann Magestro's 2015 book, *Assault on the Small Screen: Representations of Sexual Violence on Prime Time Television Dramas*, undertakes an examination of the prime-time rape genre. Whilst Magestro's focus is again on US prime-time, and predominantly fictional crime investigation shows such as *Law and Order: SVU*, *NCIS* and *CSI*, her rationale for the research are similar to mine:

These representations of rape narratives aren't just happening on television; they play out in our living rooms, kitchens, and even bedrooms. Someone needs to pay attention to what those stories say and show, the ways in which they are empowering or problematic, and to consider what we can learn about, and possibly from, them. (2015: xvii).

In older work, such as Julia Wood's (1994: 36) *Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender*, it is interesting to reflect on how the presence of rape in films has evolved from being an 'extension of sexual encounters' and dominant ideas of violence as 'sexy', even when it comes to rape. Whilst such views have not gone away entirely, as evidenced in this research, there is now a need for programme makers to at least plead good intentions and make appeals to responsibility and taking feminism 'into account' (McRobbie, 2004). Moreover, what some of the more dated literature on rape myths shows is how these cultural attitudes are by their very nature, beliefs which are not static or fixed. These myths change and evolve over time in line with hegemonic discourses of gender, sexuality, violence, and acceptance or incorporation of feminist discourse into law and popular culture. Oftentimes, the racialised nature of rape myths varies amongst different ethnic groups in different places and at different times (see appendix 3). In the US there is a legacy of African-American man as rapist (Projansky, 2001), and likewise in recent years in the UK distrust and discrimination towards the British-Asian community has arisen as a result of the problem and media attention attributed to Muslim grooming

gangs (as I discuss in chapter four). Similarly, throughout mainland Europe, as well as the US and Australia, there exists in public discourse the mythical, folk-devil figure of 'immigrant', with male Muslim immigrants often depicted in the media as potential rapists (Dagistanli and Grewal, 2012).

Kahlor and Eastin's 2011 study 'Television's Role in the Culture of Violence Toward Women' utilises cultivation theory as an empirical framework, alongside feminist theory to assess the role of television representations of rape in an existing culture of violence against women. They examine general television viewer's acceptance of established and popular rape myths, or 'rape myth acceptance' as it is termed in this US and psychologically incumbent study. An online survey asked participants questions about their attitudes and knowledge of rape according to rape myth scales established by Field in 1978, Burt 1980 and Ward 1988, as if cultural attitudes towards men and women, sex and dating, violence and the law are static and fixed, and unaffected by shifts in public discourse, the women's movement, high-profile cases of rape and so forth. I found the questions posed to respondents to be incredibly outdated in tone, dating back more than 30 years, open to a myriad of interpretations, and I would argue deeply offensive. For example, participants were asked to rate on a scale to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements such as 'Many women have an unconscious wish to be raped, and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are likely to be attacked' (Burt, 1980 cited in Kahlor and Eastin, 2011: 223) and 'Most women fantasize about rape' (Field, 1978, cited in Kahlor and Eastin, 2011: 223).

This study in particular demonstrates a desperate need for a new set of standards regarding commonly-held false beliefs about sexual violence and rape myths in a UK context; a scale which could likewise, also be used for determining the presence

of feminist discourses of sexual violence in TV, and equally, film. I found reference to, and usage of, many other scales of rape myth and rape myth acceptance in the literature, including Burt, 1980, Field, 1978, and Ward, 1988, and yet I found them problematic and inadequate for my particular study. With regards to these commonly used frameworks for researching rape myths, I considered these attitudes to be outdated, reductive and arguably quite extreme in the level of misogyny portrayed. In addition, they are predominantly US-centric, as is a majority of the literature on this field regarding cultural attitudes which draw from the discipline of psychology and often takes the form of quantitative research (Brown *et al.*, 2010). With these points in mind, I have devised for the purpose of this research my own new scale or template of rape myths and feminist counter-formulations (Cuklanz, 2000) (see appendix 3), which I describe in more detail in the next chapter.

With regards to journal articles examining the specific television programmes which I have selected for this project, some have more written about them than others, and some none at all. Perhaps due to the acclaim of its Oscar-winning director and writer of *The Piano* (1993) Jane Campion, *Top of the Lake* starring *Piano*-actor Holly Hunter, has garnered a wealth of attention from the academy with regards to feminist criticism, and media and television studies, with several studies also drawing comparisons with BBC's *The Fall*. In one of the very few articles to note the significance of the role of new media technologies in the portrayal of rape in Series 3 of *Broadchurch*, Tanya Horeck (2018) analyses the normalisation of image-based sexual violence in misogynistic crimes, a recurring and dominant theme in all of my chosen television texts, in her article 'Screening Affect: Rape Culture and the Digital Interface in *The Fall* and *Top of the Lake*', whilst Sue Thornham (2017) provides an insight into the use of storytelling and fairy-tale with her unique insight into the series

'Beyond Bluebeard: feminist nostalgia and *Top of the Lake*'. Recounting critiques of colonialization and indigenous peoples in Campion's *The Piano*, Sophie Mayer (2017: 107) meanwhile analyses the 'Decolonising (of) Feminist Utopias in *Top of the Lake*', exploring how the series' creation of a decolonised account of child sexual abuse in New Zealand reverses the role of media, normally 'instrumental in 'lurid' inscriptions of Maori as abusers— (and instead) turns to domestic television to redress the balance'.

In her particularly insightful article, Katie Moylan (2017: 269) analyses the 'estranged space and subjectivity' in her examination of Freud's 'uncanny' in *Top of the Lake*; those unexpected departures from the normal conventions of police procedurals, which whilst often aesthetically spectacular have 'the capacity to unsettle and estrange us'. And yet, as Moylan argues, I found they did not estrange or alienate me as a viewer. Rather, they intrigued, and created in me a sense of disconnection from the rational legal processes of the criminal elements of the series, thus allowing for a more esoteric and emotive connection to the complex interiorities of the characters, and wildness of the physical and emotional landscapes of the drama (which I further discuss in chapter four). Likewise, with regards BBC's *The Fall*, I have found Deborah Jermyn's (2017) work to be invaluable. Entitled, 'Silk blouses and fedoras: The female detective, contemporary TV crime drama and the predicaments of postfeminism' Jermyn's research considers the global popularity of the British series versus her analysis of the updated US version of *Prime Suspect*, which proved much less successful with audiences in the States. I comment at length on her personal engagement and reactions to the misogynistic nature of *The Fall* in my methodology chapter. Similarly, Steenberg (2017) offers a critique of the series in relation to the rising popularity of this genre in her article, '*The Fall* and

Television Noir'. With similar links made between programmes as theorised in this thesis, Kampeas-Rittenhouse's (2015) essay, "Die to Yourself": The 21st Century Feminist Crime Drama's Dream of Justice', offers a nuanced comparative reading of Jane Campion's mini-series *Top of the Lake*, alongside *The Fall* and the British drama series *Happy Valley*, starring Sarah Lancashire as 'unglamorous and down to earth' Police Sergeant Catherine Cawood.

And yet whilst there are these numerous articles written about *The Fall* and *Top of the Lake*, some of which do make reference to the tackling of sexual assault in *Broadchurch* (Steenberg, 2017), I have been surprised to find no academic attention has been given to ITV's *Liar*. As well as being extremely popular in terms of viewing figures (see appendix 1), it presents perhaps for the first time, a fictional television series devoted entirely to the premise that in the case of rape someone is lying, and it is heavily implied for a majority of the episode that in this instance it is the woman. It is a show dedicated to the notion that a woman's version of events are unreliable (Kennedy, 1992; Smart, 1995), a woman who was drinking so much on a first date, remembers kissing the man in question in her bedroom, who has a history of making sexual harassment allegations against men, and yet it has failed to garner any academic attention or analysis.

Feminist Discourses of Rape

Within my research I draw on texts and theorists which examine feminist discourses of rape, in order to discern what they are, how they have changed over time and with the movement. In Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* (1975) there is a brief prologue entitled 'A Personal Statement', in which she thought it relevant to explain how and why she chose to write the ground-breaking text on rape, and how she did

so as a woman who had never experienced rape herself. And it is in this concise explanation that she reveals the power of patriarchal discourse, the power of hegemony and discourse to influence the opinion of both men and women (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1977; 1978; 1980), as she describes how she was once so convinced that she knew the 'truth' about rape and rape victims, in accordance with the commonly held cultural attitudes and views of 1970's America. She writes of her personal confrontation with these traditional views and her shift in perspective and position. Brownmiller concludes, 'I wrote this book because I am a woman who changed her mind' (ibid: 9).

By contrast to the dearth of studies examining rape on British television, there is a wealth of theory with regard to British feminist scholars whose theories of sexual violence will help inform my data analysis. Radical feminist theory on rape will form an important part of the context for this project. Liz Kelly's (1988) important study '*Surviving Sexual Violence*' provides the concept of a 'continuum of violence' enacted by men against women on which rape can be placed, whilst Nicola Gavey's (2005) book entitled '*Just Sex?*' examines the problematic nature of cultural constructions of heterosexuality, in relation to both consensual and non-consensual sex in the 'almost ordinary' everyday occurrence of rape. Gavey (2005: 2) boldly and unequivocally argues that 'everyday taken-for-granted normative forms of heterosexuality work as a cultural scaffolding for rape'. Like many other poststructural and radical feminist theorists, she utilises the work of Michel Foucault to examine the myriad ways in which sexualities are socially constructed and culturally produced, in ways that naturalise male sexuality and rape and construct women as passive victims.

Also pertinent to mention in this review is the wide range of texts written for a more general audience, which nonetheless contain powerful and defiantly feminist stances on rape culture, rape myths and the impunity of rape. This specifically feminist, but accessible genre, that seems to have emerged over roughly the last ten years, can perhaps be interpreted as a result of the upsurge in feminism and collecting together of women by means of internet. As Ferreday and Harris (2017: 241) observe, to engage with these mainstream, popular feminist texts and their authors who have found celebrity through their feminism, 'is to engage with pressing and serious questions of sexual freedom, sexualisation, rape culture and sexual violence, racism and racialisation and the queering of gender'. This has been most noticeably evidenced with Laura Bates' *Everyday Sexism* project on Twitter which garnered over 100,000 responses and stories of sexism, misogyny and sexual violence (Bates, 2014: 19) and led to her 2014 book of the same name. Notable titles that I have consulted for this research include, *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (Friedman and Valenti, 2008), Kate Harding's 2015 *Asking For It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture - and What We Can Do about It*, and most recently *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* (2018), an anthology of essays edited by *Bad Feminist* (2014) author and academic, Roxane Gay. Whilst not written in a strictly academic style these works are well-researched and thorough in their exploration of the topic. These newer, more mainstream texts set out to expose and defy rape culture in the 21st century. According to Buchwald *et al.*'s (2005: XI) *Transforming a Rape Culture*, such a culture can be understood as the social situation in which, 'sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes'. Similarly, and strikingly, of rape culture, Gay (2018: xi), herself gang-raped at the age of twelve, asks:

what is it like to live in a culture where it often seems like it is a question of when, not if, a woman will encounter some kind of sexual violence? What is it like for men to navigate this culture whether they are indifferent to rape culture or working to end it or contributing to it in ways significant or small?

Feminist Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Whilst the usefulness and usage of Foucault's theorisation of discourse to the overall feminist post-structural project has already been noted (Bell, 1993), the analyses of gendered and sexual violence by Carol Smart (1989; 1995) and Adrian Howe (2008) have been most influential to my thinking and development of ideas that resulted in my pursuing this research. These poststructuralist analyses incorporate Foucault's concepts of discourse relating to the production of truth, knowledge and power, which are especially pertinent with regards to discourses of sex and rape myths found in law. Therefore, whilst my research is underpinned by feminist sociological and media theory which pertains on the whole to feminist scholarship, the links between Foucault's conceptualisations of discourse, power, and knowledge, and feminist research and thought, are already well established. Vikki Bell refers to such a relationship as one of potentialities of 'possible friendship', as well as 'continual contestation' (Bell, 1993: 15). In *Sex, Violence and Crime* Adrian Howe (2008: 7) explains the various way in which the work of Foucault provides a useful framework for examining Western discourses of 'sexed violence', *sexed* drawing awareness to the gendered nature of such crimes and 'usually ignored' sexed bodies of both victims and the men who commit such crimes. This is central to this research, in identifying which existing Western discourses of rape, violence and sex, and the intersections of all three, are found in law, media, and cultural rape myths. Howe's

work demonstrates how feminist Foucauldian analysis can help in identifying how discourses of sexual violence are replicated, reinforced, problematised or challenged, a framework I have applied in this instance to popular television dramas. Likewise, Carol Smart's (1989, 1995) analyses of sexual violence and discourses in law, and society's history of ambivalence regarding the historical and discursive production of child sexual abuse (Smart, 1999), are integral to the grounding of my research.

New media technology and the 21st century male gaze

And so, as I examine the most current academic literature I find that whilst the male gaze is very much still present, its enactments have changed greatly, its guises and technologies are now numerous, due to the advent of the internet (Horeck, 2018). There is much in the academic literature and in fictional television that seeks to explore the use of the internet and social media in relation to gendered violence. In *Broadchurch* the narrative of schoolboys both viewing pornography on their smartphones, as well as sharing images of an intimate/ nude image of a female pupil for their sexual gratification, successfully demonstrates how these practices are linked on what has been conceptualised as a 'continuum of image-based sexual abuse' (McGlynn *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, in the final episode and conclusion to the investigation, it is shown how rapes can be and are filmed on phones by bystanders (as occurred most infamously in the Steubenville rape case³), in order to subsequently view again *ad infinitum*, and share with others also. Over the last decade there have emerged many new harms against women and children resulting

³ The rape of a 16 year old girl by several teenage boys in the town of Steubenville, Ohio in the United States in 2012. The incident was filmed by the attackers and shared on several social media platforms (Macur and Schweber, 2012).

from advances in technology. Crimes such as 'revenge porn' or sometimes the actual stealing of nude photographs, 'upskirting', online grooming, the digital streaming and sharing of videos and images of child sexual abuse, are all 21st century crimes and patriarchal phenomena which have been actualised as a result of men's misogyny and co-opting of technological advances (Horeck, 2018; Zuckerberg, 2018). Such advances have produced a multitude of facilitations for rape culture and crimes against women and children, with the law often failing to keep up (McGlynn *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the use and possibilities for new and more misogynistic harms by means of technology and new/ social media is a recurring theme in televisual representations of sexual violence, including *Unspeakable*, *Liar*, *Broadchurch*, *Top of the Lake* (which I explore in the relevant data chapters), as well as academic explorations of such digital interfaces and a re-invented voyeurism and scopophilia (Horeck, 2018; Mantziari, 2018).

Conclusion

The majority of the literature I have found in my searching and detailed in this review is primarily focussed on sexual violence and the crime of rape in the context of the United States. There is a paucity of studies specifically concerning representations of sexual violence on British television, and so this examination and deconstruction of current mediated discourses of rape that are consumed by millions of viewers as some of the most watched programmes on television (see appendix 1), is not only warranted I believe, but necessary. Whilst some of the individual programmes I analyse in my research have already been critiqued in a scholarly manner, there is a complete lack of research on this newly emergent genre as a whole; it is a genre of prime-time television dramas in which sexual violence, rape, or child sexual abuse is the main storyline. It is a notable and significant development in television media as

this myriad of representations and discourses undoubtedly inform, produce and result from cultural ideas of what rape is and what is known of rape (Magestro, 2015); 'discourses of rape are both productive and determinative' (Projansky, 2001: 2). Consequently, these televised depictions of rape can dispel or reinforce victim-blaming rape myths in the minds of victims and survivors, men and perpetrators, and potential jurors including women (Boyle, 2017). Television is a medium which acts as both a mirror and shaper of society in a cyclical relationship that both reflects and produces discourses (Hall, 1997; Hodkinson, 2017). As a result, 'the importance of the complex and contested relationship between media representations of rape and social attitudes about it cannot be underestimated' (Cuklanz, 2000: 12). As Boyle (2017) states these programmes, and perhaps this research also, are important because 'stories about sexual violence against women are opportunities to let survivors know they are not alone and to challenge attitudes – including among future jurors, bystanders and potential perpetrators.'

Methodology:

**Deconstructing Screened Discourses of Sexual Violence
and an Ethical Consideration of Her Self**

All my books ... are little tool boxes ... if people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged ... so much the better!

(Foucault, 1975, 'Interview with Roger Pol Droit', cited in Patton, 1979: 115)

Sexual politics and the transformation of patriarchy in all its forms remain the defining objectives of feminism. Feminist poststructuralism offers useful and important tools in the struggle for change. (Weedon, 1996: 180)

Introduction to feminist Foucauldian discourse analysis

The tool that I use in this work is that of discourse analysis, but not discourse solely in the sense of language and speech but as conceptualised by Foucault (1978), as a shaper of knowledge, which becomes accepted as 'truth' and in turn a means of power. As Stuart Hall (1992: 201) explains, from this poststructuralist position neither meaning nor discourse are produced through words alone, 'since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect'. And so in this work I want to deconstruct the words, speech and practices found in the narratives and storylines of my selected television programmes, to determine how these discourses of sexual violence align with wider discourses of rape and rape myths. Whilst the work of Michel Foucault (1977; 1978; 1980) has long been used by feminist theorists and researchers as a methodological tool to analyse the role of discursive power regarding socially constructed gender differences, resulting inequalities (Leavy, 2007), and men's violence against women (Bell, 1993; Smart, 1995; Howe, 2008), I am unaware of its

application to analysing representations of gender and sexual violence found in film and television. A poststructuralist ontological approach has previously been utilised to focus on the power of patriarchal discourse in relation to this global problem (Gavey, 1989), and yet it seems that Foucault's triad of power, knowledge and truth has yet to feature in feminist media studies' theorisations of sexual violence on mediated screens. I wanted this project to be interdisciplinary in nature, underpinned by feminist sociological understandings of the nature of gendered structures and hierarchies, its application in feminist media studies, as well as their meeting point in cultural theory.

Whilst I have utilised Foucauldian discourse analysis as method, I have incorporated a feminist media theory framework - incorporating Laura Mulvey's (1975) concept of the male gaze - and not just as a filmic method but also in a much broader sense as a way in which women are sexually objectified in society, to understand the way in which the categories of 'men' and 'women' are produced and re-presented by means of performances in television dramas (Hall, 1997; Butler, 1990). As John Berger (1972: 47) describes: 'Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves'. The male gaze and objectification of women found in art and in both popular and wider culture, are therefore not separate phenomena nor separate from discourse, but part of the practices that protect and perpetuate a narrative of difference (Irigaray, 1977); a sexual difference which is constructed as 'truth' to explain gender inequality (Foucault, 1980), to account for and justify men's violence against women and in turn contributes to a rape culture and the impunity of rape in law (Smart, 1995). For Foucault (1978), discourse is not just language or text, but practices and

performance which shape and produce the truth and knowledge of reality, and in turn, power. Similarly, Judith Butler (1990) explains how gender is performative, and has conceptualised in her work how gender is constantly being produced by embodied and lived enactments of masculinity and femininity.

Therefore, I aim to describe in this work how the discourses of male and female sexualities, and the narratives and performances of gender, of acceptable versions of femininity and dominant constructions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) all intersect in these television dramas to produce representations of sexual violence and rape situated on a 'continuum of violence' (Kelly, 1988). I further argue that these televisual discourses of rape can also be envisaged on a continuum from anti-feminist and misogynistic 'knowledges' of sexual violence to post-feminist, and feminist discourses informed by women's lived experience and accounts, whilst acknowledging that continuum thinking does not necessarily need to be linear (Boyle, 2018).

Method

In this research I set out to interrogate British prime-time television programmes which centralise mainly fictional narratives of sexual violence, in relation to Foucault's conceptualisation of knowledge and truth as inextricably linked to power (1978). I have attempted to both deconstruct the discourses the televisual texts present, and examine the gendered power relations they act to uphold in their presentation of versions and accounts of sexual violence. Furthermore, I try to consider the context of power from which they are produced as entertainment programmes (Leavy, 2007). In terms of my method of selecting programmes that comprise this specific genre, I initially identified all the programmes that I was aware of from my own personal viewing and previous research concerning representations

of sexual violence on television (Yates, 2017) and watched them in full to identify them as having rape or sexual abuse/ assault/ violence as a central theme. The programmes I then selected to analyse and include are (as organised in this work): *Unspeakable* (Channel 4, 2017), *Liar* (ITV, 2017), *Apple Tree Yard* (BBC, 2017), *The Fall* series 1-3 (BBC, 2013-2016), *National Treasure* (Channel 4, 2016), *Broadchurch* series 3 (ITV, 2017), *Three Girls* (BBC, 2017), *Top of the Lake* (BBC, 2013), *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (BBC, 2017). These televisual texts were selected due to them all having a central focus on sexual violence, and having been broadcast on terrestrial television during the prime-time viewing slot. Moreover, in terms of timeframe, they pertained to my 'post-Savile' to 'post-Weinstein' period of television for analysis, from the end of 2012 to commencing this research at the end of 2017. I chose to discount and not include some programmes I had watched and considered including in the research, such as *Happy Valley* (BBC, 2014-2016) and the first two series of *Broadchurch* (ITV, 2013-2015), due to the presence of multiple dominant storylines and main narrative threads, which act to reduce the focus and centrality of sexual violence, although present.

In her 1993 essay 'Identity in feminist television criticism', Charlotte Brunsdon writes of the reluctance of many academics in the field of feminist television criticism (albeit at that time) to admit to enjoying or engaging personally with the 'popular' television they researched. Brunsdon (1993: 313) points to Tania Modleski's (1979) assertion that 'clearly women find soap operas eminently entertaining...' as evidence of how the author separates herself from the typical viewing audience and also 'women'. Moreover, Brunsdon (ibid: 313) argues that it is 'as if the researcher must prove herself not too competent within the sphere of popular culture to retain credibility within the sphere of analysis'. On the contrary, I think it is now the case or at least

should be, that the more immersion in popular culture the better equipped the researcher is to pull together the many strings that are working to shape a bigger picture, and better get to grips with public discourse. My awareness of online content, feminist issues being discussed, and attitudes that thrive on social media, form a backdrop to my television viewing, and links are then forged organically to conceive projects such as this.

And yet, as I sought to examine the whole genre of programmes with a central focus on sexual violence from my selected five year time frame (from 2013-2017 inclusive), I used various search terms in Google to find other prime-time programmes that I had not previously seen or been aware of. I then determined, through analysing available synopses, the extent to which rape/ sexual assault/ child sexual abuse was a central feature or just a singular storyline. I found references to narratives of male rape in *Outlander* and very recently in *Coronation Street*, and rape scenes as part of much larger plotlines in *Poldark* and *Downton Abbey*. Thus, I strategically decided that they do not specifically fit the genre I am seeking to define and examine in my work, which is those programmes which feature men's sexual violence against women as the central narrative arc

On the first viewing of the shortlisted programmes I took notes as I watched, in order to answer the following questions (as I had already watched all programmes in my leisure time, these questions can be seen as reflection of some of the initial reactions, as well as being influenced by feminist literature on sexual violence):

- Which aspects of rape culture does each programme reinforce or highlight and problematise?
- Is there a reliance on rape myths (detailed in the scale in appendix 3) in order to entertain a possibly undiscerning audience, or conversely are there feminist and discourses of rape present in these programmes?

- How do the patriarchal and heteronormative representations of male and female sexuality in these prime-time television programmes contribute to the discourses which act to sustain rape culture? (Brownmiller, 1975; Projansky, 2001).
- How do these television portrayals of rape reinforce 'rape myths' and heteronormative/ patriarchal/ misogynistic narratives of female and male sexuality?
- To what extent are they critical in their representation of the criminal justice system and the continued impunity of rape?
- And most hopefully, I want to ascertain which examples of television dramas are the more feminist and subversive regarding discourses of female sexuality and the violation of women's bodies in their narration of men's sexual violence?

In order to make my method of analysis more robust regarding the use or quashing of rape myths in the programmes, I also wanted to identify in the academic literature a comprehensive list of commonly accepted rape myths and feminist 'counter formulations' (Cuklanz, 2000) with which I could compare and synthesise my reading of the programmes. Cultural myths about rape often referred to as 'rape myths' have been defined as 'attitudes and false beliefs held about rape that deny or minimize victim injury and/or blame the victims for their own victimization' (Hayes *et al.*, 2016: 1541). And yet, representations of rape and its associated mythologies are also context, perspective and era-specific:

Rape myths vary among societies and cultures. However, they consistently follow a pattern whereby, they blame the victim for their rape, express a disbelief in claims of rape, exonerate the perpetrator, and allude that only certain types of women are raped. (Grubb and Turner, 2012: 445)

As previously mentioned, due to the perceived unsuitable and outdated nature of rape myth scales (Field, 1978; Burt, 1980; Ward, 1988; Payne *et al.*, 1994)⁴ as used in very recent studies such as that by Kahlor and Eastin (2011) I have compiled my own comprehensive list (see appendix 3). Moreover, as rape myths evolve and change over time, with some of this change both filtering through, and emerging from law (for example, the discourse of affirmative consent), I would argue in these times of #MeToo or even post-MeToo, there perhaps needs to be an updated and current comprehensive list of rape myths and sexual misconceptions for research purposes, a model which forms the foundations and can be further developed. As my research aligns very recent examples of representations of rape on British television with the key theorists in this particular field of media studies, namely Lisa Cuklanz (2000) and Sarah Projansky (2001), I wanted to adapt the rape myths they detail in their work to a current and UK context. Therefore, whilst I take an interpretative approach to the discourse contained in these programme, I have also started to devise a comprehensive scale of contemporary rape myths and misunderstandings of sexual violence (see appendix 3), 'inaccurate assumptions' informed by patriarchal, traditional and often hegemonic attitudes and sexual scripts (Burrowes, 2013: 8).

I then re-watched and re-examined each individual programme or series at least once, sometimes twice, in order to transcribe key pieces of dialogue, focus in detail on particularly pertinent scenes and depictions, and to look for similarities in

⁴ According to Edwards *et al.* (2011) the majority of social science research on rape myths has utilized two measures: The Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt 1980) and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne *et al.* 1994).

discourses and narratives of male and female sexualities, heterosexual sex, rape and the criminal justice system in order to make comparisons. My discourse analysis of these specific programmes is as much about discussing the use of the visual presence or absence of the male gaze to inform a discourse of feminine-masculine difference, as exploring and interpreting the narrative of the programmes and the links present to wider hegemonic discourses of rape and sexual abuse, specifically in the form of rape myths and feminist responses to these falsities.

As a feminist position is so fundamental to my personal worldview, I give a first-person account of my viewing of these programmes and in relation to this present moment regarding the feminist movement, and likewise I will be self-reflective in parts in relation to my emotional responses to the data and my future hopes for the tackling of the pervasive social problem of rape. All feminist methodologies 'recognise the importance of women's lived experiences to the goal of unearthing subjugated knowledge' (Hesse-Biber, 2006: 3). And it is with this in mind that I questioned if the narratives presented in these programmes worked towards reflecting these subjugated knowledges of female victims and survivors of rape, or whether the agenda was to falsely re-present feminist and women's voices in order to maintain a patriarchal status quo. At the most rudimentary level we can envisage 'television as an industrial practice or as a profit-making producer of commodities' (Fiske, 1987: 22), and yet attached to this financial imperative to achieve capitalist goals by means of entertainment women are arguably, increasingly finding and creating space in which to voice their experience. Of this emergence, television and film director Jane Campion (*The Guardian*, 2018b), has said: 'This whole area of female experience is so unknown...Hero stories are wearing thin. We have lived a male life, we have lived within the patriarchy. It's something else to take ownership of

your own story'. By presenting these two oppositional objectives here in such a binary manner I do not mean to present the viewing audiences as a homogenous grouping of 'cultural dopes' who passively consume such ideology and discursive manoeuvres (Hall, 1981), but rather I attempt to ascertain the intended ideological position that the television company, producers, directors and writers hope to convey.

In discussions of the significance of reflexivity in her feminist research, Anne Williams (1983, cited in Williams, 1990: 254) states that 'understanding emerges out of interaction between me as a researcher and the situation within which I find myself - out of the questions that emerge from my response to the situation'. In relation to my own research it is by its very nature not just qualitative but interpretative and as such there exists an intersubjectivity between myself and the programmes I am viewing that is integral to feminist epistemology that I would be neglectful to deny. Therefore, as well as being reflexive throughout the discussion of my data in the chapters to follow I also want to examine my personal and emotional struggles with the subject matter, the primary sources and the research process in the next section of this chapter, in order to start to envisage a feminist ethical consideration of self as researcher. This piece of research is highly personal to me for so many reasons. To borrow the depressingly appropriate phrasing of Molly Ann Magestro (2015: xvii) from her examination of rape in US prime time programmes 'a close friend of mine recently confided in me that she had been raped. That fact does not make either of us unique, neither me as the confidante nor her as the survivor'. It is my story, but also one that nearly all women share. Rape and sexual violence feature in the lives of a huge majority of women and if you are 'lucky' enough never to have been raped,

you will undoubtedly have felt the pain, anger and sorrow upon hearing the account of a woman close to you.

Emotional impact and ethics

Many women, I think, resist feminism because it is an agony to be fully conscious of the brutal misogyny which permeates culture, society, and all personal relationships (Dworkin, 1976)

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare (Lorde, 1988)

In her examination of BBC2's *The Fall*, Dr. Deborah Jermyn (2017), reader in film and television, reflects on how the relentless onslaught of punishing misogyny and violence against women on screen affects her, made her 'feel shaky' as she viewed, affected her feelings not just as a feminist scholar, but also as a woman. She calls for 'the entry of an element of 'self-conscious' anecdotal reflection' (2017: 271) to be a productive part of feminist research, a valuable part of feminist cultural criticism. Likewise, I have felt only too keenly during this first year of postgraduate research, this year of researching rape and sexual objectification, and the whole continuum of violence against women (and children), the emotional toll it has taken on me as a feeling and emoting human being, albeit a self-identified highly sensitive and empathic one. And yet I have always been heartened by the instructive that 'for academic feminists 'research' and 'life' should be neither compartmentalized nor analytically unpacked using separate intellectual means' (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 1). This acknowledgement from within feminist methodological and epistemological theory that what we research becomes a part of our life, and that in turn we bring our self, our 'life' to our research, allows for an examination of self and reflexivity that is both validated and I have found, therapeutically beneficial.

So distinct is Jermyn's reaction to the first series of *The Fall* which aired in 2013,⁵ she concludes that throughout her long academic career in feminist media studies she had *never* before 'seen something so violently misogynistic on television' (2017: 272). I found reading the honesty of this disclosure and her making space for self-reflection in an academic article to be refreshingly reassuring and comforting as a woman and feminist student/ scholar. In a similar way I feel the need, and following discussion with my very supportive supervisors, was encouraged to document my visceral and emotional response to researching such an awful and unjust reality for women in the world. These relate to my 'felt and embodied response' (Jermyn, 2017: 272) to both the BBC's *Three Girls* and *Top of the Lake* (2013), which I discuss in more detail in chapter four. Karen Boyle (2005: xiv) explains that for female/feminist scholars 'seeing and documenting the connections between 'violent' men and 'normal' men can be extremely depressing'. In a recent interview with *The Guardian* (Iqbal, 2018) Harvard classicist Donna Zuckerberg, discusses how when she was conducting her research examining the Men's Rights movement's appropriation and hijacking of classical philosophising to justify their misogynistic rhetoric, she only allowed herself one hour per day looking at the internet content of men's rights activists and so-called 'incels'. This research, published in her book *Not all Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (2018), 'led her to essays advocating rape, posts offering advice on how to dehumanise, trick and control women, and reflections on the case against female education' (Iqbal, 2018). Perhaps as Andrea Dworkin (1976) claimed, the reason that many women eschew feminism

⁵ At the time of her writing the other two similarly graphic series were yet to be produced. Series 2 aired on BBC2 in 2014, Series 3 in 2016.

is due to the depressing nature of fully acknowledging the ubiquity and brutality of misogyny in our society and our own lives.

Like Jermyn (2017), this research has at times caused me to reflect on the usefulness, and also healthiness, of certain feelings in terms of my research but also at the risk of my emotional and mental health, and wellbeing. In this world that so frequently harms women, women perhaps need to practice self-preservation or self-care in ways that recognise this as a valid harm and so protect themselves accordingly. As women in this world we cannot step outside of our research and objectively observe and remark upon the history and persistence of patriarchy as it infringes on our very being as a woman. Therefore, an element of almost autoethnography in this instance, the blatant and insidious nature of misogyny in our patriarchal world, witnessing it and *feeling* it on screen (Jermyn, 2017), is not only warranted but wise.

Jermyn (2017) argues for a 'felt experience' of media to form a legitimate part of feminist media analysis. Furthermore, in my own experience of researching these media texts and becoming entrenched and affected by the material I have found solace in the words of other women doing this work, who are affected not only by living in a patriarchal society, working in a male-dominated academy but who are also emotionally affected by their data and matters of feminism and misogyny (Jermyn, 2017). As Laura Bates writes in her introduction to *Misogynation: The True Scale of Sexism* (2018: 1) that whilst this work of dissecting misogyny and men's violence against women is vital and necessary it 'is not a labour of love'. In rejecting a need to be 'outside' popular culture or somehow separate to the viewing television audience (Smith, 1988: 92), I want to continue in the feminist tradition of questioning the need for objectivity and replicability (Ramanzoglou and Holland, 2002; Letherby,

2003) and work from a feminist epistemological, methodological and ethical standpoint that positions the personal and subjective self of the researcher in the research, 'an approach to autoethnography that takes account of the emotional politics of research' (Jensen, 2008: 387).

Chapter One

Backlash to Feminist Discourse and the Rhetoric of Men's Rights Activists

The media has become the key site for defining codes of sexual conduct. It casts judgement and establishes the rules of play. Across these many channels of communication feminism is routinely disparaged. (McRobbie, 2004: 259)

When feminism is in the air in the way it is in current culture, it is not surprising to find backlash from patriarchal culture. (Banet-Weiser, 2015)

Introduction

This first data chapter of five is about the 'deterritorialisation' of patriarchy, and conversely attempts at its 'reterritorialisation' (McRobbie, 2009), by means of televisual narratives of rape, child sexual abuse and (post-)feminism. As the underpinning concept of all the various ideologies of multiple feminisms, patriarchy can be most simply understood as a 'system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women' (Walby, 1990). Likewise, Walby (ibid.) has theorised that as the influence of patriarchy has diminished somewhat in the private sphere over the last decades of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, public patriarchy has increased accordingly; 'when patriarchy loosens its grip in one area it only tightens it in other arenas'. As well as attempting to unpack the often contested concept of post-feminism in this chapter (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004), I will examine its relationship to the discourses of rape, sex and feminism as presented in the first two programmes of my genre analysis, Channel 4's *Unspeakable* (2017) and ITV's *Liar* (2017). In this chapter I also explore the relatively under-researched area (Gottell and Dutton, 2016) of the emerging focus on rape and

anti-rape feminist activism, employed in the discourse of so-called Men's Rights Activists (MRA), particularly online (Zuckerberg, 2018).

Postfeminist portrayals of sexual violence

Sara Projansky's (2001) feminist appraisal of the postfeminist field of media has demonstrated how, in a patriarchal society, rape can be utilised as a 'particularly versatile narrative element' on screen (Projansky, 2001: 3). In a paradoxical manner⁶ it can be used to both raise awareness of men's violence against women and feminist discourses of sexual violence (ibid.), and yet it is also often used as a type of propaganda to perpetuate patriarchy (Soloway, 2016), and to punish and warn, criticise and disparage (Custers and Van den Bulck, 2013), women and feminism alike. Recent programmes which have proved popular with British audiences, such as *Game of Thrones*, *Poldark*, and *Downton Abbey*, have all included sexual violence, sometimes numerous instances, in storylines often as secondary narratives. Such programmes frequently use images of rape, arguably as vehicles merely to add drama and sex, titillating nudity, and perhaps even as attempts at conveying passion and romance (Projansky, 2001). Likewise, the majority of British soap operas have regularly included storylines of gendered interpersonal and sexual violence, with varying degrees of sensitivity and success (Boyle, 2005).

Liar (ITV) and *Unspeakable* (Channel 4), television dramas which both aired during the 9pm prime-time television slot, just a couple of months apart in the autumn of 2017, are concerned with portraying accusations of sexual assault against men as being damaging, to perhaps all men, with feminism and the law framed as dangerous. Both, I argue, are products and explicit manifestations of rape culture

⁶ I revisit Projansky's idea of 'feminist paradox' in Chapter 3.

(Buchwald *et al.*, 2005) in which occurrences of rape are commonplace and yet women's claims are met with suspicion and concern is shown for good, innocent men. These programmes discursively ask viewers, by means of these fictional mediated accounts, 'to scrutinize victims stories.. and always to imagine ourselves in the terrifying role of Good Man, Falsely Accused, before we 'rush to judgement' (Harding, 2015: 4). And so this *backlash* can be considered a 'cultural counterreaction' to the increase in women's rights (Faludi, 1991:48) and the alleged increasing centrality of feminism and gender equality. In both dramas there are accusations of sexual violence, and we the viewer are asked to cast our verdict, pick a side, have sympathy for a woman or believe a 'Good Man' (Harding, 2015: 4). And yet these are programmes which appear to be somewhat feminist or perhaps superficially so, or at least they take feminism 'into account' (McRobbie, 2004). Nonetheless, they actually represent and are pernicious examples of the subtle but visible undoing of feminism in popular culture (McRobbie, 2004). Both *Liar* and *Unspeakable* can be deconstructed as perfectly executed patriarchal backlashes against feminist gains (Banet-Weiser, 2015). Calculated sleights of hand are employed by male protagonists, directors and scriptwriters alike, to render female characters and audiences confused and bemused by the use of the feminist discourse of belief regarding claims of sexual violence, to actually undermine and question the character and judgement of women.

In a manner akin to, and employing the persuasive rhetoric of the men's rights activist movement, I will detail in my analysis how these programmes use appropriated and fabricated versions of feminism, to show it as too powerful, too dangerous, and a threat to all men (Dragiewicz, 2011). In the following subsection, I analyse how the historical trope of false claims of rape by women, and frequency

and ease by which this scenario occurs, is the initial and ongoing storyline of ITV's *Liar* (a second series of which will be broadcast in 2019). This is by no means a new narrative, and yet it is the first time that an entire prime-time television series has been dedicated to this traditional rape myth, the persistent influence of which arguably accounts for juror's decision making process and the continued impunity of rape. This notion of claiming rape as being a commonly occurring deceit by women, can be traced back at least several hundred years, with 17th century judge, Sir Matthew Hale's, (in)famous pronouncement that rape 'is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved, and harder to be defended by the party accused, tho never so innocent' (1650, cited in Cuklanz, 2000: 43), seeming to differ very little from the, arguably, scaremongering rhetoric and discourse contained in many scenes of *Liar*.

***Liar*: a misogynistic musing on mendacity**

In the first series of its kind, the provocatively named fictional drama centres around the crime of rape and the legal and moral imperative in discovering the truth from two opposing accounts. The majority of the series represents a dizzying toing and froing of narratives; it is an ambiguous fictional play-off between the accuser, schoolteacher *Laura* (Joanne Froggatt), and accused surgeon and single dad *Andrew* (Ioan Gruffudd). By episode 4 the audience is shown in no uncertain terms that he did rape her and the antagonist goes on to rape again. Likewise, the audience is made privy to the knowledge that he has raped women multiple times before. But this is not until viewers have been clearly and repeatedly reminded of the 'truth' that women can and do have the power to lie about rape and ruin a man's reputation, career and life.

(The 6-episode series aired weekly on ITV in one hour episodes between 11th Sept- and 16th October 2017.)

Many of the scenes in ITV's *Liar* create for the audience 'a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic phantasy' (Mulvey, 1975: 9). In one of the very first scenes, the series opens with a woman's body, a woman named Laura who will be

the victim of sexual violence that same fictional day, naked and gazed on in the shower, like a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). The unnecessary and therefore, gratuitous display of female flesh and skin is visual foreplay for the taking of her body, a spectacle I would argue, to be taken in that moment for the audience's viewing pleasure. The woman's bedroom gives 'the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world' (Mulvey, 1975: pg), the voyeur hidden behind the camera, the spectator watching behind the television screen. The male gaze is present from the very beginning of episode: the female protagonist Laura singing naked in the shower, in her bedroom getting dressed, walking round in a red bra whilst drinking wine, the act of making herself desirable, gazing and desiring herself in the mirror; the camera and viewer is watching her with an objectifying and sexualising lens (Mulvey, 1975). And so already, and simultaneously, certain socially constructed beliefs around women's sexual conduct, and in turn, subsequent rape myths are being employed here. Linking to my own newly devised scale of current rape myths in appendix 3, this scene starts to imply and feed into an ongoing narrative throughout the episode, which relies on the rape myths that state: *only attractive and beautiful women are raped; women who wear clothes that are perceived to be sexy or revealing are 'asking for it'; and women who are drunk are complicit in their own rape* (Laura is shown drinking yet more alcohol at a restaurant and on the couple's return to her flat).

In the next scene an older, white, male taxi-driver is watching her through his mirror, confirming her femininity, through somewhat over-familiar language in his repetition of 'darling' 'love'. And then we see her through the eyes of her date Andrew, as she comes through the restaurant door, as she sits down at the table; we, the audience, gaze upon her through *his* eyes, and perhaps already know his desires.

As well as the visual objectification of women throughout the series there is undoubtedly a sustained use of language to persuade audiences of how women cannot be trusted and frequently lie about rape, a problem made worse by feminist discourses of belief being adopted by the police. In episode two the character of Denis Walters (Peter Davison) is introduced, a former colleague of Laura's, but stranger to Andrew, who nonetheless phones him with an intriguing offer of help: *'she's done this before she's lied about something like this. And I'll be damned if I let her ruin some other poor bastard's life.'* This moment of reactionary solidarity that has resulted from the men's privilege being called into question and them being held accountable for their actions, represents a mounting of the case against Laura and that she is lying. Now two men of quite reasonable and normal professions, a surgeon and a headteacher, 'know' her to be a liar. As a discursive manoeuvre this is a strong reinforcement for the audience of the widely accepted rape myth that women lie about rape and sexual harassment, that they falsely and wrongly accuse innocent men (Burrowes, 2013). In a scene during which Denis is telling police woman Detective Inspector Harman of Laura's previous 'crime' against him, there is a show of masculine superiority made in his mansplaining. He asks: *'Have you ever read Nietzsche? There is a quote from one of his essays: I'm not upset that you lied to me I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you. Seems apt'*, with rapist Andrew adding: *'It's the boy who cried wolf, isn't it?'* Writers of the programme and brothers, Harry and Jack Williams, seem to hope that literary allusions and flourishes of erudition regarding the nature of truth, will elevate the status of this anti-feminist psychological thriller.

Likewise, in both this series and *Unspeakable* I have identified two pieces of speech given by male characters (and written by male scriptwriters), in this instance Denis

Walters, which are soliloquy-like in their self-satisfied invocations of anti-feminist rhetoric. The postfeminist backlash, or perhaps backlash to postfeminist woman, is directed not only at the woman on screen but the women watching at home, a warning to the men viewing and listening also. In the third episode of the series, at which point the audience is led to believe that Laura is most still likely lying, and has possibly lied about sexual assault before, there is a phone call between the pair in which she asks him about his interference with the investigation. Denis' rebuttal is angry, sarcastic and self-righteous:

“He’s just like me. Some bloke, goes to work, tries to get through the day, tries to be decent and turns into another victim... you can’t just scream fire in a crowded building then shrug your shoulders and pretend you didn’t create bloody havoc! All a woman’s got to do these days is to say some guy touched her and if you don’t believe her you’re an animal for even thinking so. You’re a misogynist: how is that fair? We’re equal aren’t we? Isn’t that how it’s supposed to work?”

This blatant misrepresentation of both feminism in this speech and the overall fictional situation, presents men as the victims in cases of sexual harassment and violence against an ever-powerful feminist discourse which advocates for a belief in women’s accounts. And if this truth is to be acknowledged, then men are further at risk of victimisation of being labelled as a misogynist. There are clear parallels between the discourses found in this programme (and the next that I analyse in this chapter), and the anti-feminist discourses of sexual violence espoused by the men’s rights activist (MRA) movement. Thus, just as the anti-feminist discourses of fairness, justice, equality and rights that are advocated by the MRA movement can seem appealing to men, and even perhaps convince women, these programmes

likewise 'play upon widespread anxieties about feminists having swung the pendulum too far' (Gotell and Dutton, 2016: 71).

In the latter part of the series upon discovering the male antagonist's guilt, once the audience is shown evidence and 'knows' for certain that Laura has been raped, we are shown a complexity to his crimes which are unrealistic and yet completely embodies the 'peeping tom' voyeur which Mulvey described (1975: pg). A man whose sexual gratification is achieved by scopophilia, in this instance by means of visual recordings of his own sexual attacks and raping of numerous women. In their date-rape drug induced unconsciousness they become for him mere sexual objects, on which he can exert his dominance, control and sexual proclivities. Andrew is a manipulative and Machiavellian rapist who uses his wits, intelligence and trusted position as a single father and life-saving surgeon, to commit yet more of his honed and strategic attacks on women. We witness how his recordings become a collection of not only his crimes, but of his somewhat omnipotent power to transform women from subject to object. They are moments captured on film on which he can repeatedly gaze and be aroused, by not only his dominance as man but his complete bodily power over women as desirable and beautiful objects. In episode five his chosen victim is the tokenistic character, of Detective Inspector Harman, a British-Asian pregnant woman in a same-sex relationship. This box-ticking exercise in diversity of female characters does nothing to comment intersectionally on how women of colour and queer women have distinct experiences of sexual violence (Crenshaw, 1989; Patil and Purkayastha, 2015), rather it is just another misogynistic plot device.

Unspeakable: a confused and contemptible focus on child sex abuse

Unspeakable is as much about the 'the tropes of female freedom' (McRobbie, 2004: pg) as it is the harms and crimes of domestic child sexual abuse. Career woman and devoted mother Jo (Indira Varma) who has recently replaced her middle-aged ex-husband Des (Neil Maskell) with new younger partner Danny (Luke Treadaway), finds her world in turmoil when she receives an anonymous message suggesting Danny is grooming and also possibly sexual abusing her 11 year old daughter, whilst living in their family home. The programme shows the emotional impact and repercussions of these allegations and suspicions played out on the domestic stage over the course of two tense and uncertain days.

(The one-off hour-long fictional drama aired on 5th November 2017 on Channel 4)

In *Media and Violence*, Karen Boyle (2005) outlines how the work of feminists has been to make visible, often by means of various media, the hidden nature of men's violence against women, and especially those crimes which take place in the domestic sphere, such as rape between partners and familial child sexual abuse.

And this is the discourse *Unspeakable* initially appears to present to the undiscerning viewer, myself included, on first watching. It appears to be a fictional vignette, a feminist awareness-raising programme educating audiences about the possibility of grooming and child sexual abuse in their own home. However, what *Unspeakable* does, *almost* imperceptibly, is combine the longstanding Men's Right Activists' (MRA) emphasis on fathers' rights with their newly emergent focus on sexual violence, in particular the supposedly widespread occurrence of false allegations, and the exposing of rape culture as a 'feminist-produced moral panic' (Gottell and Dutton, 2016: 65).

In *Unspeakable* the 'truth' of events, whether Danny has actually been grooming his partner's 11 year-old daughter Katie, and the identity of the person behind the anonymous text message, all unravel during the final five minutes of the 46-minute domestic drama. Concerned mum Jo is shown asking ex-husband Des whether

Katie has confided in him about anything to do with Danny. Again an MRA-like speech is relayed about father's rights, combined with the threat of sexual violence, but in this programme discourses of belief in women and men's presumed guilt are used merely as a way to hurt a woman, by framing her partner, thus destroying their relationship. The father pleads and implores his ex-wife:

"I don't know him and he's suddenly moved in... I'm concerned Jo. I'm her dad. She's suddenly living with a complete stranger, a bloke. She didn't have any choice in that, none of us did. You know, we don't...who's living with my kids? Who is he? What do you know about him? What can you know in a few months? Takes a lifetime. I haven't said anything, but I'm not happy. What were you thinking Jo? God knows what other people are thinking! A bloke I don't know is in the same house as my 11year old. I'm just trying to protect my daughter."

Hyperbolic language conveys the desperate nature of his argument: 'suddenly', 'complete stranger' 'takes a lifetime'. And so a father's concern and worry for his daughter's safety and wellbeing is quickly revealed to be a malicious disguise for his own sense of being wronged, his own self-pity. He is concerned for his reputation experienced vicariously through the relationship status of his ex-wife and what other people may think about her sexual conduct, and decisions made as a mother. In the scene, Jo realises that he is the anonymous texter and proceeds to hit him in a frenzied and ferocious manner, repeatedly crying "you! It was you!". She is met with an angry rebuke:

"It wasn't me. It wasn't me who caused this. It wasn't me. Who gave you the right to decide what happens to me? What you woke up one day, think I can do better? I can do better than Des? Look at me! No, look at me Jo! I want you to look at what you've

done. I'm 44, I live here, alone. I work, I eat, I sleep, I exist. That's it. All I've got left is being a Dad, don't take that. All I've got left is the kids."

Therefore, given the evidence about the 'hidden' nature of child abuse and that wide-ranging studies which show that it is predominantly female children who are at risk of sexual abuse from adult male perpetrators (Radford, 2017), this programme is handling a very significant social problem in both the problem of 'grooming' and child sexual abuse in the home. And yet I would argue, programmes such as this most probably go some way towards compounding the existing cultural beliefs 'attitudes, behaviours and values within institutions that prevent us from stopping child sexual abuse' (Radford *et al.*, 2017: 6).

These last five minutes of television reveal in a sudden and disorientating twist, a man's innocence, a mother's misplaced accusations, and the vengeance of an ex-husband who believes his life is so upturned by the end of his marriage he had to resort to malicious messages alleging the sexual abuse of his own daughter. A very clear and definite anti-feminist and misogynistic discourse is presented to the audience; that women are too quick to unjustly think the worst of 'good men', with the uptake of feminist discourses of sexual violence by institutions and organisations such as the police, social services and the NSPCC compounding the problem for innocent men still further. The message to viewers is not how child sexual abuse can ruin the lives of children, as well as their unknowing parent(s), but how women can harm men; first by divorcing them, removing them from the marital home and finding happiness with a younger, more attractive replacement, but also by being too quick in considering the sharing of a home with their lover, in turn jeopardising the safety of their children. There is an ambiguity of message and therefore of possible readings of the text (Hall, 1980), ways in which audiences may have decoded the messages

conveyed and in turn interpreted the discourses present in *Unspeakable*. On first viewing of the drama my analysis and evaluation changed throughout the hour, and I found that only in retrospect could I assess an overall discursive meaning.

Unspeakable plays a vengeful and cruel discursive trick on audience members, male and female alike (Allen, 1987; Howe, 2008). Ultimately though, I would argue *Unspeakable* acts as propaganda akin to MRA discourses that posit how women have the power to destroy men's lives with a single suspicion or accusation of sexual impropriety or violence, especially towards children (Dragiewicz, 2011), with the good name of innocent men being tarred.

Comparative analysis and conclusion

'A grotesque display of patriarchal resentment' (St. Felix, 2018), is the headline of *The New Yorker* used to describe the anger voiced by Brett Kavanaugh in his testimony before the US senate. And yet it also describes the frequent male vitriolic outbursts that are featured in both *Liar* and *Unspeakable*; these are programmes supposed to be about men's sexual violence against women, but which are actually lessons in the nature of male victimisation and fragility. As an audience, therefore, perhaps we are not meant to be critical of such resentment and anger but instead sympathetic to these men whose lives have been upturned by women's complaints of rape (Crenshaw, 2018). Similarly, in their examination of the online discourses of MRAs Gottell and Dutton (2016: 65) deconstruct how they use the issue of rape 'to exploit their (men's) anxieties about shifting consent standards and gender norms'. I would argue that both televisual texts and their postfeminist plotlines and the misogyny of the men's rights movement are reactions, a contemporary backlash, to the way in which 'feminist claims have made inroads into public discourse' (Gottell and Dutton, 2016: 66).

Both programmes are ‘perniciously effective’ (McRobbie, 2009) in undermining the positive moves that have been made towards hegemonic acceptance of feminist discourses surrounding child sexual abuse and rape. They both represent attempts at the gradual, subtle, but nonetheless deliberate ‘undoing of feminism’ (McRobbie, 2004). The usurping of feminist issues and discourse by the makers of these programmes present women, as a result of feminism, as liberated and empowered actors, post-feminist sexual beings and agents, but with a negative inference, at a cost. They punish women for daring to desire, for straying from the confines of their marital bed (a theme and plot device I discuss again in chapter two in relation to the extra-marital affair at the centre of *Apple Tree Yard*). Both programmes can be interpreted as a contemporary ‘backlash from patriarchal culture’ (Banet-Weiser, 2015) in what seems to be an increasingly divided and polarised age, where often a side must be chosen, an allegiance made. In the next section of my data analysis I move on to two programmes which, whilst distinctly misogynistic and punishing specifically of women’s agency, success and sexuality, also mistakenly insist on their own self-given feminist credentials. I discuss how the producers, scriptwriters, and directors behind the BBC’s *Apple Tree Yard* and *The Fall*, are alike in their ambiguous and confusing invocations of (post)feminism ‘while relishing misogynistic violence’ (Jermyn, 2017), which can impact on audience perceptions of gender relations and sexual violence, whether intentionally or not.

Chapter 2

Punishment of the Postfeminist Woman: Visual Misogyny

Not only must people know, they must see with their own eyes. Because they must be made to be afraid; but also because they must be the witnesses, the guarantors, of the punishment, and because they must to a certain extent take part in it.

(Foucault, 1977: 56)



Figure 1. Image from Series 2 Episode 1 *The Handmaid's Tale* (2018)

Taken from Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish* chapter entitled 'The Spectacle of the Scaffold' the above quotation seeks to explain the role of public executions as not only a judicial measure, a punishment, but also as an observed spectacle and warning, a way of controlling a group of people, a way of instilling fear and upholding power. Similarly, when 'public rape' (Horeck, 2003) and 'media rape' (Mantziari, 2018) is filmed and televised in a certain manner, namely by means of an explicitly male gaze, in the context of patriarchal and post-feminist rebuttals of feminism, and misogyny that is palpably 'in the air', then we as viewers are 'witnesses' to a method of both the *disciplining and punishment* of women. Whilst I have chosen not to

analyse the television adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017-2018) due to its unique dystopian theme, the visual impact and gratuitous nature of the hanging scene in a well-known American football stadium in the second series, demonstrates the extremity of 'visual misogyny' on television (Needham, 2017), perhaps even bordering at times on the pornographic.

In this chapter I further interrogate the paradigm of televisual postfeminism as a way of mediating the torture, fear and control of women, whilst hijacking discourses of feminism to do so, to legitimate narratives of misogyny both on and off screen. The concept of postfeminism although contested, relies on the notion of the 'pastness' of feminism as well as a complex repudiation by means of using feminism to reveal its own redundancy (Gill, 2007); it is a discursive exercise and manoeuvring which takes feminism into account as part of the backlash against it (McRobbie, 2004; Negra and Tasker, 2007). Conversely, postfeminism has also been described as a progression and 'type' of feminism, and therefore not necessarily opposing to it (Gill, 2007). This is exemplified in relation to both Alan Cubbitt's *The Fall* and the all-female production team of *Apple Tree Yard* being steadfast in the self-determined 'feminist' nature of their work.

In these programmes we can visibly observe complex and often contradictory postfeminist discourses which involve 'the entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist themes' (Gill, 2007:149). Therefore, the idea of postfeminist sensibilities presents an approach which pertains to a more objective analysis and exploration of discerning what these sensibilities are, which also holds that there is no 'one single authentic feminism as a comparison point' (Gill, 2007: 148). And so whilst the notion of postfeminism is 'overloaded with different meanings' (Gill, 2007: 147), Rosalind Gill has provided a clear description of what postfeminist sensibilities are, what they

look like, where they are found, and therefore also why this specific identification is useful for understanding contemporary media culture. Many of Gill's 'postfeminist sensibilities' can be found in both *Apple Tree Yard* and *The Fall*, including ideas of femininity as a bodily property, the shift from women as sex objects to desiring sexual subjects, the emphasis upon (women's) individualism and choice, empowerment and control, the increased intensity of women's self-surveillance, discipline and regulation, and the reassertion of ideas about natural sexual difference (ibid).

Apple Tree Yard: the costly nature of a woman's infidelity

Adapted from the best-selling 2013 book by Louise Doughty the drama begins by showing the start of an extramarital affair undertaken by middle-aged mother and successful scientist *Yvonne Carmichael* (Emily Watson). Many scenes show her and lover, *Mark Costley* (Ben Chaplin) having sexual intercourse in quite public spaces from the antique broom cupboard in Westminster to a secluded doorway in Apple Tree Yard. Events turn very much darker when Yvonne is savagely raped by colleague, *George Selway*. Very soon after, Yvonne and Costley are embroiled in a court case for the prosecution of his murder.

(The 4-part drama aired on BBC 1 in one hour episodes between 22nd January and 6th Feb 2017.)

In February 2017 *The Guardian* online ran two articles regarding not just the entertainment value of *Apple Tree Yard*, but also its ideological message to viewers and (post?)feminist standpoint (Coe, 2017; Cooke, 2017). Following an article by Rachel Cooke, a scathing denouncement of the drama as being anything but feminist, the predominantly female production team were quick to defend the feminist credentials of both themselves and *Apple Tree Yard*. The response from screenwriter Amanda Coe, entitled '*Fake feminism? Not our production of Apple Tree Yard*' (The Guardian, 2017) is an unequivocal declaration of her status, and that of the women around her, as feminists: 'let me be very clear: I am a feminist.

Jessica Hobbs, the director of *Apple Tree Yard*, is a feminist. Louise Doughty, who wrote the bestselling book on which the BBC1 drama was based, is a feminist.'

Moreover, there are undoubtedly elements which I read as feminist in the text, elements that were relatively commendable and therefore should be acknowledged. For example, the realistic portrayal of the normality of rapists as people already known to the victim, as Yvonne is raped by a colleague. The scenes preceding the rape are undoubtedly important in showing how Yvonne is drinking alcohol, wearing attractive clothes, being friendly with George, a man she knows from work and trusting him enough to plan to travel home with following their 'boozy' works party. This prologue to the vicious physical attack of her rape, I recognised as attempts to show how she was not 'asking for it' (Harding, 2015), not at fault in any of her actions, not to blame. In conjunction with the savage nature of the rape scene, I posit that the writers have tried to dispel, in line with feminist discourse, victim-blaming rape myths that attribute a causal effect to women's drinking, attractiveness, clothing, flirtations, friendliness, and a man's exertion of agency in his decision to rape her. Likewise, regarding the court scenes and Yvonne's retelling of her rape to barristers in front of a jury the programme applies a feminist critical perspective in revealing the heteronormative narratives of female and male sexuality found in law (Smart, 1995). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the rape scene was heavily criticised by several victim support organisations, with a *Rape Crisis England and Wales* spokeswoman branding the scene "harrowing" (Jones, 2017).

Likewise, the central discourses of this drama are the products of a misogynistic, patriarchal society, which seeks to control women in a two-fold manner by means of attributing shame to female sexual desire, whilst maintaining an ever-present threat and perhaps fear of being raped (Custers and Van den Bulck, 2013). Cooke (2017)

queries the heralding of *Apple Tree Yard* as a feminist text and as a 'so-called celebration of female sexuality'. Whilst she concedes that the drama is 'brilliantly suspenseful', she is highly critical of the notion of it being an empowering representation for women, instead highlighting the list of ways in which the writers and director, all women, choose to punish the female protagonist. The fictional ways in which Yvonne pays for her extra-marital affair are numerous; not only is she savagely raped, she is then stalked by her rapist, her husband has an affair, her son's serious mental health problems make a reappearance, and she is forced to share all the minute details of her affair and rape in court before an unforgiving audience, where she will be judged as a woman. As Cooke highlights this plethora of plotlines results in the programme's 'punitive atmosphere', which acts to consolidate the patriarchal warning: 'woe betide the woman who strays' (Cooke, 2017). In defence of Yvonne's numerous retributions, screenwriter Coe (2017) simply reminds us that her character is the protagonist, and of how 'all drama "punishes" its protagonists'.

However, I would argue that this television drama is particularly about punishing the postfeminist woman who thinks she can 'have it all', as the character of Yvonne has raised her family, sustained a happy marriage, reached the very peak of her scientific academic career and now pursues her sexual agency for her own pleasure. Throughout the drama the sexual difference of women and men, a key postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007) is reasserted as woman is victim to her own sexuality as 'punishable woman', whilst we see 'atavistic man' in the form of both lover, Costley and attacker, Selway (Snider, 2003). In the text of the book (Doughty, 2013), and Yvonne's on-screen soliloquies of her internal dialogue there exists an almost mythical and masculine discourse of 'insatiable male beast' (Snider, 2003), as

naturally animalistic and savage, an arousing proposition to the up until now faithful wife and mother. In an amorous email to her lover Mark Costley, protagonist Yvonne explains 'sex with you is like being eaten by a wolf' (Doughty, 2013: 14), evoking powerful imagery of man as active predator and woman, even when consenting, as his defenceless prey. The male gaze is used both in sex scenes and the rape scene to reinforce this patriarchal discourse, positioning man as dominant and the 'natural' sexual predator, with women discursively presented as passive, prey, not in possession of their own sexuality.



Figure 2. *Apple Tree Yard*, Episode 1: The rape is shown in full, from him slapping her face to forcing her down, ripping her clothes and climbing on top of her; it feels visceral and shockingly violent.

This discourse of supposed natural difference in male and female sexuality, and the mythology of man as animal and specifically the imagery used in *Apple Tree Yard*, can be traced back to the work of Freud's (1930: 58) *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

men are not gentle creatures, who want to be loved...; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without

his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. Homo homini lupus [man is wolf to man].

Therefore, that the legacy of this fallacy is present in a television drama written, produced and directed by women is, I would argue, evidence of the power of such knowledge pertaining to psycho-biological discourse and the hegemony of patriarchy (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1979).

Likewise, whilst the book undoubtedly contains several references to sexual desire, the entire narrative seems to have been visually 'sexed up' on screen to attract both attention and audience. I would argue therefore that the novel is a far more sophisticated and subtle account; we see how self-aware and reflexive Yvonne is in her thoughts, even when her actions seem to betray her and lead her down another path. Author Doughty's prose reveals a very internalised duality within the character and a struggling between her role as a sensible married woman, a 'good' wife, and wanting to be a woman in her own right, not just in relation to career success but a yearning away from responsibility for excitement and risk, and an acknowledging of her need to be desired. This does not translate to the screenplay; Yvonne's inner voice sounds self-assured, too sexy, she seems to be enjoying it too much to the detriment of her being a well-rounded realistic character. The book perhaps makes us have more sympathy for her as it seems the affair is about much more than sex and being desired; it explains how it is far more about her and the scope of her life than it is about him.

In a final flourish of anti-woman sentiment however, the television adaptation finishes with ambiguity. Whilst in the novel Yvonne is an unreliable narrator and perhaps lies by omission, it is never suggested that she is responsible for, or capable of, murder. And yet, in a final 'scintillating' on-screen twist it is implied that Yvonne did wish her

rapist dead. And therefore it is left for the viewer to determine whether or not she did plan for his murder; and then, if so, a man, her lover, has gone to prison whilst she escapes justice, and retreats to the domestic sphere and the arms of her forgiving and trusting husband. If *Apple Tree Yard* is about the emotional and physical punishing of the post-feminist image of woman, then the relentless misogyny depicted in *The Fall* makes it undisputedly 'a show about hunting women', successful, white, post-feminist women (Steenberg, 2017: 58).

***The Fall*: 'the most feminist show on television' (Sullivan, 2015)**

Set in Belfast, the series is a cat-and-mouse psychological thriller between serial killer *Paul Spector* (Jamie Dornan) and *DCI Stella Gibson* (Gillian Anderson). Over three series the audience and Gibson discover more about Spector's sexually abusive childhood in a care facility, a narrative which unfolds alongside his numerous killings of specifically and consistently archetypal postfeminist women; sexually motivated and ritualistic attacks, murders and mutilations of young, typically attractive, independent career women. Meanwhile, Spector lives a mundane domestic double life as a husband, father, whilst working as counsellor.

(3 series of *The Fall* have aired on the BBC between May 2013 and September 2016.)

In this next section I move on to instances in which feminism is definitely in the air, much more so than just being 'taken into account' (McRobbie: 2004: 255). Despite recognising how the series might glamorize men's violence against women by means of the 'aestheticism' of serial killing, online culture critic Amy Sullivan (2015) still finds it to be the most feminist programme because:

Nobody resents Gibson's appearance on the scene or questions her authority. Her gender is a non-issue; subordinates hop to when she enters a room and they follow her commands without question. Gibson doesn't try to submerge her femininity and stomp around barking out orders.

And so Sullivan mistakenly recognises all those postfeminist tropes and 'postfeminist sensibilities' as new and fresh feminist fodder; the apparent 'pastness' of gender

inequality and the doneness of feminism, femininity as a bodily property, and the neo-liberal emphasis upon women's individualism and choice, empowerment and control (Gill, 2007). These aspects are all mistakenly read as feminist, even alongside numerous grotesque displays of the torture and murder of female characters.

Nonetheless, female bodies are subjected to the aesthetic of the male gaze, albeit in an arguably 'artistic form of *television noir*' (Steenberg, 2017) in a myriad of ways. In almost every other scene it seems, women both alive and dead are the spectacles to be lingered over, viewed, consumed and enjoyed. And yet it is a show again concerned with visualising and showing the punishment, torture and death of a specific type of woman in the postfeminist woman. All Spector's victims are specifically professional women with established careers, white, conventionally attractive, straight, single, independent women.



Figure 3. The eroticisation of men's violence against women in *The Fall* (Jermyn, 2017: 259): the actor Jamie Dornan (shown here) as *Paul Spector*, went on to play the lead role in popular BDSM/ 'romance' film adaptation '*Fifty Shades of Gray*'

Writer and producer of *The Fall*, Allan Cubbitt previously worked on television crime drama *Prime Suspect*, and as such many similarities can be drawn between the characters of 1990's Jane Tennison and 21st century empowered woman Stella Gibson (Jermyn, 2017). However, whereas the early series of *Prime Suspect* are blatant and unsophisticated in their sexist male gaze and exposing of naked breasts at any opportunity to 'titillate' audiences, despite their 'feminist' storylines, the visual misogyny presented in *The Fall* is by comparison more frequent, more violent, and more deliberate in its use of female bodies as sexual objects. Despite so many feminist soundbites from the character of Stella, the male gaze is salaciously omnipresent in the camera's, and male character's, voyeurism of her. Stella is used as a mouthpiece to feminist rhetoric, in one scene confronting a male colleague:

"that's what really bothers you, isn't it? The one-night stand. Man fucks woman.

Subject: Man. Verb: Fucks. Object: Woman. That's okay. Woman fucks man.

Subject: woman. Object: man. That's not so comfortable for you. Is it?"

These defiant words are not only Stella's, but Cubbitt's vehement defending of his knowledge of feminist theory. The words he has attributed to her are I would argue, a supposed attestation of his and the programme's feminist competence. Nonetheless, Stella's on-screen physicality represents a two-way mirror reflecting the other girls and women, the raped women, dead women, the beautiful lifeless bodies. There is a constant assessing of the femininity of the female detective's body, played out in the luxury and sensuality of her clothes, her swimming, her effect on men; despite being an empowered character she is objectified and disempowered by the male gaze of the camera, the director, and the viewer, despite the strength of her character. And yet it is insidiously undertaken, not necessarily obvious to an audience, and even myself as a critical feminist on first viewing, so used we are to experiencing

television through the male gaze. Similarly, reflecting on her conceptualisation of the male gaze and the history of her essay Mulvey (2015: 70) more recently described her focus on theorising of old-style Hollywood cinema in particular, as being autobiographical, relevant to her own spectatorship before and after feminism, the unconscious nature of her own 'masculine perspective' which became apparent to her. The male gaze is too all extents the default normal gaze (Mulvey, 1975; Soloway, 2016), so much so that we not even aware.

Both Andrew Earlham of *Liar* (Ioan Gruffudd) and Paul Spector (Jamie Dornan) in *The Fall*, are guilty of committing crimes of sexual violence not only for the sexual gratification in that moment, but also as Stella Gibson asserts this is man 'creating his own pornography', a phenomenon we see only too often in the real-world along a continuum from upskirting to revenge porn (McGlynn *et al.*, 2017); men are not only violating women's bodies but reaping the rewards later by means of their technologically facilitated visual misogyny (Needham, 2017). Likewise, in these televisual portrayals of sexual violence against women, arguably we are witnessing a shift from the cinematic male gaze of Mulvey's 1970's conceptualisation to a different type of closeness, domesticity and intimacy of viewing television (Smit, 2015) and so to a sexual objectification that is, I would argue, as well as being voyeuristic and gratuitously 'pleasurable', also discursive in its upholding and reinforcing of patriarchal values and male sexual difference. This heightened sense of 'visual misogyny' (Needham, 2017) serves not only to legitimate the male gaze, but desensitize audiences to the spectacle of the mutilated and sexually abused naked female form.

Conclusion

Whereas, *Unspeakable* and *Liar* do not ask the viewer to think of them as being feminist-inspired programmes or feminist texts, *Apple Tree Yard* and *The Fall* do make deliberate attempts to be considered feminist in their perspective and ideology. Much more than mere references to feminism or compulsory nods, these programmes aspire and, perhaps even demand, to be defined as feminist. Nonetheless, the discursive manoeuvring in these texts is multitudinous and complex as intricate webs of imbricated images work, whether intentionally or not, to uphold gendered hierarchies by means of the constant patriarchal threat of rape and symbolic violence. In these first two data chapters I have deliberately grouped those programmes which centre their narrative around sexual violence but in line with the various aspects of postfeminist culture: *Liar*, *Unspeakable*, *Apple Tree Yard*, and *The Fall*. They all to varying degrees, present discourses which punish and warn women, manipulate and confuse audiences in their muddying of the waters regarding consent and rape, whilst presenting women as sexually desiring objects and empowered post-feminist agents but with a negative inference, always at a cost. And whilst the discourses found in *Liar* and *Unspeakable* offer 'postfeminist discourses' co-opted versions of feminism' (Projansky, 2001: 14), alongside patriarchal rape myths, *Apple Tree Yard* and *The Fall* go further in that they present the very same discourses but through a graphic, violent and gratuitously misogynistic lens.

Writing in 2001 Projansky (p197) made claims to a 'ubiquitous postfeminist representation of rape throughout popular culture', one which she affirmed then needed challenging. Over the next two chapters I aim to demonstrate how rather than relying on postfeminist discourse there is evidence of recent programmes which

mark an optimistic turn in representations of sexual violence. I explore how *Broadchurch*, *National Treasure*, *Three Girls*, and *Top of the Lake*, look to the rhetoric of feminist anti-rape activism and theoretical critiques of the legal system in their depictions of rape. I argue that they expose the institutional failings of patriarchal society and expose a sexually violent continuum of men's behaviours. In unique and exciting ways these televisual texts employ feminist discourses to inform and educate audiences of women and girls' lived experiences of sexism, misogyny and violence.

Chapter Three:

Reverse Discourses and Representations of the Impunity of Rape

Through the act of rape a man not only attacks a woman, but personifies the cultural devaluation of women. (Brinson, 1992: 360)

Introduction

During an assessment meeting with a senior member of the research staff earlier this year, I was asked if it is always the case that the ‘good’ representations of rape are in predominantly female-written and/or produced programmes, and the traditionally ‘bad’ are written by men. Likewise, before commencing this research I was also influenced by the idea of men and the still predominantly male media industry as stalwart upholders of the male gaze and patriarchal attitudes (Mulvey, 1975). I had preconceived ideas that any truly ‘feminist’ television portraying sexual violence would be made by women, probably identifying as feminist, perhaps taking a very woman-centred approach, making programmes which aimed to meet the criteria of the so-called ‘Bechdel Test’ (Bechdel, 1985). I was guilty of thinking in a simplistic manner about what I have since found to be a complex and nuanced genre of contemporary television, and as such these teleological views regarding the role of men in upholding rape myths have been somewhat unfounded and disproven by certain elements of my research.

Over the next two chapters I examine the themes and strands of the programmes I have identified as containing feminist discourses, those already established discourses of gender, sexed bodies and sexual violence pertaining to feminist epistemology. The programmes analysed in this chapter, *Broadchurch* (ITV, 2017) and *National Treasure* (Channel 4, 2016), are focused explorations of men’s

violence against women, which are written about, directed and produced by men but with strict adherence to feminist discourse and informed by feminist research. I argue that just as Rosalind Gill (2007) describes tangible, concrete narratives which can be seen as 'postfeminist sensibilities', then in these two specific programmes there is evidence of feminist discourses of sexual assault and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), which can be interpreted as feminist 'counter-formulations' to pervasive and commonplace rape myths (Cuklanz, 2000). These programmes utilise opposing discourses of sexual violence and feminist 'counter-formulations' (Cuklanz, 2000; Projansky, 2001) to create accurate accounts of the level of harm and injustice inflicted in cases of rape, in turn, I will argue, creating an empathy and compassion for women and girls as victims and survivors.

Foucault's Reverse Discourses

However, concurrent to the feminist focus on the victimisation of the woman in cases of sexual assault, there is also a marked shift to the blame and responsibility of the man as the sole culpable social actor. And it is this feminist critique of the social construction of masculinity which is rarely given attention by men as producers, screenwriters, directors, protagonists; it is a dark and perhaps dangerous avenue down which they do not care to venture. Therefore, in this chapter I want to note not only how these programmes which men are bringing to British audiences contain many 'feminist sensibilities', but that this should be recognised as significant, if not perhaps celebrated. In many ways this fits with the idea of a 'reverse discourse' (Foucault, 1979: 76). In *The History of Sexuality* (1979), Foucault explained that in relation to sexuality and the primacy of heterosexuality throughout history, reverse discourses pertained to those produced by gay men themselves; the discourses that historically were not perhaps always purposefully opposing but

relating to the experience, knowledge and truth of those objects being constructed in the original dominant discourse. And so whilst the discourses I lay claim to in these programmes are influenced by feminist activism and theory, they are perhaps not deliberately opposing and often they do not necessarily centre women in the narrative; they maintain a focus on men's violence against women and in that respect they are reverse approaches. Rather than accepting the male gaze and traditional masculine lens on rape (Mulvey, 1975; Projansky, 2001) and patriarchal narratives of sexual assault which privilege white men and their gaze above all other member of society (hooks, 1992; Yancy, 2008), they are examining what Connell (2005) deems hegemonic masculinity, or as it is becoming increasingly referred to in popular culture, 'toxic masculinity' (Stephens, 2017)⁷. In my discussion of these two television texts, I describe how other reverse discourses are produced not just by, but within the dramas also, as several male characters not even necessarily identifying with feminism, are shown to be investigating, scrutinising and holding their own gender and hegemonic masculinity to account (Connell, 2005).

Broadchurch: exploring a myriad of men's misdemeanours

In the small town of Broadchurch *DI Alec Hardy* (David Tennant) and *DS Ellie Miller* (Olivia Coleman) are investigating the rape of middle-aged woman, mother and estranged wife *Trish* (Julie Hesmondhalgh), who was dragged in to bushes at her friend's birthday party. Due to the dark and her vision being deliberately obscured, she is unable to identify her attacker; most of the men in the close-knit community are under suspicion. As the investigation progresses the police identify several possible suspects as they uncover a whole range of misdemeanours including extra-marital affairs, stalking, the viewing of

⁷ In 2017 The Guardian published an opinion piece by Jordan Stephens, one half of pop music duo Rizzle Kicks, entitled 'Toxic masculinity is everywhere. It's up to us men to fix this'. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/23/toxic-masculinity-men-privilege-emotions-rizzle-kicks>

extreme pornography. As local media publicity of the case arises other women come forward and speak about their rapes for the first time.

(The 8-episode third series of the drama aired weekly on ITV in one hour episodes between 27th Feb and 17th April 2017.)

In *Broadchurch* there are numerous moments in which Detective Hardy is shown mulling over not just the rape case he is investigating '*murder makes sense....sexual offences?*', but also pondering the other harms men do to women by means of interpersonal relationships. In their investigating of the rape and search for the perpetrator, the detective duo of Hardy and Miller learn of a man who has cheated on his wife in her knowledge repeatedly over ten years, another man who is stalking his female friend, teenage boys' viewing and sharing of pornography on their phones; the numerous everyday sexism and misogynies abound (Bates, 2014). DC Hardy asserts to female colleague Miller: 'it makes me ashamed to be a man'. Just as Thomas *Hardy* wrote *Tess* as 'a pure woman' in 1891, as an innocent and unwitting victim of men's sexual violence and their lack of moral character and conviction, then writer and producer of the series Chris Chibnall also presents a sympathetic portrayal of an innocent, undeserving and blameless woman (as are all women subjected to any sexual violence) in his writing of Trish.⁸ The re-iteration of Trish's unjustifiable suffering of such a crime, of any woman's, is present throughout the series, acting as a discursive reminder to the audience, a re-affirmation of feminist discourse with women never culpable and the responsibility lying always with the male attacker. This reverse discourse seeks to not only challenge a pervasive culture of victim blaming in cases of sexual assault, but I would also suggest successfully garners empathy for a woman who has in all her sexual

⁸ 'Why the name Broadchurch? I thought a lot about the literary heritage of this county. In true Thomas Hardy style I came up with a compound location name of Broadchurch combining the West Dorset hamlets of Broadoak and Whitchurch.' (Chibnall, 2013)

liberation had sex with a married man. This contrasts with the audience's male gaze on the events that occurred in *Apple Tree Yard* and perception of protagonist and undeterred adulterer Yvonne.

And yet however well-informed and feminist the scriptwriter and police are in *Broadchurch*, in their belief and sensitivity towards Trish, there is something to question and perhaps investigate further in future research regarding the ethics of false hope. By means of what can perhaps be seen as 'best-practice' policing, it is an optimistic portrayal of a sensitive and adequately funded and resourced justice system portrayed in *Broadchurch*, in which the victim is treated with the utmost care by all professionals, has access to her own rape support worker who is well versed in using the discourse of survivor rather than victim and a case in which the perpetrator is found and charged. This scenario is in stark contrast to the court scenes of *National Treasure* and the more realistic portrayal of the use and reliance on rape myths in criminal trials (Smith and Skinner, 2017) and perpetrators of rape being found not guilty, as is so often the case in the real courts of England and Wales and most countries around the world. *National Treasure* is important in that it reveals to audiences the harm of the rape trial for victims (Lees, 1996), whilst arguably *Broadchurch*, perhaps unwittingly, acts to conceal the pervasive prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes held by police officers towards women who have been raped (O'Keefe *et al.*, 2009).

In a blog post hosted by the University of Sheffield (Holloway, 2018) entitled 'Criminally Good TV' criminologist and academic Dr Maggie Wykes reflects on her viewing of the final season of *Broadchurch*. She talks about how the third series starts off examining 'real' rape but then culminates in revealing the stranger and sexual predator duo storyline, as the police find those responsible for raping Trish

Winterman. She reflects that had they stuck to the storyline of it being someone the female character knew well, then audiences may have been made to feel too uncomfortable. Wykes (cited in Holloway, 2018) explains:

They don't really want to deal with two women a week being killed in domestic abuse incidences. It's catching the evil stranger, makes us all feel a bit more comfortable and we can sleep safely. Thinking that the evil stranger might actually be the person in your room is a very difficult proposition.

In the final episode's revealing of there being two attackers, and how serial rapist Leo Humphries forced a easily influenced 16-year old boy to rape, Boyle (2017) also remarks upon the slightly disappointing conclusion to *Broadchurch*: 'making Winterman's rapist an unrepentant, arrogant and wholly unlikeable young man who attacked strangers', being a more conservative outcome than the academic had hoped for. In the words of Tennant's character, Detective Hardy, Humphries represents an 'aberration', removing any lingering possibilities that it could have so easily have been an 'ordinary' man. Rather than make visible and tangible for viewers 'links between the ambient sexual objectification of women and the crime of rape, it comfortingly blames it all on one bad apple' (Mellor, 2017).

Nonetheless, the numerous examples of sexist and misogynistic behaviour fictitiously portrayed in this series do reveal the real-life nature of such gendered crimes, these characters who hit their partners, cheat on them, watch pornography, stalk them and several other harms on a continuum of harms against women (Kelly, 1988) are just 'ordinary' men. They are fictional examples of men within a very real patriarchal society, rape culture and flawed justice system, all of which allow them to act like 'aberrations'. As well as garnering huge audience figures (see appendix 1), *Broadchurch* has been termed 'a fightback against many rape clichés in TV drama' (Boyle, 2017). I would argue it is also a fightback against patriarchal discourses of

sexual violence, a feminist backlash against persistent and pervasive societal rape myths and rape culture, a fightback against men's misogyny.

National Treasure: 'family man and monster' (Boyle, 2016)

Paul Finchley (Robbie Coltrane) is a veteran entertainer and bona fide 'national treasure', as well as husband to *Marie* (Julie Walters), father to *Dee* (Andrea Riseborough), and seemingly loving granddad to Dee's two young children. He is being investigated for historical sexual assault charges relating to two separate incidences much earlier in his career, of which we the audience learn he is unequivocally guilty. He raped a long-time fan of his work *Rebecca Thornton* in his television-set trailer, around the same time he was repeatedly sexually assaulting his daughter's underage teenager babysitter, *Christina*. *National Treasure* explores both the implications for family life and legal procedures of such a case, as well as the character examination of a 'family man' who has a proclivity for BDSM, pornography, prostitutes and power.

(The 4-part fictional drama aired weekly on Channel 4 in one hour episodes between 20th September and 11th October 2016.)

National Treasure (Channel 4, 2016) is about how men who have been celebrated in the public eye as actors, comedians, 'personalities', whom we have come to know in our own homes through mediated screens, and who we often know to be husbands, fathers, perhaps even grandfathers, can also be sexually violent predators. As well as examining the crime of rape the television drama presents an image of men who use their body, sex and sense of entitlement against the numerous women and girls in their life, for their own gratification and to ensure a sense of power and control over them also. In one scene early on in the drama the character of Finchley tells his daughter during a tense exchange: 'I've been surrounded by women my whole life'. As Karen Boyle (2016) observes, the crux of this fictionalisation of events similar to those of Operation Yewtree, is that men can be both a 'family man and a monster'. From the very first episode it seems that for the character of Paul Finchley anything close to this truth seems incomprehensible, as twice he states in bewilderment and denial: "they think I'm Jimmy 'fucking' Savile". And it is this cultural removal of rape

and men's sexual violence against women and children from the realm of 'normal' masculine behaviour that is debunked in this drama; the persistent rape myth of rapists as being 'abnormal, depraved and marginal men' (Cuklanz, 2000: 10) is investigated through a gaze of scrutiny and opposition. Writer Jack Thorne has produced a drama series which sets out to show how 'most men who rape appear normal in other ways and are not especially 'depraved' (Projansky, 2001) and despite the ongoing moral panic around child sexual abuse *National Treasure* shows how the 'folk devil *par excellence*' (Jewkes, 2011: 111) the 'paedophile' or men who choose to abuse children, can and often are 'normal' men, with successful careers, friends, wives and children.

The court scenes and cross-examination of the women bringing the charges against their attacker are particularly well constructed in this drama, and reflect what is known in the research regarding the use of rape myths in the narratives of rape trials (Grubb and Turner, 2012; Smith and Skinner, 2016). The defence barrister suggests that single mother Christina is making a false accusation, solely in order to gain financially by selling her story to a tabloid newspaper. Meanwhile, Rebecca's behaviour after the alleged rape is deemed abnormal or not typical in line with her version of events, as she later sends Finchley another 'fan letter' stating her admiration of him, leading the barrister to conclude therefore, that the sex was in fact wanted and consensual. A report commissioned into the effect of rape myths in securing prosecutions, (Burrowes, 2013) documents how according to Ministry of Justice figures, the category of sex offences has the lowest conviction rate of those cases which make it to court at just 60.4%, in comparison with the overall rate for all crimes at 83.5%. As such, Burrowes' (2013) states that a turning of the tables

regarding rape myths and the attitudes of jurors as members of the general population is necessary in providing justice for victims of sexual violence.

In many ways the repeated denial of the character of Finchley throughout the drama appears similar to that of Andrew Earlham's emphatic insistence of his innocence in *Liar* (ITV, 2017). In the first episode the disgraced and disgruntled 'national treasure' uses the words 'I didn't do this' in four separate incidences to his wife, his daughter, the solicitor and the police. However, unlike in *Liar* there is little doubt as to his guilt from the very beginning of the series, as juxtaposed with his protestations of innocence is the unravelling of his successful façade as the audience are shown the harmful and misogynistic nature of his sexual proclivities, as well as clear and unambiguous visual evidence of his historical crimes by means of flashbacks and leaps in timeline. Both *National Treasure* and *Broadchurch* impactfully present sensitively nuanced narratives which counter traditional patriarchal views of sexual violence, as well as challenging to varying extents the rape myth that rapists are obviously and markedly different from other men (Cuklanz, 2000; Ryan, 2011).

Likewise, both television dramas show how crimes of sexual violence are wide-reaching and often have multiple victims, multiple circles of harm which include women both close and removed from them. In *National Treasure*, the story of Finchley's crimes and violent masculinity experienced by Rebecca and Christina as the primary victims of his manipulation, violence and lies, are revealed and heard in the court scenes. And yet the audience is shown over numerous glimpses and insights, a much closer inspection of daughter Dee and wife Marie's lifetime of hurt and trauma living with and loving such a man. None of the four women's trauma or

ongoing pain is centred in the writing, but the various ways in which one man has so catastrophically impacted their lives is explored at times in minute detail. It is implied throughout the drama that Finchley's extremely complex and pathological relationship with his grown up daughter who has survived multiple suicide attempts, has involved sexual abuse, in a cyclical manner to the sexual assaults he experienced as a teenage boy with his father. This recurrent cycle of incestual sexual abuse is a theme both in this drama and *The Fall*, albeit focussed on to varying extents. Whereas, Paul Spector's whole disturbed psychology and sexual desire is traced back to the days when as a child in an all-boys children's home he was a teachers 'pet' and predominant means of several men's prolific and varied sexual abuses, Finchley's history of abuse is mentioned in passing. In feminist theorising Liz Kelly's (1996) essay 'Weasel Words' contests the routine and unqualified use of the word 'paedophile' and the discourse of cycles of child abuse which encourage a lack of accountability whilst potentially vilifying adult survivors of abuse also.

Conclusion

British-made television dramas such as *Broadchurch*, *National Treasure* and also *Three Girls*, which I examine in the next chapter, aim to and are successful in doing so much more than entertain the viewing public. These programmes highlight and scrutinise the lack of justice in our legal system, they tell the human stories behind sensationalist tabloid headlines, they strive to create and enable connections between viewers and the victims of patriarchy. Perhaps most significantly they help audiences to at least sympathise, if not empathise with women and girls who have experienced sexual violence. The writing of Chris Lang in the ITV detective series *Unforgotten* (2015 - 2018) which whilst not focussed on in this research, contains a

very similar level of sensitivity around femicide that might be an interesting topic to explore in future research. In this series there is a complete lack of male gaze, especially regarding the presentation of the female detective Cassie Stuart (Nicola Walker), both visually and in terms of character; she is not there either in the drama or the workplace to be 'looked at'. She is no Stella Gibson, there is no pseudo-erotic chemistry with the male suspects.

This chapter is concerned with feminist discourses being relayed and understood by a mainstream audience on television, an especially important issue for men as viewers; boys and men who are growing up and living in the shadow of a patriarchal society, boys and men who are continuously subjected to the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and the violence of pornography, and rarely if ever to women's account of sexual violence and/ or feminist discourses of sex and rape. And so whereas as a woman and feminist student I was more enamoured with the woman-centred nature and artistic aesthetic of *Top of the Lake*, which I discuss in depth in the next chapter, more appreciative of a predominantly female perspective of the nature of misogyny, a female gaze, I believe that both types of programme are equally important. We need programmes which dispel rape myths, challenge stereotypes of gender and educate both men and women of the impunity of rape in our social justice system; and yet of equal importance is the opportunity for women to see themselves fairly, accurately and sensitively represented on screen, for the complexities and nuances of our lives to be portrayed, believed and understood.

Chapter Four

Filming and Feeling as Feminist Insurrection

'Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies...Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement. (Cixous, 1976: 875)



Figure 4. Jane Campion's feminist vision of 'Paradise' led by the enigmatic guru GJ (Holly Hunter) in *Top of the Lake* (2013)

In this chapter I want to further highlight and celebrate the use of popular culture and feminist discourse to not only bring awareness to the physical and emotional terrorism of women (Buchwald *et al.*, 2005), by means of televisual interventions, but also to the necessity of understanding the misogyny of the world through the words, accounts, writing, voicing and art of women: 'woman must write her self' (Cixous, 1976: 875). Whilst in the previous chapter I examined the perhaps unique contributions of men in the television industry to this genre, as a woman and feminist I want to revisit the potential of H el ene Cixous' (1976) call to arms by means of her

'écriture féminine', her hopes for a woman's writing. In the next chapter I want to use Cixous' theorising alongside my own thoughts and optimistic musings concerning a reimagined female gaze; an intersectional gaze which has transformative potential outside the realm of television or film media also (Soloway, 2016). But prior to this attempt at visualising a new conceptualisation of gazing, I want to consider two extremely popular feminist and female produced television texts which interrogate men's sexual violence by means of insurrections of women's and girls' subjugated accounts (Foucault, 1980), in the BBC dramatization *Three Girls* (2017), and *Top of the Lake* (2013) and its second series, *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (2017).

Three Girls: the harrowing truth of the Rochdale grooming scandal

Relying heavily on the accounts and testimonies of the real-life child victims of grooming and sexual exploitation by a group of British-Asian men, a scenario that has occurred again and again in other cities around the UK, *Three Girls* focuses specifically on the emotional impact on the lives of teenagers *Holly*, *Amber* and *Ruby*. From how the girls became lured into a world of free food and alcohol in the backrooms of takeaway shops to the interventions and compassion of sexual health counsellor *Sara Rowbotham* (Maxine Peake) and the often negligent work of the police, the dramatization shows in detail not only the horror of the organised raping of young girls by numerous men but also the failings of the police and criminal justice system.

(The three-part dramatization aired on BBC 1 in one hour programmes over consecutive nights between 16th and 18th May 2017.)

In a similar manner to how Jermyn (2013) relates being shocked and emotionally troubled by her viewing of *The Fall*, I have probably been most affected during the research process by *Three Girls*. During my first watching of the dramatization I reflected that being witness to the crimes of so many men against three children was difficult, but it also felt important to learn about who these girls were, what these men did to them, and how they were able to do this with any repercussions for so long. Interestingly however, during the second viewing for analytical purposes, when I was

focusing much more closely on the narrative and structure, the dialogue and visuals, I found myself very emotional from only 30 minutes in. In my notes I wrote 'harrowing'. I found myself not wanting to watch any more, wanting to remove myself from that world, to not be a witness to such cruel manipulation of children by adult men. Even though I knew how the story of the real-life events unfolded, I was distressed by the still very shocking and, almost in ways unexpected, rape of Holly by Dadi, the oldest of the men. I found it so difficult to think analytically about his sheer disregard for her as a person, his using of her as an object, and then the chilling nature of his words as he got up from the bare, dirty mattress: '*you're my bitch now, cross me and I'll kill you*'. I had to pause the episode on my laptop, give myself time to remove myself from that visual space and emotionally recover; it felt too much to bear. And yet these girls and hundreds of others have and continue to endure this life, they live in this world of misogyny and disregard, often enduring extreme and incessant sexual violence, in cities around the UK (Radford *et al.*, 2015).

And this is the very nature of the 'feminist paradox' which Projansky (2001) describes; television and film can be sites of subversion to challenge popular thinking about sexual violence and draw awareness to the problem of rape and rape culture, whilst at the same time this can make for very hard and troubling viewing, especially for women. As bell hooks (2016) stated in a discussion with Jill Soloway at The New School in New York, I too often feel like 'I would like to go my entire life without ever having to see another rape scene in a movie as long as I live'. And yet programmes such as *Three Girls* are, I would argue vitally necessary in bringing awareness to a general public about the problem of men's sexual violence against women and girls, and to start a public conversation. The show is a direct criticism of

the institutional handling of the scandal by public services, as well as an exposé of the malevolence of law in relation to the treatment of the young girls in court (Smart, 1995).

Onscreen text at the very beginning of the final episode acts to remind viewers that 'Words spoken in the trial are taken from court transcripts', in turn making the court scenes and proceedings both more credible and conversely, incredible. In difficult to watch scenes, the nine men's *nine* defence barristers are shown to have vehemently interrogated the girls by means of video link in court. In calculated attempts they make, no, *made*, them appear to be 'unreliable witnesses' who were merely confused about their ordeals, mistaken in the details of their recruitment for the sexual gratification of unknown men paying for the pleasure of raping them in dirty unkempt houses, potentially not credible enough in their accounts of the crimes against them for the jury to convict the nine men. In a case in which the label of 'child prostitute' was used by the police to describe these young and vulnerable girls, I would argue that the reality of what happened to these girls not only at the hands of men, but in police stations and courts of law, in terms of symbolic violence and emotional harm, deserves to be known also.

The programme rightly acknowledges the problematic co-opting of the issue by white nationalist extremists; a male journalist outside the courtroom cynically acknowledges 'it's a gift for the BNP and all that lot out there; innocent white victims, dark skinned abusers...I just don't see what it achieves'. Likewise, in the 18 months since its airing it would be remiss not to mention the manner in which the problem of British-Pakistani child-grooming gangs has been escalated and taken up as an issue by the far right to justify their racism and religious hatred. I would argue that English Defence League founder and far-right spokesperson Tommy Robinson, has used

the widespread problem of child abuse in our country to incite a targeted hatred of Muslims, and recruit a significant minority of people to his protests, thus further raising his celebrity and power (Halliday, 2018). Arguably, due to a disproportionate heightened Western media focus on migration and immigrants over approximately the last decade, ethnicity, especially Muslim identity, is often central to such narratives of rape, whilst the 'whiteness' of male perpetrators is unremarked on, and thus remains unchallenged (Dagistanli and Grewal, 2012).

Top of the Lake: a nuanced account of sexism and sexual violence

Set amongst the countryside of New Zealand, *Detective Robin Griffin* (Elisabeth Moss) returns to her home town to visit her ill mother, only to become professionally and emotionally involved in the disappearance of 12 year old *Tui Mitchum*, who has been concealing a pregnancy. *Top of the Lake* shows how Robin, herself a survivor of rape as a teenager, battles to save this girl alongside her sexually harassing co-worker *Detective Al Parker* and Tui's violent and misogynistic father *Matt Mitchum*. It is a fictional account of how corruption in a close knit community can allow men's violence against women in many forms to go unchecked and unpunished. In the second series, entitled *China Girl*, Robin investigates the disappearance of a sex worker in Sydney alongside new policing partner *Miranda* (Gwendoline Christie); the series is a feminist exploration of the problems of pornography, prostitution and surrogacy. Robin is also reunited with the daughter *Mary* (acted by Campion's real-life daughter), who was conceived by rape and adopted 18 years previously. Storylines become entangled as Mary's older and abusive boyfriend Alexander is the driving force behind the brothel and illegal surrogacy trade.

(This first series aired on BBC 2 over 7 episodes in July and August 2013. The second series aired on BBC 2 over 6 episodes in July and August 2017)

Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake* (2013, 2017) is a startling televisual display of the insidious and ubiquitous nature of sexism, misogyny and rape culture. It shines a harsh light on the sexism and relentless misogyny present in all levels of patriarchal society: within communities, families, institutions. And yet it manages to do so with a strictly woman-centred and feminist focus, through the lens of a female gaze (what such a gaze might mean and entail is discussed at length in the next chapter). Of all

the programmes in this study, I have felt most emotionally involved and moved by *Top of the Lake*, perhaps because I have empathised most or got to understand the individual struggles and motivations of the characters to a greater extent. This element of Jane Campion's work has been recognised and identified as relating to a 'reader's gaze' (McHugh, 2007), a perspective or lens that is concerned with the interiority of subjects and the rich inner lives of people on screen (Lutz and Collins, 1991). Alongside themes of reproduction and mothering, I found numerous relationship between female characters, which feel tangible and complex, nuanced and well-written, which all involve protagonist Robin and the traumatic effects of men's violence. These include the resentment between Robin and her mother stemming from the time of her attack, the relationship Robin has with Tui as she recognises her own younger abused pregnant self in her, and then later Robin helps Tui care for her baby, the reunion with biological daughter Mary in the second series, and the sharing of mothering her with adoptive parent Julia, played by Nicole Kidman. Both series provides sensitive but challenging examinations of the cyclical harm of conception resulting from rape, bodily violence by means of pregnancy, birth and ambivalent feelings as a girl or woman towards her child. *Top of the lake and China Girl*, tell us about women, and their lives, their desires, their experiences of sexual intimacy, loving relationships, and rape, side by side from women's perspectives and by means of a female gaze. As televisual texts they present fully human, flawed and brave female characters entangled with feminist discourses of sexism, sexual violence, injustice and society's failure to act and recognise this pandemic problem.

Moreover, this is a series also predominantly about the continuum of men's violence in the lives of women and girls and features a shocking but realistic number of

powerful and misogynistic male characters. There are a number of violent scenes not all pertaining to men's violence; Campion is not afraid to explicitly show the trauma and anguish caused by rape and a woman's resulting rage in a scene in which Robin reeks unbridled vengeance in a physical assault on one of the men who raped her. This scene is juxtaposed with often quietly insidious displays of misogyny; the continual verbal disrespect and discrimination of women in the workplace, viewing pornography in public spaces, the prostituting and soliciting of sex workers, all existing on a continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988).

It is also dark and disturbing television, which combined with its panoramic landscapes and dream-like esoteric elements, is often cinematic in style; visually the series produces 'an atmospheric aesthetic resonant with emotional depth' (Moylan, 2017: 271). *Top of the Lake* is contradictory and complex in its gritty and unafraid portrayal and focus on deeply misogynistic communities. But it is also quite unexpected and at times endearing too; there are moments of tenderness that caught me off guard in their beauty and poignancy. Campion's writing, direction and use of cinematography, alongside the performances of the characters ask of us, the audience, to emote deeply, empathise, feel, breath with the characters; it is arguably a much more emotive experience than is typical in television drams. And yet, as bell hooks (1996) has stated the transformation of patriarchy in popular culture will happen only through the radical embracing of something which is different, new and perhaps not necessarily mainstream or popular, and instead by seizing the opportunity that the *avant-garde* offers.

Conclusion

Three Girls and *Top of the Lake* and *China Girl*, all encourage the audience to empathise with girls and women from within an feminist ontology of reality and by means of a feminist lens. These televisual texts show how real-life women in positions of authority within patriarchal institutions strive to make a difference; we are as the audience invited into not only their world but to see it from their perspectives, both in their suffering as victims of sexual abuse, but also in their struggle and determination to bring about justice. These programmes show what women can and do unfairly endure in a world of men, depressing accounts of so many but also just a few of the violences inflicted on women that happen all over the world every day. Arguably, by means of a female gaze these programmes do not re-present or contribute to existing discourses, they reveal them and scrutinise them, shine a light on them, critique and deconstruct them. If power is produced and contained within discourse, the above dramas are about giving power back to individual female subjects, the director and photographers claiming power to appeal to the viewer's empathy with the character, feelings emotions, and viewing misogyny and patriarchal violence through female eyes.

Chapter Five:

The Potentialities of a Female Gaze, or *feminine regard*?

Rather than simply pertaining to two polarised ideological positions regarding sexual violence, patriarchal or feminist, the televisual representations and discourses of rape analysed in this research, exist on a spectrum of often subtle and nuanced differences, between one programme and the next which can be categorised. In appendix 3 there is a chart devised to conceptualise and visualise the continuum of discourses that I have found to be present in this genre of very current and popular prime-time programmes that centralise stories of sexual violence. This refinement of perceptible difference, what can often be imperceptible discursive manoeuvres, and entanglements of feminism, postfeminism and misogyny (McRobbie, 2004) lends itself to 'continuum thinking' (Boyle; 2018). There exists a continuum, a continuous and ongoing sequence, of interlinked and overlapping televisual discourses of rape on British prime-time television. I have found that within postfeminist media discourses of rape and narratives of sexual violence there exists subcategories of discursive practices which pertain to anti-feminism, misogyny and traditional patriarchal ideologies. Likewise, I have identified narratives which are modelled around well-established feminist discourses of sexual violence. In doing so, the writers of these programmes are drawing on a long history of feminist activism and theory and wider feminist discourses relating to and encompassing women's reproductive rights, a myriad of relationships between women, and explorations of women's subjectivities throughout their life-course. In the programmes analysed in chapters one and two, the discourses of anti-feminism and misogyny, and the reinforcement of sexual difference, are produced not only by means of dialogue and storyline, but also by means of a violently objectifying male gaze (Mulvey, 1975).

Conversely, there is a complete absence of voyeurism or female sexual objectification in *Broadchurch*, *National Treasure*, *Three Girls* and *Top of the Lake*; and yet there is as with all visual media, a lens, perspective and gaze by which the story and meaning is depicted and shown to the audience and viewers nonetheless. In 1975 (7) Laura Mulvey observed that 'cinema has changed over the last few years'; in a much wider collective sense of media it has changed again numerous times in previously unimaginable and unthinkable ways, due to the advent of the internet and its ever evolving capabilities, but the male gaze has remained. Television can be theorised as 'an advanced representation system', and just as 'cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking' (Mulvey, 1975: 7), then television also brings to fruition society's and culture's unconscious ways of seeing. And so I wish to conclude my data analysis from a place of optimism by considering the potentialities of that which is not a male gaze, but a female gaze as a force for social change in the way we see women and women feel seen. I want to use my data findings to think about how women's writing and a feminist perspective can and could work in tackling cultural attitudes towards sexual violence, and in turn challenge and eliminate discourses which allow for men's violence and women's suffering. Following in the footsteps of many feminists who have expressed a need for hope and a belief that social change is possible regarding women's objectification and victimisation, I encompass the works of Mulvey (1975) and Cixous (1976), to briefly map out my ideas for the opportunities a female gaze presents and its re-conceptualisation in a *feminine regard*.

As Soloway (2016) so clearly affirmed in her aforementioned keynote at the Toronto Film Festival, an envisaging of the female gaze is not the opposite or the inverse of

the male gaze. They refute this misrepresentation of the female gaze, as being 'the opposite of the male gaze, if taken literally, would mean visual arts and literature depicting the world and *men* from a *feminine* point of view, presenting *men* as objects of *female* pleasure' (original emphasis). Likewise, it is not defined by the objectification of men, as this type of erotically charged gazing is actually a very similar type of gaze; perhaps this is female 'male gazing', as recently problematised by a fellow scholar at my own university (Lucas, 2018a). Philosophy scholar, Peter Lucas, (2018b) argues that there are two types or results of objectification: firstly, that the person is reduced to their body, reduction to object and so increases the dangers of men's sexual violence against women and secondly, that objectification can also be about the 'colonisation of people's identities', their image appropriated by others for their own agenda. It is this second case that he believes is starting to occur more often regarding the sexual objectification of men in BBC's *The Bodyguard* and *Poldark*. But he does repeatedly acknowledge that specific to the male gaze and men's sexual objectification of women is the link to the risk of sexual violence.

For quite different reasons however, the highly successful *The Bodyguard* featuring numerous women in top jobs, and perhaps more male than female nudity, has also been criticised by former equalities and human rights commissioner, Trevor Phillips (Woode, 2018). In this instance, Phillips is concerned with the way in which the numerous strong female characters are all in his opinion, either 'dim, devious or pusillanimous or all three'. However, what has been envisioned by Soloway and what I am trying to interrogate here is not a reversal but a reinvention of the way we see, view, and frame especially female actors, as subjects with agency and a move away from passivity and sexual objectification. As author Kathy Lette, quipped in response

to Philips comments: 'at least the women were depicted in positions of power and not as human handbags – decorative and demure and draped over the arm of some powerful man' (Woode, 2018). It requires an entire reconfiguration of the baseness of viewing bodies as objects, without properly seeing women as subjects, and arguably writing female characters which are fully realised people with lives and careers to observe, even if their personalities are flawed.

Likewise, the writing of fully formed women could intersect with a female gaze; a gaze captured by 'a subjective camera that attempts to get inside the protagonist...to share and evoke a feeling of being in, rather than seeing, the character' (Soloway, 2016). In this way the concept of a more compassionate female gazing can be extended to the 'gazing' not just of and at women, but of people of colour, queer people; if anything is to be achieved in terms of toppling patriarchal structures the gaze must be intersectional and oppositional to such dominance (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1992). Television and film could be used as a way to re-present the *looked-at-ness* of the marginalised and 'othered' (Said, 1978), and allow them to be the subjects of their own narratives who see the gazing and gaze right back. As men and patriarchy have created the hegemonic and dominant discourses of sex, violence, and rape, feminist theorising, then the female gaze in media, culture and society can act as subversive challenges to these discourses. And whilst feminist discourses on television are present, as documented in this research, still they remain marginal, with their art and voices repeatedly undermined, ridiculed, and falsely portrayed.

Therefore, a female gaze is not only about the visual aspects of television and cinema but also about evoking and creating a culture of women's writing and women's representation on screen, that could pertain to what Cixous (1976) termed *écriture féminine*. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', Cixous (1976: 875) wrote

optimistically about the future imperative for a women's writing, and the transformative potential of 'what it will do', what it can and could do. Likewise, my research has emphasised not only the need for a re-writing of the way in which television and film present discourses of sexual violence, but also of the manner in which social sexual scripts, bound up with patriarchy, are the foundations of rape myths. Patriarchal writing, which can be attributed to the scriptwriting of both men and women as evidenced in *Apple Tree Yard*, is responsible for perpetuating and reconfirming misconceptions and false assumptions of rape on television. Cixous' essay was and is a call to arms for women to put themselves into the world, into history and into texts in a similar manner to Soloway's demand for women to claim space and ground in the film and television industry and on screen, both behind and in front of the camera.

We must continue to look forward to shaping new discourses of sexual violence in order to challenge sexual violence. Just as the discourses of a rape culture uphold and allow for rape and its impunity, then discourse must be the power that women seize. Through the writing of texts, an *écriture féminine* is concerned with both breaking up and destroying what has gone before but also hopes to 'forsee the unforeseeable, to project' (Cixous, 1976: 879). Television and film must continue to challenge the hegemonic sexual scripts which inform rape myths. And yet, is it perhaps still true that 'big bosses don't like the true texts of women – female-sexed texts?' (Cixous, 1976: 877), that it still 'scares' them. With regards to some very recent television dramas, in which there is a more varied and higher representation of female protagonists, programmes such as *The Bodyguard* (BBC, 2018) and the subversive and genre-defying female-written text *Killing Eve* (BBC, 2018), are

beginning to break through into the mainstream of television broadcasting to huge success, albeit a mixed critical reception.

Cixous' (1976) 'Laugh of the Medusa' is a reply and retaliation to the Greek myth of the serpent-haired woman being slayed and beheaded by Perseus. Likewise, classics scholar Mary Beard (2017) uses her account and reflections on the harms against women in the literature and myths of antiquity, the women often silenced, violated, and mutilated for speaking of their rape, to envision her reframing of female power. Beard (ibid.) calls for moves towards a rethinking and restructuring of power, an end to traditional patriarchal elitist power, in order for a new type of power to be configured. This new power must, I argue, allow for the voices of the disqualified and marginalised people, those subjugated knowledges, to be insurrected (Foucault, 1980). It must be the power to tell the stories of history not from the perspective of the victors but of its victims; the power to deconstruct normative discourses of sex, gender, sexuality, the power to challenge and reveal the shortcomings of masculinist institutions of law and governments and war and even education

In this next small section I want to start to envisage new ways in which this type of female gaze can be academically conceptualised. I want to question whether it should be in fact be termed a *gaze* at all, as it involves a seeing of people based on notions of empathy and compassion, rather than just another superficial ocular viewing or alternate voyeurism. Soloway (2016) states: 'the Female Gaze seeks to destroy all gazes. She is, Other Gaze, Queer gaze, Trans gaze, Intersectional gaze. She is the non-gaze'. Therefore, it seems logical to question and query whether it should even be termed a 'gaze', when we have available to us a myriad of language to help create a new discourse of seeing and feeling through cameras and on screens. In this way the female gaze is about how art and cinema and television are

mediums which allow audiences to empathise, and to intuit meaning, emotion and understanding by means of the feminine character's gaze and how in turn the camera regards the female character. I want to suggest therefore, an idea of what could possibly be termed a *feminine regard*. I propose that rather than the opposing concept of the male gaze being just a binarily imagined 'female gaze', rather we need to *regard* others, in a feminine way which can be adopted by men as well as women and persons of any gender, giving us instead a *feminine regard*; but equally possible is a *queer regard*, a *black regard* and so forth. In my attempts at thinking creatively about alternate terms for 'gaze' I found that the etymology of 'regard' derives from the Old French usage of *regarder* meaning not only to watch but also to guard or watch over. Similarly, in its English usage 'regard' can mean to watch or see a thing as well as being defined as the way in which we pay attention or consideration to something or someone, or hold them in esteem. It is a term synonymous with: consideration, care, concern, sympathy, thought, mind, notice, heed, attention, interest. The female gaze as *feminine regard*, therefore is not a gaze but a consideration, an empathy, an identification with, a caring about, as part of an overall feminist project of disrupting the culture and discourses of patriarchal white heterosexual male dominance.

Therefore, a *feminine regard* is not solely the result of the ocular but also an interior vision which is based in perception, intuition and empathy. It is a way of seeing from a typically gendered feminine perspective, which does not necessarily have to pertain to the gazer's female body, but from a view of the world that sees the harm in particular constructions of masculinity and misogyny and patriarchy. And so just as a male gaze is also a patriarchal one rather than specifically pertaining to all men, then a female gaze can be better explained as a feminine regard, a regard which is often

but not exclusively informed by a feminist perspective. Moreover, I would argue that in a patriarchal society in which a male gaze still dominates in all areas of media, art and culture, in which a female gaze/ feminine regard is nowhere near being fully realised and an actuality, only women and men adopting a strictly feminist informed approach and female gaze should be producing television and film which centres narratives of sexual violence. If discourse is about producing and seizing power, knowledge and truth, the dramas of *Broadchurch*, *National Treasure*, *Three Girls* and *Top of the Lake* have successfully started to steal back discourses of sexual violence. They are examples of 'woman's *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based on *her suppression*' (original emphasis) (Cixous, 1976: 880). They do this by means of telling the truths of individual female subjects, which are upheld by the director's care in portraying this knowledge, and the viewer's empathy in 'holding' the character's experience and emotions, viewing the patriarchal misogyny of sexual violence through female eyes, a female lens, a feminine perspective, a *feminine regard*.

Conclusion

Time's Up on Patriarchal Discourses of Rape

I was warned, because he now knows you don't remember, he is going to get to write the script. He can say whatever he wants and no one can contest it. I had no power, I had no voice, I was defenceless.

(‘Emily Doe’ who spoke out against Brock Turner in court⁹)

We can deconstruct the images in mainstream white supremacist capitalist patriarchal cinema for days and it will not lead to cultural revolution

(hooks, 1996: 135)

As part of their discussion of all the possible evocations and potentialities of what a female gaze is and can be Soloway (2016) stated that, ‘the female gaze is that letter Brock Turner’s victim wrote’. In light of what a woman wrote and read out in court to the man who raped her, it is becoming more and more urgent, and pressing and pertinent that we, perhaps all of us, start to write the scripts of these crimes against the very humanity of women and children. We must use our voices to thwart patriarchy; we must contest it and ‘him’; we must not be, to borrow her words, defenceless. Likewise, it seems that the lines are blurring between the narratives that are televised in fictional media and the ones we are increasingly seeing play out in courtrooms, perhaps more so because of the MeToo movement. We must therefore attempt to take control of both. In October 2018 I found myself again reflecting on the significance of my research in this post-Weinstein era, this time in relation to the Brett Kavanaugh hearings, which showed startling similarities to the issues raised and the discourses that play out in *Liar*; that women do lie about sexual

⁹ The 7,000 word letter, an account of her experience of being rape and the aftermath, which she read aloud in court at the trial of Brock Turner in 2016, was published in its entirety on *BuzzFeed News.com* (Baker, 2016)

assault, they are heard and given credibility to the detriment of an innocent man's character. Donald Trump has openly mocked Doctor Blasey Ford's account of sexual assault, in the process stoking the flames of an ever-present but sometimes waning backlash against women and our rights (McCarthy, 2018). It pertains to the discourse that 'that women are already equal to men... or that equality has already gone too far, that men are unmanned' (Campbell, 2014: 1), and as such the world is framed as being a difficult place for men in the face of feminism. There exists in the wake of such scandals the arguably preposterous idea that 'women are winning' (Campbell, 2014:3), a discourse that pertains to women having too much power in being able to bring accusations of sexual assault to the fore.

As myriad discourses of sexual violence increasingly permeate our lives through the many available avenues of news media, the influence of such rhetoric cannot be underestimated. Likewise, the television programmes analysed here are broadcast to millions of people in the UK, and often around the world; they are productions which contribute to cultural understanding of not only rape, but sexual desire, men's and women's sexualities, violence, control and consent. With the viral nature on social-media of the #MeToo movement showing no signs of abating, the #Time'sUp campaign, it is perhaps easy for this to be touted as a moment, the start of significant change regarding sexism, misogyny and violence in popular culture and society. And yet it is apparent that this is still a Sisyphean struggle between the symbolic and cultural violence of patriarchy and the consciousness raising of feminists in both academia and activism (McGlynn, 2010). It is however, undoubtedly a long and enduring historical trajectory to which hopefully the Me Too and Time's Up campaigns can perhaps provide a renewed impetus.

In a very recent TED talk for *TEDWomen 2018*, Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo movement in 2006 long before it achieved viral status, describes how a backlash against the campaign has played out in the media and re-framed the movement as a witch hunt, stoking the flames of gender wars, a feminist moment that is anti-men. In a moving and emotion-filled talk Burke (2018) describes her recent tiredness and exhaustion at the injustices of men of power and privilege with reference to both Trump and Kavanaugh: 'Suddenly, a movement to centre survivors of sexual violence is being talked about as a vindictive plot against men... victims are heard and then vilified.' And yet she concludes that a day without sexual violence is possible, as in Burke's words 'movement is possibility'.

For too long men and the structures of patriarchy have determined how rape is written about, spoken about, determined and punished; men as victors, as the dominant power, as the bearers of dominant discourse and privilege, have written the entirety of history (Beard, 2017). Man has put himself not only at the centre of our patriarchal world, but also himself and his perspective into texts. And our past and present as women has been determined by the discourses, words, and voices of men. Horeck (2018) concludes in her comparison of *The Fall* and *Top of The Lake*, that there is in fact no one correct way to screen issues of sexual assault in fictional television, but I would strongly argue that there are definite 'wrong' ways and examples of television that exist as guideposts for creating entertaining but responsible representations and these are the ones informed by feminist discourse. Over ten years ago, Rosalind Gill (2007) argued in her examination of 'Postfeminist media culture' that feminist debate actually takes place predominantly in the media rather than outside it. And more recently it has been stated how 'the significance of popular culture as a site where the meaning of feminism(s) is produced and

contested has never been more vital and apparent' (Ferreday and Harris, 2017: 240). And so, now in 2018, when our lives are played out in the media more than at any other time in history, mediated discourses of sexual violence therefore play a crucial component when examining current cultural attitudes, persistent rape myths, understandings of men's violence against women and children, and the backlash against feminism and women's rights. Yet, neoliberal capitalism continues to shape, appropriate and neutralise feminism and its discourses of sexual violence (Campbell, 2014; Ferreday and Harris, 2017).

In this research I have demonstrated how prime-time television programmes can be used to propagate traditional, patriarchal discourses of rape as well as punishing women by means of symbolic violence and visual misogyny, whilst falsely representing and undermining the goals of feminism, in order to nullify it as a movement in this contradictory age of post-feminism and feminist resurgences. However, as demonstrated in chapters three and four, televisual narratives offer a realm in which feminist discourse can be re-presented with women's experiences central to the representation. I am as yet unsure which category of programme is the more important in terms of social change, the more mainstream *Broadchurch* or avant-garde experimentations in *Top of the Lake*, but perhaps this ambivalence is a reflection of the array of the good and responsible representations of men's sexual violence, that is now being broadcast on prime-time television, and there is room for many different types of texts of this calibre.

Due to the underrepresentation of women in the television and film industry, and the awareness of sexual violence, sexism and misogyny more generally resulting from the MeToo movement and the resulting public conversation, now more than ever, is the time for women's voices to gain a collective momentum, for women to come to

writing and for that writing to be shown on screen. Collectively, women's voices are powerful as evidenced by how much the feminist movement has achieved thus far. However, Tarana Burke (2018) reminds her listeners that our work is still so far from done and that we cannot stop in the fight against misogyny and men's violence against women. I share Burke's vision when she says: 'We owe future generations a world free of sexual violence - we can build that world'.

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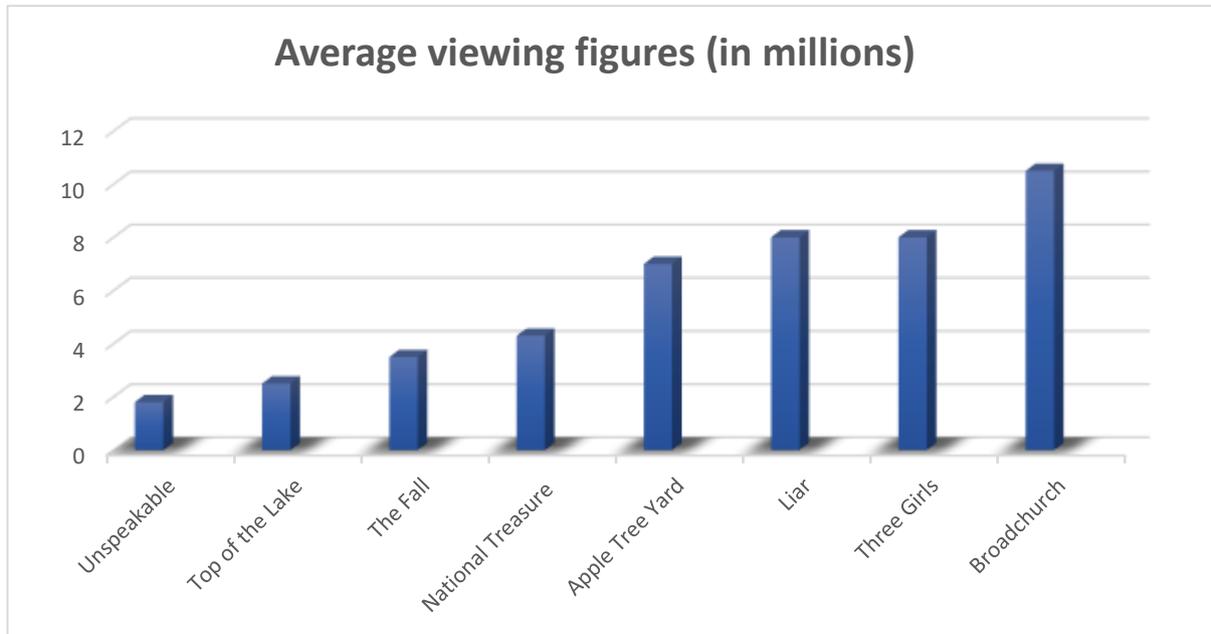
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Appendix 1

Dates of programmes, duration and viewing figures

(According to searches conducted on: www.barb.co.uk,
including '+1' channels where available)



Unspeakable (Channel 4, 5th November 2017)

Single 47 minutes TV drama/film, 1.84 Million viewers

Liar (ITV, 11th Sept- 16th October 2017)

6 episodes x 45 minutes, 1st episode 8 Million viewers, most watched ITV show that week

Apple Tree Yard (BBC 1, 22nd January – 6th Feb 2017)

4 x 1hr episodes, average 7 million viewers

The Fall (BBC, 2013-2016)

Series 1 first aired 13th May 2013, 1st episode highest viewed show on BBC2 that week
4.5million

Series 2 first aired 13th Nov 2014, 3.5 million

Series 3 first aired 29th Sept 2016, 3.5 million

National Treasure (Channel 4, 20th Sept – 11th Oct 2016)

4 episodes x 1 hr, 1st episode most watched on that channel that week 4.3 million

Series 3 of Broadchurch (ITV, 27th Feb – 17th April 2017)

8 episodes x 1hr, 1st episode most watched that week 10.75 million (all episodes over 10million)

Three Girls (BBC 1, 16th-18th May 2017)

1 hr x 3 consecutive nights, top three watched programmes that week, average episode 8 million

Top of the Lake (BBC 2, 7 episodes 2013)

First episode aired 13th July, 2.7 million

Top of the Lake: China Girl (BBC 2, 6 episodes 2017)

First episode aired 27th July, 2.5 million

All other television programmes and films

Downton Abbey (2010-2015) Television series, created by Julian Fellowes. Series 1-6. ITV.

Fifty Shades of Grey (2015) Film, directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson. USA: Focus Features.

Game of Thrones (2011 – present) Television series, created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss. Series 1-7. Sky Atlantic.

Happy Valley (2014 - present) Television series, created by Sally Wainwright. Series 1 & 2. BBC1.

Killing Eve (2018 - present) Television series, created by Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Series 1. BBC1.

Poldark (2015 - present) Television series, created by Debbie Horsfield. Series 1 & 2. BBC1.

Psycho (1960) Film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. USA: Shamley Productions.

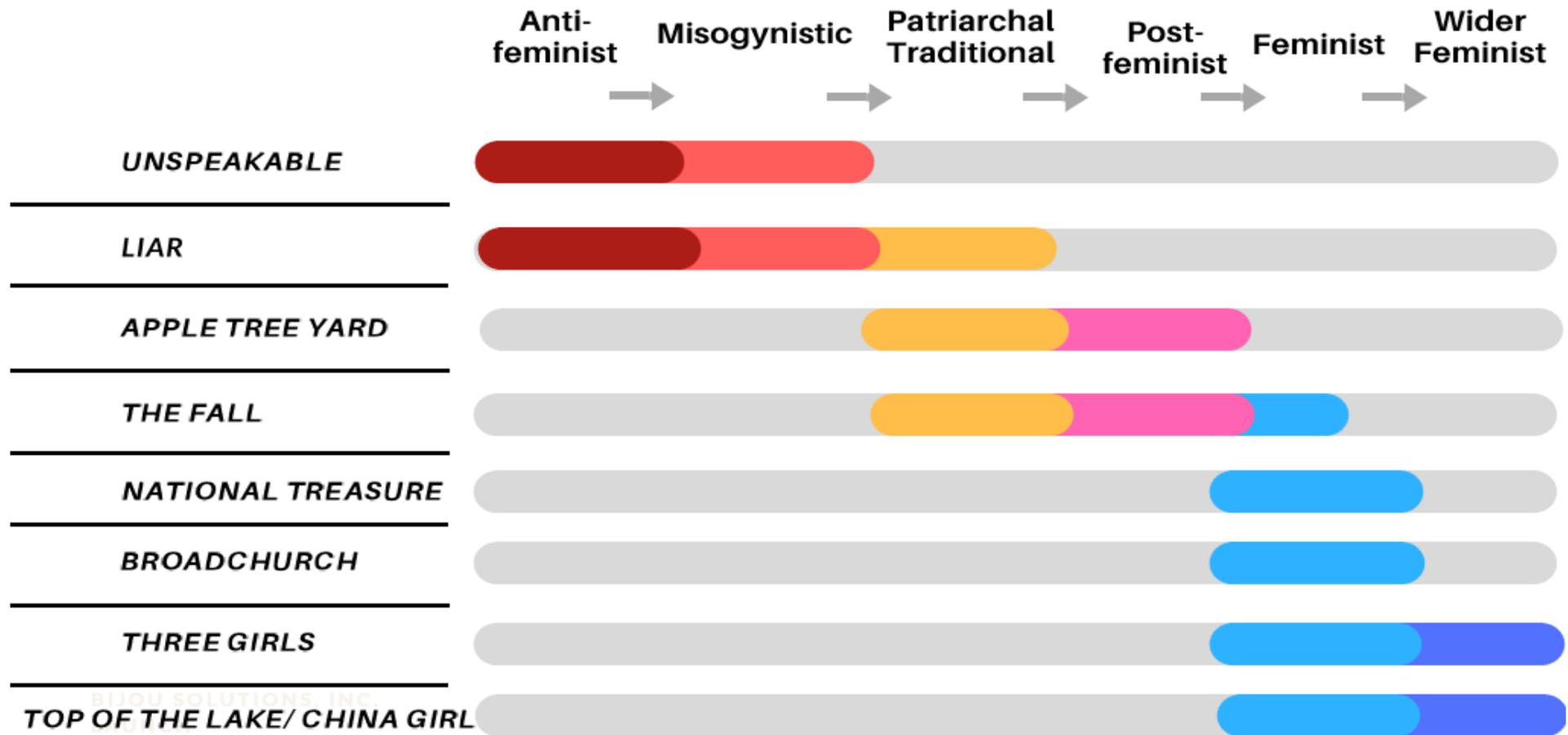
The Bodyguard (2018 - present) Television series, created by Jed Mercurio. Series 1. BBC1.

The Handmaids Tale (2017 – present) Television series, created by Bruce Miller. Series 1 & 2. Channel 4.

The Piano (1993) Film, directed by Jane Campion. New Zealand: Jan Chapman Productions.

Unforgotten (2015-present) Television series, created by Chris Lang. Series 1-3. ITV.

Continuum of Televisual Rape Discourses



Key to categories of discourses (as shown in continuum chart)

Anti-feminist: discourses which are purposefully antithetical to feminist discourse and often deliberately misrepresent feminism; the rhetoric of the Men's Rights Activist movement (Dragiewicz, 2011), based around the feelings of discrimination and inequality they feel men experience as a result of feminism, feminist discourse and women's rights.

Misogynistic: visual, spoken and performed discourses which are grounded in a dislike, contempt, hatred and ingrained prejudice towards women.

Patriarchal/ traditional discourse of rape: includes all those views and attitudes documented predominantly in the works of Lisa Cuklanz (2000) and Sara Projansky (2001), as well as rape myths as documented in numerous feminist studies.

Post-feminist: narratives concerned with the repudiation and redundancy of feminism, as well as neo-liberal discourses of female empowerment as the result of individualisation and linked to financial status, class and career (see a discussion of the contested definitions of post-feminism in relation to the work of Angela McRobbie (2004; 2009) and Rosalind Gill (2006) in chapters 1 and 2)

Feminist discourses (of men's sexual violence against women and girls): 'counter-formulations' which are direct responses to patriarchal and traditional discourses of rape and commonly-held rape myths (Cuklanz, 2000).

Wider feminist discourses (of women's lived experience and the female body): including institutional sexism in the workplace, reproduction, female sexuality and desire, relationships between women especially mothers and daughters, as well as feminist issues such as abortion, surrogacy and prostitution.

Appendix 3

A scale to identify discourses of sexual violence in contemporary television programmes

This is a preliminary undertaking towards a comprehensive list of 21st century rape myths and patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes and stereotypes of sexual violence, alongside feminist counter-formulations, legal facts regarding sexual conduct, and feminist discourses of consent. It can be applied to the context of the United Kingdom, as well as those myths emerging from the wealth of data from the United States. Whilst this research tool has only been designed and used in this instance to analyse nine prime-time terrestrial television dramas which specifically focus on sexual violence, there is scope for this to be used with analyses of individual storylines in soap operas and other crime dramas, as well as in film. Undoubtedly, there is the need for this type of framework to be researched more extensively and adapted further, in order that it could be utilised in a wider range of empirical 'rape myth' studies.

Designed specifically with reference to, and as a synthesis of the myths, misconceptions and discourses detailed in:

Burrowes, N. (2013) 'Responding to the Challenge of Rape Myths in Court: A Guide for Prosecutors'. London: NB Research.

Cuklanz, L. M. (2000) *Rape on Prime Time: Television, Masculinity, and Sexual Violence*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Projansky, S. (2001) *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*, New York: New York University Press.

Rape Crisis England and Wales (2018) 'Sexual Violence: Myths vs Realities', Available online: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/mythsvsrealities.php>

Ryan, K. M. (2011) 'The Relationship between Rape Myths and Sexual Scripts: The Social Construction of Rape', *Sex Roles*, 65: 774–782.

Rape myths, misconceptions, and misogynistic discourses of sexual violence

There are a high number of false allegations of rape.

Women lie about being raped when they regret consensual sex.

Women lie about rape as a form of vengeance against men.

Women who are prostitutes cannot be raped.

Delays in reporting the rape are suspicious.

Only attractive/beautiful women are raped.

Women who wear clothes that are perceived to be sexy or revealing are 'asking for it'.

Women who are drunk are complicit in their own rape

Women are most likely to be raped after dark by a stranger.

There is a 'typical' rapist; rapists are abnormal, depraved and marginal men.

Black men/ Muslim men/ ethnic-minority men are more likely to rape than white British/American men.

Men who were sexually abused as children are likely to become abusers themselves.

Once men are sexually aroused it is difficult for them to stop.

Feminist counter-formulations, discourses and legalities

False allegations of rape are very rare and a large majority of crimes of rape and sexual violence are never reported.

Sexual consent is when someone agrees of their own free will to have sex and consent can be withdrawn at any point.

Victims of rape or sexual violence are never responsible or to blame; responsibility and accountability always lie with the attacker

A person who is incapacitated or unconscious by means of alcohol or drugs cannot consent to sex.

A child under the age of 16 cannot consent to sexual intercourse or acts of a sexual nature.

There is no typical rapist or perpetrator of sexual violence. Men who commit sexual violence come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age and social group.

Acts of rape and sexual violence can happen in the home, place of work and other 'safe' settings.

Male perpetrators of sexual violence can be friends, colleagues, neighbours, relatives, or (ex)partners; most women and child victims know the attacker.

Women and children of all ages and appearances, and of all classes, cultures, abilities, genders, sexualities, races and religions, are raped.

Men are responsible and have the agency to control their sexual urges, and can stop at any point if consent is not willingly given.

