

# **U.K. Press Discourses Surrounding Representations of Rape in Film and the Subject of Male Violence against Women**

**Natalie Haygarth**

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School of Art, Media and American Studies  
University of East Anglia

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# Abstract

Representations of rape in film have contributed significantly to the mass of representations of rape present in popular culture. The attention these have attracted, and continue to attract, from audiences, cultural critics and academics is substantial. What has often been overlooked, and what this study does, is explore how these films have been discussed across the U.K. national popular press (including individual newspapers' online counterparts).

Developing on the work of scholars working in the area of film publicity and critical reception who have suggested that film criticism may be socially impactful, this thesis contends that press discussions of films that include representations of rape contribute to discourses surrounding rape that circulate in society and culture and that, as such, they play a part in the construction of specific frameworks of thinking about rape and other forms of male violence against women.

Paying particular attention to the language used to describe the rape, the language used to describe the female characters who are raped, and language used to describe the male perpetrators of rape, this thesis demonstrates how press discussions of mainstream films that include representations of rape can *reinforce*, *propagate*, *challenge* and *reject* rape myths and misconceptions surrounding rape and other forms of male violence against women.

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# Introduction

This study explores how mainstream films that include representations of adult men raping adult women have been discussed in the U.K. national popular press. By paying particular attention to the language used to describe the rape, the language used to describe the female characters who are raped, and the language used to describe the male perpetrators of rape, this thesis seeks to determine how the press discourses surrounding these films interconnect with media and cultural attitudes surrounding rape as well as exemplifying how the press texts contribute to discourses surrounding rape and other forms of male violence against women.

This research is not suggesting that the press discussions about these films cause and/or encourage men to rape women. What it does suggest is that the way these films, their representations, and their subject matters are discussed contribute to wider social, media, and cultural discourses about rape and that, as such, they play a part in the construction of specific frameworks of thinking about rape that circulate in society and culture.

As Tanya Horeck notes, ‘discussions of...filmic depictions of rape have been particularly prone to pivot on the question of whether a depiction of sexual violence is “positive” or “negative”, “good” or “bad”’ (2004: 3). This thesis’ aim is not to discuss, explore or interrogate attitudes towards the inclusion (or exclusion) of representations of rape in film. My concern is with the *language of rape* present in the press texts in which my selected films are discussed. In her book *Virgin or*

*Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*, Helen Benedict describes how the ‘language of rape’ is insidious and how it is used unconsciously, quickly and carelessly (2005: 126). She also acknowledges that language can be and has been reformed in the media and, symbiotically, in everyday life (2005: 126) and argues that the media needs not only to learn to reform its language about rape, but that it can also lead the reform of the language of rape.

This study is, therefore, concerned primarily with language and its ability to reinforce as well as to reform. More specifically, it is concerned with discourses about rape. Michel Foucault highlights the power of discourse, arguing:

...in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth (1980: 93).

What versions of ‘truth’ regarding rape are circulated in society? Who are we (consumers of the press) encouraged to believe are ‘real’ victims? Who have we been / are we being told commit these crimes? How have they been / are they being described?

The media, in its various forms, constitute a significant part of the current social and cultural climate. If media discourse constitutes social knowledge and participates in constructing frameworks of thinking about the subject of rape and other forms of male violence against women, it is important to interrogate these discourses.

I use similar methods of discourse analysis as have been used to analyse newspaper reports of real-life incidents of male sexual violence against women (in particular rape) to analyse how mainstream films that include representations of rape have been discussed in the U.K. national popular press. Rather than press texts that report real-life incidents of rape, the discussions of rape I analyse throughout the course of this thesis appear in texts that are not primarily about rape and / or violence against women but films that contain *representations* of these. I argue, however, that it is important to interrogate the way in which the subject of rape is discussed in the popular media in *all* contexts – whether this be in relation to real-life events or fictional representations.

In *Media and Violence: Gendering the Debates*, Karen Boyle notes how the film *Thelma and Louise* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1991) ‘creates a public forum whereby feminism, rape and justice can be discussed’ (2005: 142). Approached from this perspective, films that include representations of rape (and indeed other representations of male violence against women) have the ability to create public forums where social issues such as rape and male violence against women can be discussed. Mainstream, popular films that include representations of rape and other forms of male violence against women have the potential to instigate media discussion about such subjects that, otherwise, may not be discussed in the popular media at all. These discussions can take place in a variety of contexts, and amongst and between different groups of people – between friends, amongst work colleagues, and in organised debates (to name but a few). Some of these discussions are more

visible than others – popular press discussions being one of these. I contend that these discussions in the popular press contribute to and form an integral and important part of culture that defines what rape is and the circumstances attributed to it – that these discussions constitute part of social rape discourse which helps to construct and / or reinforce specific frameworks of thinking about rape, hence, why it is important to study these texts.

### Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1, I analyse how *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) has been discussed in the national press from the time surrounding its original theatrical release in 1971 up to the release of the film's remake which was directed by Rod Lurie and released in 2011. I argue that myths about rape were reinforced in the press coverage that surrounded the initial release of the film – mainly that women's dress and behaviour are at least partially responsible for rape. Later texts also did this, with the interpretation of Amy's<sup>1</sup> behaviour being perceived as teasing, flirtatious and 'encouraging'. In such instances, Amy's voice, was ignored, with certain writers seemingly more concerned with her appearance and their own interpretation of her behaviour than what she had to say, reflecting a (continuing) cultural response to women who express discomfort at the way they are harassed by some men where they are not taken seriously or ignored altogether. I argue that while the representation of rape included in the film was distinguished from the other representations of violence (in that it was discussed as a representation of rape rather

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<sup>1</sup> While individuals are usually referred to by their surname in academic work, there are instances throughout the course of this thesis where characters from the films being discussed have the same surname. In such instances, I refer to these characters using their first names as to avoid confusion.



than as a representation of violence), it was, more often than not, discussed in conjunction with debates about film censorship and what was considered to be gratuitous violence. As such, the sex / gender specific elements of rape were lost in much of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film, the sex-specific nature of the sexual harassment and sexual violence represented in the film, notably only committed by men against women, ignored.

In Chapter 2, 'Representations of Rape-Revenge', I explore and analyse how *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Wes Craven, 1972) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978) were discussed and implicated in the so-called 'video nasties' debates in the early 1980s and how they have continued to be discussed in the U.K. popular press since then. I argue that in these press discussions, men who perpetrated rape were portrayed as victims of the 'video nasties', with an overwhelming focus placed upon the damaging effects that viewing 'video nasties' supposedly had on individuals carrying out attacks. It was implied that 'video nasties' *alone* were having an effect on male behaviour that was positioned as being out of control and unable to restrain. As such, the idea that males 'can't help it' and / or that external factors have the effect of provoking sexual reactions in men that are uncontrollable were propagated. Similar ideas were also reinforced in press texts where the films were mentioned in 1983, 1993 and 2013. Rape myths were also reinforced in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remakes of *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Steven R. Monroe, 2011) and *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Dennis Iliadis, 2009). Also exemplified in my analysis is the use of sexualised language to describe the female characters who are raped in a context specifically aligned to them being raped. I argue that this has implications for the way in which

representations of rape are perceived as entertainment, the trivialisation of rape in culture and attitudes towards rape and sexual violence against women in a wider social context.

In Chapter 3, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988). As Tanya Horeck notes:

in its representativeness (as part of a long-standing tradition of screen violence) or in its distinctiveness (as the first serious Hollywood depiction of rape), *The Accused* marks a turning point in the history of Hollywood's representation of sex and violence. *The Accused* constitutes the border-line between the unreflective, pre-feminist depiction of rape found in *Straw Dogs* (2004: 92).

I argue that rape myths were frequently criticised and contested in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film – illustrating how feminist discourses surrounding rape had permeated into more mainstream avenues of thinking by the time *The Accused* was released in the U.K. In doing this, however, many discussions of the film focused on *female* behaviour and, as such, there was a distinct lack of engagement with, and interrogation of, the behaviour of the male rapists.

Furthermore, when male behaviour was mentioned and described, it was frequently done so in a manner that positioned male behaviour as being somewhat uncontrollable and, in some texts, the solution to preventing or decreasing the numbers of rape being perpetrated (by men against women) was for *bystanders* to intervene, not the changing of male behaviour.

In Chapter 4, I analyse the press coverage of two films that include representations of intra-military rape – *G.I. Jane* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1997) and *The General's Daughter* (Dir. Simon West 1999). These films are significant as they were released

after the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals (1991 and 1996 respectively) where male members of the military sexually assaulted female colleagues. These revelations conflicted greatly with the representation of America, the American military, and the American servicewoman represented in the British press only a few years earlier when the Gulf War was taking place, with America represented as an idealised culture and society where women were treated as equals to men in opposition to representations of Arab culture which was depicted as a restrictive and oppressive place for women (see, for example, Wheelwright 1994). While in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *G.I. Jane*, the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals were frequently mentioned, these discussions often took a specific form whereby they were used to provide some context and position the film as being topical. However, this topicality was more focused on the *presence* of women in the military rather than the problem of male sexual violence against women in the military. The sexual violence represented in the film (only perpetrated by men against women) was frequently discussed as part of, or alongside, the non-sexual violence O'Neill was subjected to – it positioned as being simply another aspect of training that she had to endure as part of the military training process along with the beatings. There was little engagement with the fact that she was subjected to a *different* kind of violence than her male colleagues – sexual violence – because she is a woman, the patriarchal aspects of this violence consequently being lost.

In opposition to *G.I. Jane*, the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* did not include any mentions or discussions about real-life

incidents of male military personnel sexually harassing or sexually abusing their female colleagues (such as those of the Tailhook or Aberdeen scandals). The popular press discourse surrounding the release of *The General's Daughter*, was dominated by mentions of Captain Campbell's sex life and criticisms about the film's representations of sex, violence and rape. Some of the language and structure of statements in the press coverage could certainly be considered problematic as they implied that Campbell's death was linked to her sex-life – positioning her (sexual) choices and behaviour as being at least partially responsible for her death.

In Chapter 5, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of two films that include representations of rape within domestic violence narrative contexts – *What's Love Got To Do With It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993) and *Lovelace* (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2013). I argue that myths surrounding domestic violence were reinforced in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and that Ike's actions were frequently 'explained' and partly justified. In other instances, the language used to describe Ike's violent behaviour towards Tina had the effect of downplaying the level of violence, as well as neutralising the power dynamics involved, representing and suggesting that both Ike and Tina were equally involved and equally accountable for the violence. I suggest that the public profile of Ike afforded him, in certain instances, a little more sympathy from journalists and film critics, who sought to explain why he beat and raped Tina. In opposition to this, the actions of Chuck Traynor (who beats and rapes his wife, Linda Boreman, in *Lovelace*) were rarely 'explained'. However, some of the language used in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace* was tentative, and cautionary in terms of whether or not Boreman was actually beaten,

raped and forced into performing in pornographic films by Traynor – reflecting a cultural trend where women who reveal they have been raped are not believed.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* (Dir. David Fincher, 2014). I argue that rather than being directly challenged and/or countered, myths about rape and of female behaviour were just as likely, if not more likely, to be reinforced in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film – particularly that women frequently lie about being raped and that it is easy for them to get away with doing so. Myths about female behaviour, more generally, were also reinforced. Some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* reflected a distrust of women (both in terms of crying rape as well as of their behaviour more generally) contributing to a troubling trend in which female behaviour is perceived as being devious and manipulative.

## **Literature Review**

I perceive this research as contributing to an already well-established area of academic research, this being the study of representations of rape in film, and making its particular intervention in the study of paratexts and critical reception. In the following sections, I provide an overview of key academic studies / debates within these fields of academic research, highlighting this thesis' contribution and intervention within these fields of study.

## **Paratexts and Critical Reception**

Films have many proliferations (Gray 2010: 2). These include (but are not limited to) advertising texts, promotional materials, magazine and newspaper features, DVD special features (including audio commentaries) and reviews. The purpose / function of such paratextual materials do, however, differ.

Advertising texts, such as trailers and posters, communicate the essence of a film and highlight its unique selling proposition - the objective of which is to create 'want to see' in the mind of the consumer (Kerrigan 2010: 130-131). Each of the advertising texts produced for an individual film will be aimed towards different potential audience groups. Janet Staiger notes that one of the main characteristics of today's marketing procedures, as opposed to earlier methods (prior to the 1950s), is the 'reconceptualization of "the customer" from "everyone" to "someone-in-particular"' (1990: 17). This 'someone-in-particular' does not necessarily mean that the range of advertising texts for an individual film will target only one group in particular, but that each individual advertising text, be it a trailer or a poster, will target a specific audience group. This enables marketing to a larger prospective audience.

In addition to the release of official advertising texts, various other intermedia coverage such as features included in magazines and on television shows about stars, directors, and the making of a film (Klinger 1989: 5), also help to publicise the release of a film. Film producing companies establish a vast array of media contacts with editors and writers on TV, radio, newspapers and magazines of every conceivable circulation that serve to promote the film through stories on its production and interviews with its stars (ibid.: 9).

Approaches towards the study of official, industry-created texts that accompany the release of a film have varied. In ‘Advertising Heterosexuality’, Mary Beth Haralovich (1989) explores how heterosexuality was represented in film posters of the Thirties and Forties, arguing that these representations are cultural products and exemplifying how they changed as their historical determinations changed. In ‘Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising’, Staiger (1990) examines the history of the economic practices of producing film advertising in the United States. In *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*, Lisa Kernan, who defines a trailer as ‘a brief film text that usually displays images from a specific feature film while asserting its excellence, and that is created for the purpose of projecting in theaters to promote a film’s theatrical release’ (2004: 1), analyses and explores the rhetorical conventions of movie trailers ‘principally for the ways in which it can offer information about the implied audiences to whom trailers are addressed’ (ibid.: 212). In *Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology*, Keith Johnston approaches and analyses the film trailer text ‘as a unique short film, rather than a lesser (abbreviated) form of the feature film’ (2009: 2), highlighting film trailers’ importance in the overall picture of film history.

Andre Cavalcante notes that paratexts have largely been theorized in terms of their ability to quarantine certain themes and discourses (2013: 99), with much scholarly attention ‘devoted to examining how paratexts close down or domesticate potential meanings for media with polemical themes or controversial protagonists’ (ibid.: 87).

In their article ‘Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet’, Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus argue that *Fight Club*’s DVD ‘extra-text’ ‘dissuades the viewer from acknowledging the film’s homoerotic elements as representing homosexual experience’, protecting the commercial viability of the product (2002: 21). In her analysis of the construction of the promotion of the television series *Any Day Now*, Amanda Lotz argues that Lifetime ‘apparently calculated that downplaying the series’ unconventional anti-racist discourse to appeal to those accustomed to the less politically progressive Lifetime brand would provide a larger audience than emphasizing the slumpie-friendly themes (anti-racist and feminist discourse) that may have drawn new or infrequent viewers to the network’ (2004: 38).

‘Audience-created’ (Gray 2010) film reviews are also paratexts. Unlike advertising texts and intermedia coverage, these do not attempt to sell or promote a film for financial gain (as do official and industry-created texts). Instead, by critically evaluating various aspects of a film, they act as sources of recommendation for film goers, functioning ‘specifically as gate-keepers or guardians of specific taste formations, mediating between texts and audiences and specifying particular ways of appropriating and consuming texts’ (Jancovich 2001: 38).

A number of studies analyse the critical reception of a singular, or group of films (see, for example, Klinger 1992; Staiger 1992; Read 2000: 103-124; Projansky 2001: 137-153; Hall 2001a; Bode 2010; Jancovich 2012; Forest 2013). The aims and approaches of such studies vary widely. Some have focused specifically on



interpreting how critics have responded to a film. For example, In *The Crash Controversy: Censorship Campaigns and Film Reception*, Martin Barker, Jane Arthurs and Ramaswami Harindranath (2001) explore how critics understood, analysed, or responded to *Crash* (Dir. David Cronenberg, 1996); and in *Disciplining Deviant Women: the Critical Reception of *Baisemoi**, Amy E. Forest (2013) explores the socio-cultural reasons for the strongly critical reception of the film *Baise-moi* (Dir. Virginie Despentes and Coralie, 2000).

Others have focused more specifically on gender and / or genre. In ‘Transitional tastes: Teen girls and genre in the critical reception of *Twilight*’, Lisa Bode examines the different ways in which critics constructed the film’s teen girl audience and, in relation to this figure, reaffirm both their own taste formations and their cultural values (2010: 717). In “‘Frighteningly real’: Realism, social criticism and the psychological killer in the critical reception of the late 1940s horror-thriller’ Mark Jancovich (2012) explores the changing meaning and value of psychological themes in 1940s horror film; and in ‘Master of Concentrated Suspense’: horror, gender and fantasy in the critical reception of Fritz Lang during the 1940s’, Jancovich (2013) examines the critical reception of Lang’s career during the 1940s and explores the ways in which critical evaluations of the director changed over the period, particularly in relation to issues of gender and realism.

From a different perspective, rather than focusing on analysing critical reception, in ‘Film Criticism as “Women’s Work”: The Gendered Economy of Film Criticism in

Britain, 1945-65', Melanie Bell (2011) explores women's role in the history and production of film criticism.

Other scholars have analysed paratexts in terms of their ability to construct conceptual frameworks through which a film will be viewed and its meaning shaped. Barbara Klinger has argued that the contextual factors that accompany the presentation of a film, including film reviews, serve as signs of the vital semiotic and cultural space that superintend the viewing experience and that these factors are not just 'out there', external to the text and viewer, but that they actively intersect the text/viewer relation, producing interpretive frames that influence the public consumption of cultural artifacts (1994: xvi). Alice Hall also notes that popular culture materials such as films are often supplemented by other texts such as reviews, news stories, and advertisements (2001a: 400) and that reviews provide frames and background information that are likely to shape how at least some viewers interpret and respond to the films they choose to see (ibid.: 401). In their critical analysis of the DVD release of *Fight Club*, Robert Alan Brooke and Robert Westerfelhaus similarly argue that 'the additional material DVDs typically offer, coupled with the format's interactivity, constitute a rhetorically powerful means of directing the consumer's viewing experience' (2002: 21). Martin Barker also proposes that reviews, marketing and publicity materials, press kits, contractually-required interviews and photo opportunities, and so on 'constitute more or less patterned discursive preparations for the act of viewing' (2004), that they 'generate and shape expectations which influence how we watch a movie' (ibid.); and Jonathan Gray similarly argues that paratexts 'create texts, they manage them, and...fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them' (2010: 6).

While all of the above analyses are useful when attempting to decipher a film's cultural impact and / or meaning/s, when seeking to determine and further impart knowledge about a film industry's advertising practices and strategies, and how audiences / spectators are implicated in these, I argue that the analyses of such texts can be useful for other reasons.

A number of studies have highlighted how paratexts engage with social issues that are represented in a film and it has been suggested that this might be impactful. For example, discussing the promotion of *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988), the narrative of which centres on a rape trial, Klinger notes that the relevance of the film's subject matter was further developed in mass culture through TV talk shows and magazine articles that featured stories about one of the film's female stars, Kelly McGillis's, experience with rape (1989: 13). In her book *Film Marketing*, Finola Kerrigan observes how critics of the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (Dir. Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2008) referred to it as 'poverty porn' and how the film *Trainspotting* (Dir. Danny Boyle, 1996) was criticised for 'glorifying drug taking' (2010: 184). Kerrigan suggests that whilst such claims made by critics may be refuted, the societal impact of bringing such issues into the public consciousness may be valuable (ibid.). In 'Brokeback Mountain: How the Popular Press Corralled the "Gay Cowboy Movie"', Brenda Cooper and Edward C. Pease (2008) interrogate how press reviews of movies work to help structure the social discourse of a film. They also argue that while critics have no obligation to discuss a film's sensitive or

controversial themes (such as homophobia in American society), failing to place such issues into context for audiences can have significant implications (252).

In her essay 'Film Reviews and the Public's Perceptions of Stereotypes: Movie Critics' Discourse about *The Siege*', Hall argues that reviewers 'have the potential to contribute to the media's role in maintaining existing belief systems or encouraging social change' (2001a: 402), suggesting that 'one way to conceptualize the social significance of film reviews is through Gramsci's (1971) conception of the intellectual as a role with the primary function of organising, administering, or managing information for others' (ibid.):

Since work within a society is divided so that intellectuals tend to come from empowered social classes, intellectuals' work as mediators of information helps maintain the existing hierarchical power relationships within a society. The body of texts constantly produced by the Hollywood movie industry has been found to reflect a variety of ideological perspectives... The controlled inclusion of this type of variety allows for the existing power structure to maintain control. Diversity allows the existing system to absorb and counter resistance from society members. In this context, reviewers, in the role of intellectuals, can help organize these varied perspectives for the audience and contextualize their consumption. To the extent that film reviewers, as an example of a society's intellectuals, contribute to audiences' managing of the varied perspectives implied by the images and information embodied in film, they have the potential to contribute to the media's role in maintaining existing belief systems or encouraging social change (ibid.).

I believe that there is important value in the idea that film criticism could be socially impactful and that this idea can also be extended to any popular press text that discusses the content of a film and its subject matter – especially when a film's subject matter, themes and / or representational content include references to and / or representations of social issues. This research draws on and develops these ideas and suggestions.

It is also important to acknowledge that many people who come into contact with a film's paratexts – whether this be viewing a trailer, reading a magazine article, watching a television interview with one of its stars, reading a review etc. – will not necessarily go on to view the film associated with those paratexts. As such, I would argue that these texts can be considered primary texts in their own right.

### Representations of Rape in Film

From ancient mythology, medieval and modern literature, to newspapers, cinema and television, images and accounts of rape have existed for centuries (Bell, Finelli and Wynne-Davies 2012: 53). Having appeared in cinema since its beginnings, representations of rape in film have contributed significantly to the mass of representations of rape present in popular culture (Projansky 2001: 26). They have been included in a range of different film genres including horror films, drama films, thriller films, and biographical films. They have also been included in films in a number of different narrative contexts. For example, *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) includes a graphic representation of rape in a narrative context that centres primarily on the subject of rape – the rape trial of a group of men who gang-rape the female character Sarah Tobias (played by Jodie Foster). *What's Love Got to Do With It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993) includes a graphic representation of rape in a narrative context that centres on the relationship between Ike and Tina Turner (played by Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett) – in particular the emotional, physical and sexual violence that Tina was subjected to by Ike. Each of these films are also based on real-life events and / or people. In other films, while a graphic

representation of rape may be included, the film's narrative does not revolve around an instance of, or the subject matter of rape and / or male violence against women. For example, in the films *A Clockwork Orange* (Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1971), *Once Upon a Time in America* (Dir. Sergio Leone, 1984), *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) and *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Rod Lurie, 2011) while representations of rape are included, the rape is not, nor does it ever become, a central narrative focus.

Representations of rape in film have also taken different forms. In some films rape is simply discussed (I would argue that even discussions about rape in film are a manner in which rape is represented). In others, it is *implied* that a rape occurs, but the rape itself is not represented. Examples of these include *Hannie Caulder* (Dir. Burt Kennedy, 1971), *Lipstick* (Dir. Lamont Johnson, 1976) and *Cape Fear* (Dir. Martin Scorsese, 1991). Films such as these usually show the initial moments of an attack (for example showing men forcing women to the ground / to lie down) but they do not represent the rape itself. There is no 'rape scene'. Instead, it is implied through the film's dialogue (both prior to and after the rape taking place) and other narrative devices that a male character has raped a female character. In other films, representations of rape are graphically depicted. Examples of these include *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978), *The Accused*, *What's Love Got to Do with It*, and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Dir. David Fincher, 2011). In addition to this, I would also argue that the term 'representation of rape' can also be used to refer to *discussions* about rape that appear in films. For this purpose of this study, I use the term 'representation of rape' to include all of the above.

Graphic representations of rape have been a particular source of contention amongst feminists, academics and cultural critics alike. Debates have circulated around the necessity of such representations: Do they serve to inform and educate audiences about rape? Do explicit representations of rape simply act as a marketing tool through which they are used to conjure audience interest through controversy? Do they have the ability to make such violence visible and challenge it? Or, do they have the effect of contributing to the normalisation of rape in culture? In her book *Watching Rape: Film and television in postfeminist culture*, Sarah Projansky argues that graphic representations of rape function ‘paradoxically, both to challenge rape myths from a feminist perspective and to contribute to the existence of violence against women in media culture’ (2001: 96).

The aims of studies surrounding representations of rape in film have differed, and approaches to analysing representations of rape have also varied. Rape-revenge films have been of great interest to film theorists working with a range of approaches (Henry 2017: 7). In her analysis of the low-budget exploitation film *I Spit on Your Grave*, Carol Clover sought to identify, through close textual analysis of the film, which characters the audience were encouraged to identify with, concluding that narrative and cinematic devices were deployed to align viewers, regardless of their gender, with the female victim (1992). From a similar perspective, in “‘Don’t Blame this on a Girl’: Female Rape-Revenge Films’, Peter Lehman seeks to counter claims by critics that the pleasure of watching rape-revenge films for men lies in identification with the rapists, providing an inquiry into the nature of those pleasures which, he argues, ‘are complex, multiple, and fluid and address a male subjectivity which is both heterosexually masochistic and homosexually sadistic’ (1993: 105).

Subsequent to Clover's discussion of *I Spit on Your Grave* as a sub-genre of horror, later studies of the rape-revenge film have focused, though not primarily, on issues surrounding definition – what is, and what makes a rape revenge film? In *The New Avengers: Feminism, femininity and the rape-revenge cycle*, Jacinda Read argues that 'rape-revenge is not a sub-genre of horror, but a narrative structure which, on meeting second-wave feminism in the 1970s, has produced a historically specific but generically diverse cycle of films' (2000: 11). In *Revisionist Rape-Revenge: Redefining a Film Genre*, Claire Henry (2017) argues that rape-revenge should be considered a film genre. The primary aims of these studies do, however, differ. Read explores 'the way in which the story of second-wave feminism is being retold for the 1990s...how the discourses of 1970s feminism are circulating and functioning in the popular texts of the 1990s, and...what this tells us about feminism past, present and future' (2000: 5); and Henry combines 'in-depth textual analysis of key examples of the genre produced within the past two decades – particularly their rape and revenge scenes – with the application of phenomenological and ethical concepts' (2017: 7) with the aim to 'expand and update the study of rape-revenge from sociopolitical and psychoanalytic perspectives to include embodied, phenomenological perspectives and a treatment of the ethical issues raised' (ibid.). And in *Rape-revenge films: A critical study*, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas 'explores the intersection of rape and revenge in film, surveying both mainstream and exploitation examples across time, national boundaries and genre' (2011: 5), arguing that if there is a broader cultural confusion regarding how to tackle rape-revenge films, it is because the films themselves reflect a broader cultural confusion about rape more generally' (ibid.: 4).



A number of other studies also use close textual analysis to analyse films that include representations of rape. In her book *Watching Rape: Film and television in postfeminist culture*, Sarah Projansky (2001) explores how representations of rape have been included in film (and television) since the beginning of cinema, paying particular attention to how representations of rape function within a film's narrative to address social issues such as gender, race and class, and as a tool for narrative progression. In 'Desperate Deeds, Desperate Men: Gender, Race and Rape in Silent Feature Films, 1915-1927', Joel Shrock argues that 'many of the top-grossing feature films spanning from 1915-1927 utilized rape as a device for defining manhood and thereby establishing power relationships' (1997), with rape acting as a metaphor for larger cultural concerns.

Taking a different approach to the study of films that include representations of rape, Martin Barker (2011) conducted an audience study in order to explore how audiences responded to watching the rape scenes in *À Ma Soeur!* (Dir. Catherine Breillat, 2001) in which he wanted to talk about viewing representations of rape in film with 'real' audiences (as opposed to audiences artificially assembled for purposes of a laboratory-like test) with the aim to interrogate and challenge predictive claims about audience responses to films. In *Women Viewing Violence*, Philip Schlesinger et al. also conducted audience research, focusing on women's responses to four very different kinds of programmes, one of these being *The Accused*. And in "'Media effects", texts and audiences: A Re-investigation of *The Accused* and its interpretation by women viewers', Cynthia K. Weaver (2004) also used audience research to explore the complex relationship between a media text, its reception by historically constituted subjects, and discursive culture.

While, as exemplified above, a variety of approaches have been used to study films that include representations of rape, these have usually been confined somewhat to the film text – either analysing the text itself or audience responses to the text (whether these be predicted, assumed, or actual responses). What has been largely overlooked is how films that include representations of rape have been discussed in the U.K. popular press.

Despoina Mantziari argues that, ‘representations of gender violence have occupied feminist film scholars for several decades’ (2017: 3) a recurring issue of which has been ‘the impact the onscreen depiction of rape may have on film spectators and its role in framing wider rape discourses’ (ibid.). I contend that press texts that discuss these films similarly frame wider rape discourses.

Where analyses of press coverage has been conducted, the focus has not been on discourses surrounding rape. In *The New Avengers: Feminism, femininity and the rape-revenge cycle*, Jacinda Read conducts an analysis of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* and *Thelma and Louise* and similar to other studies discussed above, argues that ‘extra-textual material such as reviews play an important part in the construction of any particular text’s meanings, particularly its dominant or preferred readings’ and explores ‘the ways in which they might produce popular, common-sense understandings of feminism’ (2000: 15). Sarah Projansky also offers an analysis of the popular press’s response to *Thelma and Louise* seeking to answer the following question: ‘Does the postfeminist discursive context of the

popular press's response to the film potentially limit any reading of feminism in the film, particularly a feminist perspective on rape?' (2001: 122). She argues that 'coverage in the popular press resolves the film's ambivalence over and implicit resistance to postfeminism by glossing over sexual assault and offering circumscribed answers to questions about feminism and feminine pleasure' (ibid.: 123). My research fills this gap in the literature.

### Feminist Theorisations of, and Popular Discourses Surrounding, Rape

This thesis draws on second-wave feminist theories of rape and sexual violence which recognize and emphasize the cultural component of rape. As such, I begin this section by providing an account of the second-wave feminist theorisations of sexual violence upon which this thesis relies. I then go on to provide an overview of the various dominant cultural and media attitudes surrounding rape that have circulated in culture over the years. Some may argue that what follows in this section is a massive oversimplification of what constitutes discourses of rape. My aim with this section, however, is not to provide an extensive, in-depth overview of these, but to provide a brief overview of the *dominant* cultural and media attitudes, opinions and ideas surrounding rape. These provide the framework through which I go on to analyse the press coverage of my case study films, exploring how the press coverage interconnect with and contribute to these discourses.

Despite long-standing recognition of the sparse existence of heinous rape as a serious crime, prior to the Women's Liberation Movement (also recognised as the second-wave feminist movement), rapes were more often silenced, denied, minimized or

condoned (Gavey 2005: 17). As Nicola Gavey notes in her study *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*:

the standard story of rape in the mid-twentieth century was one that encompassed a notion of rape as a romanticized “crime of passion”. Unless rape was committed by a stranger using extreme physical violence it was something that was easily accommodated within the dominant discourses of heterosexual sex - that is, as just sex and not rape (ibid.: 31).

First published in 1971, ‘Susan Griffin’s article “Rape: The All-American Crime,” is widely regarded as having laid out the conceptual foundations for a new understanding of rape around which the anti-rape movement in the U.S. was organised’ (ibid.: 30). In this, one of the very first attempts to analyse the social phenomenon of rape (Cahill 2011: 15) Griffin argues:

Rape is an act of aggression in which the victim is denied her self-determination. It is an act of violence which, if not actually followed by beatings or murder, nevertheless always carries with it the threat of death. And finally, rape is a form of mass terrorism, for the victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but the propagandists for male supremacy broadcast that it is women who cause rape by being unchaste or in the wrong place at the wrong time—in essence, by behaving as though they were free (1971: 35).

Ann Cahill identifies two distinct schools of feminist philosophy concerning rape (2011: 2), the first of which she argues, ‘can be generally summed up in the pithy formulation that rape is “violence, not sex”’ (ibid.), a position which ‘held considerable sway in the 1970s’ (ibid.). Along with Griffin, Susan Brownmiller (1975), Germaine Greer (1970) and Kate Millett (1969) all ‘emphasized the violent nature of rape and conceptualized rape as a form of social control over women’ (Muehlenhard, Danoff-Burg and Powch 1996: 121). Griffin’s article opens: ‘I have never been free of the fear of rape’ (1971) and she goes on to argue that:

The threat of rape is used to deny women employment...The fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they be thought provocative (1971).

And in her seminal study *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Susan Browmiller argues: ‘From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear’ (1975: 15). It was argued that acts of sexual violence against women were central to gender and sex inequality and played a crucial role in both maintaining and reinforcing social hierarchies that subordinated women. Rape was, thus, re-envisioned as a symptom of a culture of violence against and disrespect for women that should be viewed as a form of sexist hate crime rather than an impulsive act of sexual need (Kitzinger 2009: 77), established as a *political* act – an act of power and intimidation (Anderson and Doherty 2008: 20).

The second strand of feminist philosophy surrounding rape, as identified by Cahill, argues somewhat to the contrary that ‘given the compulsory nature of heterosexuality and the eroticization of masculine dominance, rape was in fact continuous with most heterosexual sex and could not be distinguished from it by mere reference to coercion or violence’ (Cahill 2011: 2-3). Writing in 1976, Andrea Dworkin argued: ‘rape is not committed by psychopaths or deviants from our social norms – rape is committed by *exemplars* of our social norms .... Rape is no excess, no aberration, no accident, no mistake – it embodies sexuality as the culture defines it’ (1976: 45 - 46). Stevi Jackson also argued:

Sexual relationships are built around sexual inequalities, are scripted for actors whose roles have been predefined as subordinate and superordinate, and hence involve the exercise of power which may be manifested in the sexual act itself, as well as in other aspects of the relationship. Rape, then, is simply an extreme manifestation of our culturally accepted patterns of male-female relationships (1978: 37).

As Gavey notes, ‘social research coming out in the 1980s on the scope of rape as well as on unwanted sex and sexual coercion, provided empirical support for the feminist analyses of rape that were generated throughout the 1970s’ (2005: 62):

Together these new findings – that rape was not rare, that it coexisted with a whole range of other forced sexual acts and other forms of coerced and pressured sex, and that most rapes and acts of sexual coercion were committed by men at least known to, and often in a heterosexual relationship with, the women they abused – transformed the ways in which we understand paradigmatic rape. At the same time they coalesced to present a serious challenge to normative heterosexuality. Of course, this challenge had already been expressed in the earlier feminist critiques of heterosexuality and marriage. But this time the message came in the form of scientific data, rather than “merely” political rhetoric (ibid.: 63).

As such, rape was beginning to be thought of in terms of its position on a continuum of ‘normal’ male behaviour, several writers suggesting that a dimensional view of rape be adopted, where rape represents an extreme behaviour but one that is on a continuum with normal male behaviour within the culture (Koss and Oros 1982: 455).

While there are obvious differences between these schools of feminist thought, one similarity is their focus on the *cultural component* of rape. That is, they each interrogate how longstanding cultural traditions, ideas, and representations of gender and sex created a milieu in which rape (along with other forms of male violence against women) has been normalised, excused, tolerated and permitted. Culture is positioned as playing an important role in shaping attitudes surrounding male sexual violence against women.

The media, in its various forms, constitute a significant part of the current social and cultural climate and have done, to varying degrees, for a number of years now. If

media discourse constitutes social knowledge and participates in constructing frameworks of thinking about the subject of rape and other forms of male violence against women, it is important to interrogate these discourses.

While Women's Liberation did receive some media coverage throughout the most active years of the movement, campaigning for issues 'including equal pay, 24-hour access to child care, and an end to physical and sexual violence...only a handful of these issues received mainstream media attention' (Mendes 2011: 82). At least in the U.K., annual conferences and events including Take Back the Night (that included marches and protests against rape and other forms of sexual violence) were routinely ignored (*ibid.*: 86). As noted by Jenny Kitzinger, 'feminist criticisms of how mainstream culture validates sexually violent behaviour are usually ignored by the mainstream media' (2009:87) and 'most of the media have consistently failed to take on the more radical critiques of how society supports and perpetuates sexual violence' (*ibid.*: 91).

In the early 1990s, media friendly conservative writers such as Katie Roiphe (1993), Camille Paglia (1991), and Christina Sommers (1994) set the tone and the parameters for the analysis of rape in the public sphere (Mardorossian 2002: 748):

These self-proclaimed feminist writers all have one thing in common beside the fact that their books have been best-sellers: they downplay the severity of the problem of rape by blaming the high incidence of rape in the United States on the warped and unnecessarily alarmist representations of "radical" feminism. They go to great lengths to debunk the rape statistics offered in feminist surveys and antirape literature and to argue that the problem is really not as widespread as we are led to believe. Victims in fact owe their victimization not to the experience of rape but to a feminist propaganda that has brainwashed women into thinking of themselves as victims' (*ibid.*).

In her book *The morning after: Sex, fear, and feminism*, Roiphe argues that ‘rape-crisis feminists reinforce traditional views about the fragility of the female body and will’ (1993: 66). In *Who stole feminism: How women have betrayed women*, Sommers argues:

To view rape as a crime of gender bias (encouraged by a patriarchy that looks with tolerance on the victimization of women) is perversely to miss its true nature. Rape is perpetrated by criminals, which is to say, it is perpetrated by people who are wont to gratify themselves in criminal ways and who care very little about the suffering they inflict on others...Gender feminist ideologues bemuse and alarm the public with inflated statistics. And they have made no case for the claim that violence against women is symptomatic of a deeply misogynist culture’ (1994: 225-226).

In *Sex, art, and American culture*, Paglia argues ‘we cannot regulate male sexuality. The uncontrollable aspect of male sexuality is part of what makes sex interesting. And yes, it can lead to rape in some situations’ (1992: 63).

As Cheryl Brown Travis notes, ‘there is a cultural readiness to locate causes for human events in biology and a cultural receptivity for the idea that gender roles are the product of orderly laws’ (2003: 9) and scientific reports consistent with this cultural bias receive high profile coverage in the media (ibid.). This was evidenced more recently in the press coverage of a study titled ‘Sexual offending runs in families: A 37-year nationwide study’ which was published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*. This study, which proposed to have found substantial familial aggregation of male sexual offending - ‘having a father or a brother convicted of a sexual offence increased the odds of being convicted in a particular man 4–5-fold compared with men without a sexually aggressive father or brother’ (Långström, Babchishin, Fazel, Lichtenstein and Frisell 2015: 719) and that ‘statistical modelling indicated that sexual offending was primarily influenced by



genes (40%)' (ibid.: 718) as well as 'non-shared environmental factors (58%)' (ibid.), attracted a significant amount of press attention, with articles featured in a range of U.K. national press titles including *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Independent*, both in print and on their websites. An article published in *The Sun* was titled 'The rape gene' (McDermott 2015: 17). Another published in the *Daily Mail* was titled 'Sex crimes may run in a family's male genes' (Hope 2015). On the *Daily Mirror*'s website an article was titled 'Your genes may determine whether you're a sex attacker, study claims' (von Radowitz 2015), and another uploaded on *The Daily Telegraph*'s website was titled 'Sex offending is written in DNA of some men, Oxford University finds' (Knapton 2015). Finally, an article that appeared on the front page of the *Independent* newspaper was titled 'Sex crime is "genetically influenced", finds biggest study yet' (Connor 2015: 1). The titling of these articles further propagate the idea that rape is in some way attributable to genetics and that 'men can't help it'. Within this context, male behaviour is rendered uncontrollable and, as such, the management of female behaviour is positioned as the means by which rape can be prevented.

The concept of rape myths was introduced by feminists in the 1970s who 'attempted to dispel myths about the nature, the incidence, the perpetrators and the causes of rape' (Lees 1996: xxi):

All kinds of myths were challenged: that rape was an expression of sexual desire rather than of sexual power and violence; that rape was due to the irresistible urge of male sexuality, or a question of men 'misreading signals' in a sexual negotiation rather than a violent sexual attack; or that the typical rapist was a stranger or black (ibid.).

Gerd Bohner, Friederike Eyssel, Afroditi Pina, Frank Siebler and G. Tendayi Viki identify four general types of rape myth, beliefs that:

- blame the victim for their rape
- express a disbelief in claims of rape
- exonerate the perpetrator
- allude that only certain of women are raped

(2009: 19)

In her seminal essay 'Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape', Burt defines rape myths as 'prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists' (1980: 217). She identifies a number of rape myths in this essay including, amongst others, that 'any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really wants to' (ibid.: 223), that 'if a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her' (ibid.), and that 'when women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble' (ibid.). In rape myths such as these, women are positioned as being at least partially responsible / to blame for rapes committed against them by men. Such ideas are particularly problematic as 'the use of rape myths has severe consequences for sexual assault victims and for maintaining sexual assault in our society' (Franuik, Seefeldt and Vandello 2008: 790). The falsehoods rape myths reinforce in culture also 'create a climate hostile to rape victims, portraying them as often-willing participants in furtive sexual encounters, or even instigators of them' (Allison and Wrightsman 1993: 99). Rape myths are very much a part of the fabric of everyday life and affect not only how rape victims and assailants view the crime of rape but also how the public view the crime of rape (Stanko and Williams 2009: 209). It is therefore important and necessary to continue to challenge these myths.

The idea that women can avoid being raped through managing their behaviour is one that we have seen (and indeed continue to see) propagated in contemporary society. For example, in 2009, Nottinghamshire police released the following poster in a rape and sexual assault awareness/prevention campaign called ‘No Regrets’:



Figure 1: Nottinghamshire Police ‘No Regrets’ Campaign Poster

Discussing the ‘No Regrets’ campaign, Detective Superintendent Adrian Pearson, head of the Public Protection Unit, was quoted on the *Nottingham Post* website arguing:

People enjoy going out at Christmas time and letting their hair down. But the reality is that drinking excess alcohol can make you vulnerable to rape or sexual assault and may also affect people’s judgement. We are urging people to drink sensibly, stay with friends, and book a licensed taxi home (quoted in This Is Nottingham 2009).

In both the ‘No Regrets’ poster and Pearson’s explanation of the campaign, it is the regulation of female behaviour that is positioned as being the solution to preventing sexual assault and rape. Alex Campbell has noted how rape prevention literature often offers advice on how to avoid sexual victimization, with directives aimed at women through crime prevention compelling the feminine body to dress in certain ways, to avoid certain locales and so on (2005: 120). The question of whether risk reduction is a valid strategy for combatting sexual violence against women has long

been contested and debated. Oona Brooks, for example, has argued that safety campaigns that focus on the actions of women ‘inadvertently compound the normalization of male violence and harassment experienced by women by presenting it as an innate aspect of male behaviour alongside the presentation of safekeeping strategies for women as “commonsense”’ (2011: 646). Such campaigns also imply, and create the illusion (or rather the delusion), that women are able to control any situation or environment that they are in and that it is their responsibility to do so if they want to avoid being raped. Mayet Costello and Caroline Blyth have also argued that such campaigns ‘may inadvertently reinforce the blurring of boundaries between vulnerability and responsibility’ (2004: 250) and that ‘this can lead, albeit subtly, to the blaming of victims...especially if victims did not follow recommended safety precautions’ (ibid.). As Irina Anderson and Kathy Doherty state, ‘nobody chooses to be raped’ (2008: 2), yet ‘rapists are often exonerated while it is the victim who is found culpable’ (ibid.). Anderson and Doherty move on to point out that ‘this pattern of attribution represents a common cultural reaction to reports of sexual violence’ (ibid.).

### Newspaper Reports of Male Sexual Violence against Women

In this study I use similar methods of discourse analysis as have been used to analyse newspaper reports of real-life incidents of male sexual violence against women (in particular rape) to analyse how films that include representations of rape have been discussed in the U.K. national popular press (including individual newspapers’ online counterparts).

Newspaper texts that report real-life stories of rape and other forms of sexual violence (committed by men against women), have been the subject of significant academic study. Studies have been conducted in a range of differing national contexts including the UK (see, for example, Carter 1998; Meyer 2010; Soothill and Walby 1991), the USA (see, for example, Benedict 1992; Franuik, Seefelt, Cepress and Vandello 2008; Gutsche Jr and Salkin 2016; Moore 2011), Australia (see, for example, Waterhouse-Watson 2016), South Africa (see, for example, Bonnes 2013; Boshoff and Prinsloo 2014) and others in which the reporting of real-life stories of rape are reported both with and across different national contexts (see O'Hara 2012).

While, real-life reports of rape in newspapers have been the subject of significant academic study, and the majority pertain primarily to the analysis of the *language* used, the *objectives* of these studies have varied. In 'Expurgating the Monstrous', Priscilla Boshoff and Jeanne Prinsloo, analyse the South African tabloid the *Daily Sun*'s coverage of the 2012 'Soweto gang rape', the objective of study being to 'unpack how a variety of discourses cohere around a violent act...and to better understand how apparently disparate discourses function as mutually constitutive' (2014: 209), including discourses of legitimate and illegitimate violence, traditional and modern and the masculinities and femininities linked to these.

From a differing perspective, in their study 'Who lost what? An analysis of myth, loss, and proximity in news coverage of the Steubenville rape', Robert E Gutsche Jr and Erica Salkin (2016) analyse 6 months of coverage surrounding the 2012 rape of a 16-year-old girl by two teenage boys in Steubenville, Ohio, USA, examining how

mythical news archetypes were applied to provide meaning to particular news audiences, focusing on the role that the media plays in community life.

Other studies have focused more specifically on analysing real-life reports of rape and male sexual violence against women in direct relation to discourses surrounding rape and sexual violence. For example, in her article “‘Too drunk to say no’” Anneke Meyer uses discourse analysis ‘to identify and critically examine the major discourses which are produced around rape involving alcohol’ (2010: 19) in the British newspaper the *Daily Mail*. Stephanie Bonnes’ (2013) article analyses rape coverage in the South African newspaper *Grocott’s Mail* with the aim to identify and discuss themes that emerge in the coverage of rape and determine whether or not these themes converge with or challenge rape myths discussed in the literature on rape in the media. In her analysis of US newspapers, Sarah E. H. Moore traces the shifting meaning of the term ‘date rape’ in US newspapers across a fourteen-year period 1985 – 1999. In ‘Monsters, playboys, virgins and whores: Rape myths in the news media’s coverage of sexual violence’, Shannon O’Hara (2012), assesses the use of rape myths within the British and American news media’s reporting of such violence, exploring the ways in which the media frames and portrays sexual violence to ascertain whether or not they disseminate rape myths. And in ‘News media on trial: towards a feminist ethics of reporting footballer sexual assault trials’, Deb Waterhouse-Watson uses the trial of prominent Australian footballer Brett Stewart to explore ‘new and complex ethical questions of how to balance legal rights with feminist imperatives to challenge victim-blame, uncovering the fraught nature of journalistic representation in these cases’ (2016: 954).

Considering the influence of, and the overbearing presence of the media in contemporary culture, it could certainly be argued that the media provides the optimal space to challenge rape myths. However, as Kitzinger has argued, the media are guilty of reinforcing myths (2009: 84). Kitzinger, has identified that journalists 'are highly selective in what they report and can be guilty of voyeurism and sensationalism' (ibid.: 76), that 'coverage can decontextualise abuse, encourage racism, promote stereotypes of women (as virgins or whores), blame victims and excuse assailants' (ibid.) and that 'the issues raised by newspaper reports...over a hundred years ago still capture many of the tensions in more recent representations of sexual violence' (ibid.).

Studies, from across the globe, have:

highlighted the ways in which news reports of rape and sexual assault sensationalize sexual violence, give a distorted view of its incidence and nature...trivialize women's experience of the attack, and report rapes in a manner that is designed to be titillating or arousing (Gill 2007: 135).

In *Sex Crime in the News*, Keith Soothill and Sylvia Walby note how reports concerning real-life incidences of rape were 'typically sensational and titillating' (1991: 3) rather than being 'serious accounts' (ibid.). In *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*, Benedict analyses journalist reporting on real-life stories of male sexual violence against women, concluding that the language used to describe women who had been raped was 'consistently sexual, condescending, or infantilizing' (1992: 20). In addition to identifying the sexist language used to describe female survivors of rape, Benedict also demonstrates in her study how the coverage of these real-life stories of male sexual violence against women perpetuate

myths and misunderstandings of rape (ibid.: 2). In Meyer's (2010) study, she found that *Daily Mail* discourses deprecate and delegitimise victims by reinvigorating and refashioning old rape myths and re-gendering rape involving alcohol as a problem of female drinking rather than male sexual violence. O'Hara (2012) also identified in her study that the majority of the articles analysed perpetuated rape myths including victim-blaming and the myth of the sociopathic rapist. She also found that the impact of the attacks on the victims was largely overlooked, having the effect of trivialising the crime. Bonnes (2013) also found in her study that South Africa's *Grocott's Mail* used rape myths that blame the victim for the rape and de-emphasise the role of the perpetrator; and Waterhouse-Watson (2016) also found in her study that Australian newspaper reports reinforce rape myths and stereotypes about rape.

Evidenced here, from studies that cover a twenty-five year period, are some recurring themes and outcomes – primarily that newspaper reports of male sexual violence have, and continue to, reinforce myths and stereotypes about rape. Such studies have highlighted the importance of analysing such texts as they contribute to and form part of the culture in which rape is not taken seriously, women are blamed for being raped and men's actions are exonerated.

### Methodology

As indicated earlier in this introductory section, this research approaches discourse from a Foucauldian perspective, who highlights the power of discourse in the production of knowledge through language. As Stuart Hall summarises:



Discourse, Foucault argues, constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (2001b: 72).

The concept of discourse is not about whether things exist but about where meaning comes from...Foucault argues that since we can only have a knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse – not the things-in-themselves – which produces knowledge (ibid.: 73).

As acknowledged by Myra Macdonald, ‘discourse can be a complex and often confusing concept’ (2003: 1). Furthermore, methodologically, theoretically and analytically, the field of discourse analysis is extremely diverse (Richardson 2007: 21). In her book *Exploring Media Discourse*, Macdonald offers the following definition of discourse: ‘a system of communicative practices that are integrally related to wider social and cultural practices, and that help to construct specific frameworks of thinking’ (2003: 1). Considered from this aspect, discourses of rape help to construct frames of thinking about rape, highlighting the importance of analysing discussions about rape and other forms of male violence against women that appear in the media.

This study also draws on the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, the starting point for which is social issues and problems (Fairclough 2001: 229). Critical Discourse Analysis is also ‘committed to progressive social change’ (ibid.: 230). I approach this study from a similar standpoint, with the social issue and problem identified as media and cultural attitudes towards rape (though throughout the course of this study I also discuss attitudes towards other forms of male violence against women).

As Ruth Wodak notes, a criticism often advanced against Critical Discourse Analysis is ‘the political stance taken explicitly by the researchers’ (2001: 5). In *Analysing Newspapers: an approach from critical discourse analysis*, John E. Richardson also notes that a characteristic of Critical Discourse Analysis that some scholars have objected to is that it ‘takes an overt moral and political position with regard to the social problem analysed’ (2007: 1). In response to such criticism, Richardson contends:

we should recognise that all scholarly discourse is produced in social interaction, is part of a social structure and context, and hence is socio-politically situated whether we like it or not: research which takes a neutral or impartial approach to social injustice does not solve the problem, indeed it could be argued that academic neutrality contributes to the perpetuation of such injustice (ibid.).

The press texts analysed throughout the course of this study have been sourced by searching the films’ titles in a number of electronic databases. These databases are: Nexis UK, NewsBank, Gale News Vault, UK Press Online, *The Telegraph* Historical Archive 1855-2000, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Guardian* (1821 – 2003) and *The Observer* (1791-2003).

I have limited this study to the national popular press for continuity purposes. The release dates of the films used as cases studies span over four decades. Focusing on the popular press, therefore enables me to source texts over a forty-plus year period from the *same* publications. Focusing on press texts also means that I am able to move beyond the study of the newspaper review to analyse texts across different sections of newspapers that discuss film and receive little attention.

The texts analysed throughout the course of this study are not limited to film reviews, but also articles from different sections of newspapers including opinion pages, news and celebrity gossip. The functions of these texts differ significantly.

“Opinion” discourses, that is, editorials, op-ed articles, and guest columns...assume an important communicative function by contributing to the media’s role of formulating certain, “preferred” viewpoints about the world. The function of opinion discourse within the larger context of newspaper coverage is to offer newsreaders a distinctive and authoritative “voice” that will speak to them directly about matters of public importance (Greenberg 2000: 519).

Celebrity gossip articles function to keep readers up to date with well-known public figures (singers, reality stars, actors etc.). These can be very short, snippets of text, sometimes comprising of only a few lines of text detailing where a celebrity has been spotted, what they are wearing and what they look like (especially if a woman), and who they have been spotted with. The following is such an example from *Express Online* sourced from my search for press texts in which *Lovelace* was mentioned:

SHARON STONE took centre stage on Tuesday night in New York at the premiere of her new film *Lovelace* looking every inch the Hollywood star.

The 55-year-old recently revealed that being in her 50s has bought her a new lease of life: "You may be sick of what you did the first half of your life but you don't have to just walk around and play golf or do nothing. It's not like 50 is the new 30. It's like 50 is the new chapter."

She may be turning over a new leaf but she's still turning heads (Day and Night 2013).

In such texts, a film title may be mentioned in passing, but doesn’t become a primary focus of thought or discussion.

Film reviews in newspapers are:

prepared for a general audience; they perform an explicit consumer function. The reviewer answers the moviegoer's most basic and most immediate question – should I see this movie? Newspaper...movie reviews are usually very short, and the reviewer must address this question right away. The reviewer typically does this by giving a highly personalized and subjective response to the movie (Prince 1997: 321).

While it is important to acknowledge the differing functions of these texts, I contend that despite these different functions, and the context within which a film may be discussed, writers have a responsibility to use language that does not reinforce or perpetuate rape myths or blame survivors. For example, the following review was published in the *Daily Star Sunday*:

RENTING an isolated log cabin in the outer reaches of Hicksville, USA, has never been a good idea.

Especially if you are on your own and a scantily-clad babe, who has already attracted the attention of the sex-starved, jug-eared locals at the gas station.

In this remake of a notorious 1978 exploitation shocker, Sarah Butler's unlikely novelist Jennifer is put through the same harrowing rape and torture by her inbred tormentors.

Even in this post-Saw age, it's pretty difficult to watch.

But it does the trick. You really want Jen to get her revenge - and she doesn't let us down. Each member of the gang is hunted down, trapped and brutally butchered with fish hooks, bear traps and garden shears.

It is being hoist with your own petard, redneck style.

It's all done with more style and verve than in the original. But it's just as stomach churning.

Out on Friday

(Anon. 2011: 37)

The direct *criticism* of Jennifer's actions and choices in this review – that her decision to rent an isolated log cabin was a bad one – designates her actions as being somewhat responsible for her being raped. What I want to highlight here is that even

in a review, and a summary of a film's plot or narrative, choices of language and phrasing are important.

For the purpose of this study, I define 'articles' as those texts that are produced (or at least appear to be produced) independent of collaboration with any persons involved in the production of the film in question. While these may include quotes from the stars and / or directors of the film, they have been sourced from elsewhere (for example from other interviews). I define 'features' as those texts which have involved some degree of input from those involved in the production of the film. For example, texts that include interviews with cast and / crew, visits to and reports from the film set and location. I define 'reviews' as texts that act as sources of recommendation for readers, usually appearing in specifically defined entertainment / film sections of newspapers.

While all of the results of the search criteria were looked at, as to avoid what would be an overwhelmingly lengthy bibliography, only the press texts have been directly referenced and / or quoted in this thesis are included in the bibliography. The number of texts referenced in each chapter are as follows:

<b>Chapter / Film</b>	<b>Data Set</b>	<b>Number of Press Texts Referenced</b>
Chapter 1: <i>Straw Dogs</i>	209	46
Chapter 2: <i>I Spit on Your Grave</i> and <i>The Last House on the Left</i>	165	38
Chapter 3: <i>The Accused</i>	29	16
Chapter 4: <i>G.I. Jane</i> / <i>The General's Daughter</i>	45 / 29	19 / 11
Chapter 5: <i>What's Love Got to Do With It</i> / <i>Lovelace</i>	25 / 87	17 / 33
Chapter 6: <i>Gone Girl</i>	125	24

**Table 1**  
**Data Set and Number of Press Texts Referenced**

In my analysis of the texts I have focused upon specific aspects and asked specific questions:

- How is the female character who is raped in the film discussed / described?
- How is the male character who rapes the female character discussed / described?
- Is the subject of rape and / or other forms of male violence against women discussed in relation to the film?
- Is the subject of rape and / or other forms of male violence against women discussed beyond the immediate context of the film and in relation to contemporary society?
- Do these reflect / share any characteristics with media trends and cultural attitudes surrounding male violence against women?

Generally speaking, mainstream American films attract the most attention from the U.K. popular press around the time of their release. A number of factors contribute to this including the star power of the cast and director, and the fact that these films (unlike foreign-language films and other lower-budget films) usually receive releases in cinemas nationwide in the U.K. (as opposed to receiving a limited release in selected cinemas around the country such as in arthouse cinemas). For this reason, in this study, I primarily analyse the press coverage that has surrounded the release of mainstream American films that include representations of rape (five out of the six chapters that comprise this thesis focus on mainstream American films). I now go on to detail the case studies that comprise each chapter and the rationale for these choices.

In Chapter 1, '*Straw Dogs* and Rape Myths', I explore and analyse how *Straw Dogs* has been discussed in the press from the time of its initial release, up to when the film's remake was released in 2011. This film has been selected for analysis for this opening chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is the earliest film (by theatrical release date) used as a case study in this thesis. The production and timing of the film's release is also significant. As detailed earlier in this introduction, throughout the 1970s, feminists began to challenge dominant rape discourses in society. This film, therefore includes a 'pre-feminist depiction of rape' (Horeck 2004: 92), and the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film could also be considered pre-feminist (feminist activism was in its early stages and feminist rape discourse had yet to permeate mainstream avenues of thinking). The analysis of the pre-feminist press coverage that surrounded the initial release of the film, thereby provides a starting-point and lens through which later analyses can be compared. That the film has also

been discussed at various points over the forty-year period from the time of its initial release up to the time that the remake also enables me to compare how discussions about the film have / have not shifted over time (particularly pertaining to the subject of rape and rape myths).

In Chapter 2, 'Representations of Rape-Revenge', I explore and analyse how *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* were discussed and implicated in the so-called 'video nasties' debates in the early 1980s and how they have continued to be discussed in the U.K. popular press since then. Unlike the other films selected as case studies for this thesis, these films are not mainstream films, and they also did not receive cinematic releases nationwide. However, they did come to public attention on a large scale in the debates surrounding the so-called 'video nasties' in the early 1980s (upon searching the film titles in the databases used to locate and source my texts for analysis no results showed that these films had been discussed in the popular press prior to these debates). For the purpose of this thesis' aim, which is to explore how the press discussions of films that include representations of rape interconnect with and contribute to social, media and cultural discourses surrounding rape and male violence against women, as these films became very visible in popular culture as debates circulated around the 'video nasties', I believe it important and necessary to include these analyses.

The remaining chapters all focus on the press coverage that surrounded the initial release of the selected case study films. In sourcing the primary texts for analysis from these databases, I used the following search terms: the film title searched within



the time period of three months before its initial cinematic release date and three months after.

In Chapter 3, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused*. This film is particularly useful for this study as it is ‘Hollywood’s first feature-length film on rape’ (Horeck 2004: 91) and as the first serious Hollywood depiction of rape, ‘marks a turning point in the history of Hollywood’s representation of sex and violence’ (ibid.: 92).

In Chapter 4, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of two films that include representations of intra-military rape – *G.I. Jane* and *The General’s Daughter*. These films, and the representations included in them, are of particular interest as they were released only a few years after the revelations of the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals (1991 and 1996 respectively) where male members of the military sexually assaulted female colleagues. Selecting these films as case studies enables me to explore how films that include representations of rape, of which bear similarities to well-publicised real-life events, have been discussed.

In Chapter 5, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of two films that include representations of rape within domestic violence narrative contexts – *What’s Love Got To Do With It* and *Lovelace*. *What’s Love Got To Do With It* and *Lovelace* have been selected as the case studies for this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, although representations of rape committed by men against a female partner have been included in films since early cinema, rarely have these

representations occurred in a context within which the film's primary subject matter is domestic violence. As Duncan Wheeler notes, while prior to the 1990s 'physical violence between spouses was occasionally depicted in comic mode or as a passionate or drunken outburst...it was not a central subject matter in its own right' (2009: 156). *What's Love Got to Do With It?* has been selected for this study as it is one of the first Hollywood films to position domestic violence as a primary narrative focus and 'the issue of domestic violence is also addressed in a more thoughtful manner than had previously been seen on the silver screen' (Wheeler 2009: 162). Using this film as the first case study for this chapter therefore enables me to analyse how one of the first films to depict and focus on domestic violence was discussed across the U.K. national popular press. Using *Lovelace* as my second case study film, which was released twenty years after the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and similarly positions domestic violence as a primary narrative focus and central subject matter, enables me to explore how discussions about these compared from 1993 to twenty years later in 2013. Notably, my analysis in this chapter is of the press coverage that surrounded the release of only two films, so I would not claim that any similarities or differences are indicative of a general trend in terms of wider social discourses surrounding male violence against their female partners / wives. However, I do believe that they can be indicative of this to a certain extent. For example, I would argue that if the same victim-blaming questions were asked of a survivor of domestic violence in 1993 and in 2013 that this may be indicative of wider-spread attitudes towards survivors of domestic violence, highlighting the continuing need to challenge such perceptions and attitudes.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl*. This film has been selected as the final case study of this thesis for a number of reasons. It is the latest film (by release date), to be used as a case study. Similar to the opening chapter case study, *Straw Dogs*, the film explicitly represents a rape myth – the film's female protagonist, Amy Dunne, lies about being raped (numerous times) and is shown not only framing the scene to incriminate the man she accuses of rape, but also inflicting physical injuries on her own body to support her story. This enables me to explore how this explicit representation of a rape myth was received and discussed in a contemporary context.

# Chapter 1

## *Straw Dogs* and Rape Myths

In this opening chapter, I analyse how *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) has been discussed in the U.K. national popular press from the time surrounding its original theatrical release in 1971 up to the release of the film's remake, *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Rod Lurie), which was released in 2011.

The narrative of *Straw Dogs* (1971) centres around American academic David Sumner (Dustin Hoffman) and his British wife Amy (Susan George). After getting married in America, they return to her hometown in Cornwall. Upon arriving, they hire a group of local men (known to Amy from when she was younger) to fix the roof of an outbuilding. Later in the film, Amy is raped by two of these men - Charlie Venner (Del Henney) and Norman Scutt (Ken Hutchison). The film ends with the Sumners' farmhouse being besieged by Venner, Scutt and a number of other local men, with scenes of sustained and graphic violence.

*Straw Dogs* has been the subject of a number of academic studies. It has also been discussed and analysed as part of larger studies, the aims and approaches of which have varied. In his book *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies*, Stephen Prince examines 'Peckinpah's use of cinema to inquire into the phenomenon of violence in human life' (1998: xvi). Michael Bliss (1993) also studies Peckinpah's corpus of films in his book *Justified Lives: Morality &*

*Narrative in the Films of Sam Peckinpah*, providing an analysis of Peckinpah's narrative technique.

Other studies have focused more specifically on *Straw Dogs*. In his book, *Straw Dogs*, Stevie Simkin (2011) details the making of the film, the context in which it was produced, marketed and consumed by its first audiences, moving on to discuss and explore how the film's meanings evolved in subsequent years. From a different perspective, in his essay 'Loving and Hating *Straw Dogs*: The Meanings of Audience Responses to a Controversial Film', Martin Barker considers 'what it means for a man to *enjoy* watching a film which includes rape' in attempts to try to 'identify the processes involved in forming a judgement of any kind' (2005).

In both popular and academic discourses surrounding *Straw Dogs*, the reputation of the film has frequently been referred to. In his day, Peckinpah 'was one of the most contentious directors working in the American cinema and one if its most controversial' (Prince 1998: 3). In his biography of Sam Peckinpah, David Weddle notes how 'even at the peak of his career in the late sixties and early seventies, when many critics hailed him as one of the most brilliant directors of his generation, an equal number condemned him as a misogynist, sadist, even a fascist' (1996: 8). Following the release of *The Wild Bunch* (Dir. Peckinpah, 1969) and *Straw Dogs*, Peckinpah's work 'became synonymous with graphic, slow-motion violence' (Prince 1998: 3). Subsequently, violence is what Peckinpah's 'work was chiefly known for in its day, and it continues to be the central attribute that many people think of when his films are mentioned' (ibid.: xvi).

In his essay '*Straw Dogs, A Clockwork Orange* and the Critics' Charles Barr compares the first critical responses to *Straw Dogs* and *A Clockwork Orange*. He criticises their response to the film, writing:

Why does the violence in films like this not only shock critics deeply but knock their critical faculties so far off balance? *Straw Dogs* is only one of a line of more or less distinguished films whose violent or gruesome elements have produced an overall critical response which can be termed hysterical: it involves a turning away from the film, a refusal to engage seriously with it and with one's reactions to it (1972: 26).

In his study, Barr also describes how aesthetic and moral confusion seem to underly the critical reception of *Straw Dogs* (and *A Clockwork Orange*) (ibid.: 27).

Barr's study is somewhat unique as it focuses specifically on the exploration of critics' response to *Straw Dogs*. While the popular response to *Straw Dogs* has frequently been mentioned in studies (whether this be relating to initial responses to the film, or the reputation it has garnered over the years) little sustained attention has been paid to the discourses surrounding rape present in popular discussions of the film. For example, Barker notes how the film is 'often discussed in books and magazines as an exemplar of a troublesome film' and how it 'has mainly been remembered for one scene, in which Amy...is raped by two local men' (2005) but doesn't explicitly engage in analysis or exploration of these texts. And while Simkin (2011) does include a section titled '*Straw Dogs* and the UK Critics' in his book, similarly to Barr's study, this focuses primarily on *reactions* to the film and its impact on critics.

There has been little attention paid to the language of rape present in press discussions of the film and how this language has / has not changed or shifted over time. This is what I explore in this chapter. In particular, this chapter focuses on how certain kinds of rape myths have been represented and /or discussed.

*Straw Dogs* is suited to such a study as it has been mentioned and / or discussed in the U.K. national popular press a number of times since the time surrounding its initial release up to the release of its remake. These have included press discussions and debates about representations of violence and film censorship (see, for example, Seaman 1972: 8; Powell 1972: 16; Coady 1972: 12; Anon: 1972: 6-7; Waymark 1972: 3; Edelman 1973: 6; Appleyard 1993: 33; Pearce 1994: 27; Appleyard 1996: 10/8; Peachment 1997: 70; Mathews 1998: A4; Littlejohn 1998: 23); concern about sexual violence in films (see, for example, Anon. 1972: 6-7; Lewin 1973: 6-7; Goodwin 1996: 4); TV violence (see, for example, Miller 1986); the TV code (see, for example, Grade 1989); and debates about Sky TV (see, for example, Cuff 1993: 2). When the film received a limited re-release at the National Film Theatre in 1995, it, again, received attention from the press (see Brown 1995: 37; Anon. 1995a: A8; Anon. 1995b: 54; Norman 1995: 2; French 1995); as it also did when it was announced that the film was to receive a certificate for release in 2002 after being banned for 18 years (see, for example, Jury 2002: 9; Campion 2002; Thomson 2002: 11; Dalton 2002: 7). And the film has also been discussed alongside the release of other films that include representations of violence and / or rape including *Cape Fear* (see Johnstone 1991), *Natural Born Killers* (see Wallace 1994: 9; Campbell 1995: 19), *Irreversible* (see Dalton 2003: 18), *Crash* (see Peachment 1997: 70); *Last*

*Tango in Paris* (see Anon. 1973: 16; Sunday Telegraph Reporter 1973: 3) and *The Accused* (see French 1989: 42).

*Straw Dogs* represents one of the many rape myths that second-wave feminists sought to quash – that women ‘enjoy’ being raped, that they eventually relax and ‘enjoy’ it. When the male character Charlie Venner begins to rape Amy, she is represented succumbing to Venner’s advances and ‘enjoying’ being raped as she is shown wrapping her arms around him and kissing him.

Of the press texts sourced for analysis that surrounded the initial release of *Straw Dogs*, only one acknowledged that Amy is represented ‘enjoying’ being raped. This was in an article titled ‘A little rough stuff...’ which was written by Jill Tweedie and published in *The Guardian* in which she criticised dominant ideas and social understandings of rape (perpetrated by men against women). She described how she was ‘brought up in the diffuse but all-embracing belief that inside every male was a seething volcano of sex, a churning stream of lava kept under control only by dint of iron discipline on the man’s part’ (ibid.) and ‘extreme caution’ (ibid.) on her own:

No-one actually said so but all their attitudes screamed it. I was adjured to be ‘careful’ when I was with a man, I must never be guilty of ‘leading him on,’ I mustn’t even flirt as I might get ‘more than I bargained for’ (ibid.).

She also detailed how from a young age, she was made to believe that it was her responsibility (and women’s more generally) to avoid being raped as the myth of uncontrollable male sexuality was widely regarded as truth:

the implication was always that men could not help themselves, that sexually they were at all times very nearly out of control and so it was my duty, as a



woman, to cover myself and lower my eyes if I wanted to stay out of trouble...The boys I grew up with absorbed this social propaganda eagerly and, as a result, were often brainwashed into total sexual irresponsibility (ibid.).

Tweedie analysed the character of Amy (how she is dressed, her behaviour, her previous sexual relationships) and highlighted how she embodies many of the traits that are often used to blame a woman for a rape committed by a man against her:

A young wife is raped by two village louts and Mr Peckinpah obviously believes she deserves everything she gets. After all, the shameless hussy has (a) slept with one of the men before her marriage, (b) wears no bra, (c) pulls up her skirt to examine a ladder in her tights and, worst of all (d) appears to be keener, if anything, on sex than her husband. Heavens to Betsy, the girl's begging for it (ibid.).

Tweedie's article highlights how films can instigate further media discussion about social issues (in this instance rape). She challenged dominant social attitudes surrounding the subject of rape as well as ideas about male perpetrators and female victims of rape, thus, contributing at the time, to an emerging feminist dialogue instigated by the Women's Liberation movement that sought to challenge and change common (mis)conceptions and ideas about rape.

While Amy's *reaction* to being raped by Venner was rarely discussed or even mentioned in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original *Straw Dogs* film, this is not to say that the representation of rape was not frequently mentioned and / or discussed, as it most certainly was. The context within which this was discussed and mentioned was not aligned with concerns about the subject of rape and male violence against women, or with representations of rape per se, but rather with concerns about representations of violence in film. One aspect of the original version of *Straw Dogs* that was discussed more than any other (including the representation of rape) was that of the film's representations of violence. The film

does contain explicit representations of violence, particularly in its latter section.

When David accidentally knocks over Henry Niles in his car, he and Amy take an injured Niles back to their house. Unbeknownst to them at this point is that a group of villagers (including Venner and his friends) are looking for Niles as they suspect (correctly) that he is involved in the disappearance of a young girl from the village, Janice Hedden. When the villagers arrive at Amy and David's house, David refuses to let them take Niles and in his attempt to keep Niles from the villagers as he waits for the doctor and police, the Sumners' house becomes the scene of violence and murder, the film including explicit representations of people being shot, maimed and killed.

Throughout the 1960s, representations of violence had become both more commonplace and explicit in mainstream films, igniting fierce debate amongst film and cultural critics about film censorship and whether films that contained such explicit representations of violence should be banned. Consequently, when *Straw Dogs* was released, many journalists and film critics used the film to engage with and further this ongoing cultural commentary. In the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original *Straw Dogs*, these representations of violence and the representation of rape included in the film were often bundled together, listed one after the other, with the effect of representing the film as being exceptionally violent. For example, Wendy Hughes described how 'seven grisly murders, double rape, a sex-crazed village idiot, nymphomaniacs, voyeurs, a lecherous rat catcher, lynching parties, a strangled cat...are just a few of the film's ingredients' (1971: 4). John Heilpern similarly described the content of the film as including 'rape, buggery, a man's head caught in a gamekeeper's mantrap and with the help of electronic

devices, raw meat and what's known as 'Kensington Gore' (fake blood) – several people blown to bits, not counting a cat that is strangled' (1972: 9) (for other examples of such descriptions of the film's content see Malcolm 1971: 10; Powell 1971: 38; Wilson 1971: 27). As such, the representations of rape included in *Straw Dogs* were not positioned as being any more or less problematic than the representations of non-sexual violence in the film. Tom Milne even argued that it is the violence at the end of the film (not the rape scene) 'which raises all the questions and has already caused the film to be attacked for gratuitous violence' (1971: 12).

While (as exemplified above), the representation of rape included in *Straw Dogs* was often distinguished from the other representations of violence included in the film (in that it was discussed as a representation of *rape* rather than as a representation of *violence*), it was, more often than not, discussed in conjunction with debates about film censorship and what was considered to be gratuitous violence. As such, the representation of rape in the film was adopted and used to further points about representations of violence and censorship debates, the issue / subject of rape mostly ignored, deflecting attention away from the real issue of rape in our society and culture. In addition to this, with the bundling together of the representation of rape with the representations of non-sexual violence, the sex specific elements of rape were lost in much of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film. It is important to note this use of language and the significance of this language as 'when the sex-specific elements of rape are denied, when it is perceived as merely another kind of violence, the patriarchal aspects of rape are lost' (Cahill 2001: 33). The sex-specific nature of the sexual harassment and sexual violence represented in the film,

notably only committed by men against women, was ignored in the grouping together of the rape with the representations of violence included in the film.

Between the time that *Straw Dogs* was initially released in the UK and the early 1980s, there was a distinct shift in the way *Straw Dogs* was referred to and discussed in the popular press – a shift towards discussing it alongside other films (most frequently *A Clockwork Orange*) in terms of media effects. Over this period of time, it was implied in a number of texts that the film could, and was, influencing the behaviour of (male) viewers. For example, Donald Seaman, wrote in the *Daily Express* in 1972:

What worries me, and I believe most parents, is just how far films like these I have mentioned [inc. *Straw Dogs*] influence our lives today. The beast who dreams of rape is certainly not going to be restrained, or helped mentally, by taking his seat for a showing of *A Clockwork Orange*. The danger is, he could be encouraged, stimulated' (8)

From a similar perspective, Maurice Edelman, an MP for Coventry North at the time, argued in a text he wrote for the *Daily Mail* in 1973 about Stephen Murphy (Secretary at the BBFC at the time):

...if Mr Murphy not only gives his thumbs up to *A Clockwork Orange* but continues gratuitously to applaud its appeal a year later when gang-bangs and muggings have risen to unprecedented heights and the vicious cult-figures imitated from the film have already appeared on our streets, it's time to ask whether the continued existence of the British Board of Film Censors is performing a useful public service' (6)

In 1974, in an article titled 'Sex and rape films shown in Broadmoor' published in *The Daily Telegraph*, it was reported that *Straw Dogs* had been shown to sex offenders and Mary Whitehouse (who later became a dominant public voice in the campaign against 'video nasties' (see Chapter 2)) was quoted arguing: 'How can any of these sex offenders recover if they are subjected to films of this kind?' (Daily

Telegraph Reporter 1974: 15). In another article, while it was not explicitly stated that *Straw Dogs* caused one person to murder another, it was insinuated. The article opened: ‘A woman was found brutally murdered yesterday at a mental hospital where patients were shown the violent film *Straw Dogs*’ (Anon. 1977: 3). In his 1973 text published in the *Daily Mail* titled ‘The nastiest trend for 50 years – and only women can put a stop to it’, David Lewin discussed the subject of rape alongside representations of rape in film. He argued:

All this is happening [representations of rape on film], not perhaps without accident, at a time when rape on both sides of the Atlantic is the fastest growing crime. The figures in England and Wales of reported rape during the past ten years shows a 56 percent increase – a greater rise say criminologists than for any other crime. In America, the situation is worse. The U.S. figures over the same period show a staggering increase of 172 percent in reported victims. Last year, 43 out of every 100,000 women in America admitted to being raped (6-7).

And in 1981, in an article published in the *Daily Mail* titled ‘Is it any wonder John Hinckley tried to kill the President?’ which primarily discussed the film *Taxi Driver* but also mentioned *Straw Dogs* as part of debates about films being anti-social, Peter Greig argued:

When films like this are produced with conveyor-belt slickness and forced on to society, is it any wonder that America, and to a lesser extent the rest of the Western world should be going through an explosion of anti-social violence? (6)

In such instances, the idea propagated is one that positions certain members of the audience (men) as being particularly vulnerable to the proposed ‘effects’ of viewing representations of violence and rape – whereby they could be influenced and encouraged to commit rape and other acts of violence. Considered in the context of rape (perpetrated by men against women) this alleviates men of personal blame and

responsibility – ignoring the fact that men *choose* to rape women (and commit other acts of violence).

In her 1972 article for *The Guardian* in which she criticised, challenged and rejected rape myths, Tweedie also referred to a Granada television programme in which a panel of men and women discussed the rape of Amy and unanimously blamed her. She detailed how one lady on the programme argued that Amy had slept with one of the men before her marriage ‘so what else but rape could she expect?’ (9). While Tweedie used this an example to highlight the *problem* of such attitudes that pervade society, a number of other texts that surrounded the initial release of *Straw Dogs*, such ideas were simply stated by writers as fact. In the press coverage that surrounded the initial release of the film, rape myths that exonerate male perpetrators of rape and hold other peoples’ actions responsible or to blame for rapes committed by men were more likely to be reinforced and further propagated. In a review published in *The Guardian*, Derek Malcolm described the film in the following way:

Because David insists on being friendly to the natives, his wife is raped and he has to kill despite his hatred of violence. Because Amy is desirable, she has to suffer the consequences of wanting to be desired (1971: 10).

Here, Malcolm holds both David and Amy somewhat accountable and, therefore, partially to blame for Venner’s and Norman’s rape of Amy – David because he insists on being friendly to the natives, and Amy, because she wants to be desired, has to suffer the consequences of this (the implication being that one of these consequences is rape). Similarly, in his review of the film published in *The Daily Telegraph*, Patrick Gibbs argued: ‘Since Amy not only wears no bra but is apt to take a bath without drawing the curtains, she can be said to provide some

provocation, and to be asking for what's coming to her' (1971: 13). As exemplified here, in Malcolm's and Gibbs' reviews of *Straw Dogs*, they each attribute a degree of accountability and blame on Amy for her rape, it implied that her behaviour and dress are factors that contributed to her being raped.

In another review, this one published in *The Sunday Telegraph*, while it was not explicitly stated that Amy's behaviour was responsible for her rape, it was vaguely implied. Margaret Hinxman described Amy as: 'the dim young wife who apparently has not the wit to notice that it is expedient to wear a bra when you are wandering around on the loose in small, inbred villages' (1971: 18). Hinted at here, is that Amy would have benefited from wearing a bra, this benefit presumably being that it would have prevented at least some of the sexual harassment she is subjected to by Venner and his group of friends and / or that Venner and Norman would not have raped her. From a similar perspective, when the film was released on video and DVD in 2002, in his review of the film published in the *Independent on Sunday*, David Thomson, described the film in the following manner:

...there are horny young men around who knew Susan once when she was a kid and reckon that no American boffin deserves her nice titties. Those breasts are very prominent: in almost the first shot of the film, the nipples glare like earnest sub-text beneath her white sweater; and there will come a moment when a frustrated Susan exposes herself to the locals as they work on her house. It is, in short, an essential part of this rape that naughty Susan has half-provoked, and half-enjoys it, and is not worthy of the learned American who will resort to appalling if unaccustomed violence in the climactic throes of revenge (2002: 11).

In some of the press coverage that surrounded the original release of *Straw Dogs*, Amy was also described as being a 'tease' (see Melly 1971: 32; Christie 1971:

17). In a video and DVD review published in *The Times*, Stephen Dalton argued that the film contains a ‘gruelling double rape in which the implication is that Amy is at least partly complicit’ (2002: 7) and he also argued in 2010 in another article for *The Times* that ‘the main sticking point for censors was the film’s notorious rape scene, which George’s character *appears to encourage* [emphasis my own] and enjoy’ (2010a: 25), and in article about the film published in *The Daily Telegraph* in 2002, Chris Campion argued that Amy is raped by her former boyfriend ‘with whom she has been flirting relentlessly in order to provoke her husband’.

I would question the labelling of Amy as a ‘tease’ along with any other attempts to imply that she was flirting or ‘encouraging’ Venner. I would argue that throughout the film, Amy is frequently harassed by Venner and his friends and, far from ‘encouraging’ such behaviour, is vocal in her detestation of the harassment she is subjected to. At the beginning of the film, Venner (the man who it is implied she has had a sexual relationship with in the past, and who rapes her later in the film) puts his arm around her neck and the following exchange between the two of them is represented:

Venner: Remember when I took care of you Amy?

Amy: But you didn’t. Remember?

Venner: There was once a time Mrs Sumner when you were ready to beg me for it.

Amy: Take your hands off me.



Similarly, prior to Charlie's act of rape, Amy makes it more than clear that she does not want to have sex with Charlie, telling him 'please leave me', 'get out' and saying 'no' repeatedly. How any of these scenes could be interpreted as Amy being a tease or 'leading Venner on' is incomprehensible. In another scene, Amy expresses her unease to David about Venner and his friends' behaviour towards her with the following exchange represented between the two characters:

Amy: Practically licking my body.

David: Who was practically licking your body?

Amy: Venner and Scutt.

David: Congratulate them on their taste.

Amy: Damn rat catchers staring at me.

David: Why don't you wear a bra?

Amy: Why should I?

David: You shouldn't go around without one and not expect that type to stare.

It is also implied here, this time by her husband, that Amy's behaviour, or more accurately her choice of clothing, is responsible for her being harassed by Venner and his friends.

The similarities between the opinions expressed by the male characters in the film and in a number of the popular press texts that discussed the film – in relation to Amy's behaviour and how it is implied that her behaviour /dress is partially

responsible for the sexual harassment and rape that she is subjected to (as discussed above) – is striking. While it is also suggested by some of the characters that when Amy was growing up in Cornwall she had a sexual relationship with Venner (for example, in a discussion between two of Venner's friends about wanting to have sex with Amy, one of them says: 'Charlie Venner, he had some of it, years ago') in a discussion with her husband, Amy tells David that 'Venner did try to get fresh once' but that 'nothing happened', so she didn't have a relationship with him.

The dialogue in the film or, more accurately, Amy's dialogue, Amy's voice, was largely ignored in such discussions of the film, with certain writers seemingly more concerned with her appearance and their own interpretation/s of her behaviour than what she had to say, reflecting a (continuing) cultural response to women who express discomfort at the way they are harassed by some men where their voices are not taken seriously or ignored altogether.

As well as some of the press coverage surrounding the original release of *Straw Dogs* focusing on Amy's behaviour there was also a focus on her (or the actress who played her – Susan George's) physical appearance. In a review published in the *Daily Mirror* titled 'Gorgeous George' Donald Zec described George as a 'spectacular blonde' (1971: 7) and while he argued that 'the fact that she [George] occasionally appears half nude in this chilling and totally explicit piece, is not, I promise you, the most nudging part of her appeal' (ibid.) he proceeded to describe her as being 'nubile and nipple-proud' (ibid.) as well as discussing her 'shape' and her 'mouth', highlighting the comparisons that were made between George and other

female celebrities most commonly known for their appearance, including Raquel Welch and Brigitte Bardot (ibid.). Similarly, Ian Christie, writing for the *Daily Express*, described George as a ‘sexy young lady’ (1971: 17). Such sexualised descriptions were not confined to Amy / George but were used to describe other female characters in the film also. Gibbs, for example, argued that one of the troubles that the village faces in the film is that there is no policeman, and another that there are just two girls, ‘Amy and Janice, both filling out white sweaters’ (1971: 13). Notably, these descriptions of Amy / George in which her appearance was described in a sexualised manner were mostly found in the tabloid press which, in the 1970s, was becoming increasingly sexualised and where the ‘the news had taken a new turn with the representation of the female body as spectacle’ (Holland 1998: 24). Such descriptions were, thus, reflective of a wider contemporary media trend in which women were often represented and discussed in a manner that sexualised them, prioritising their sexuality and appearance over anything else. This is problematic within the context of this film however as, once again, Amy / George’s appearance is prioritised at the expense of her voice.

While I would argue that this is a trend that still dominates contemporary media representations of women (and is exemplified in Chapter’s 4 and 5 of this thesis), it is notable that the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake of *Straw Dogs* paid very little attention to Amy / Kate Bosworth’s (the actress who plays Amy) physical appearance in the film. This is somewhat surprising considering the similarities between the way in which the character of Amy is represented in each of the films, particularly with regards to how her body is framed by the camera. In each of the films, the first shot we see of Amy is of one part of her body. In the original

version, this is a close-up of Amy's chest – her wearing a white polo neck with no bra underneath (hence, the focus on her not wearing a bra in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original film); and in the remake, this is a shot of her mouth with Amy applying lipstick. This framing, with a focus on Amy's body, is evident throughout both versions of the films. In the original version, Amy is shown driving up to her house as Venner and his friends watch her from the rooftop they are working on. As she opens the car door and begins to get out she notices a ladder in her tights which she inspects by pulling up her skirt at which point her underwear is also visible. In the remake, when out driving in their van, Venner and his friends see Amy out running and we see a shot focusing on Amy's bum from, what is assumingly, Venner's and his friends' point of view. The way in which the film's director, Sam Peckinpah, chose to represent the character of Amy in the original version of *Straw Dogs* – how he had her dressed (and at times undressed) and how he chose to frame her body with his selection of camera shots – appears to have had a significant impact on how Amy was perceived which was often as a tease and as being sexually provocative (as exemplified in some of the press coverage discussed above). These representative choices made by the director were interpreted / represented by some journalists writing about the film not as choices made by Peckinpah as the director of the film, but rather as a reflection of Amy's character. We see that she is not wearing a bra, we see her undressing to get into a bath, we see her 'exposing' her legs and underwear as she gets out of a car, therefore, *she* is a tease. Writing in 1995, Linda Ruth Williams argued that 'in *Straw Dogs*...femininity is perversity, and women can only misbehave' (1995: 26-27). I would argue that such an idea is not only represented in the film, but is also evident

in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original version of *Straw Dogs*.

In addition to being perceived as a tease and as sexually provocative, Amy was referred to in a number of derogatory ways in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original version of *Straw Dogs*. She was described as ‘a retarded adolescent, impulsive, a teaser’ (Melly 1971: 32), ‘the dim young wife’ (Hinxman 1971: 18) and it was argued that she ‘shows the mental equipment of a hamster’ (Powell 1971: 38). This focus on Amy’s physical appearance, behaviour and presumed lack of intellect in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original version of *Straw Dogs* was, for the most part, absent in the press discourse that surrounded the release of the remake some forty years later, with only one of the texts selected for analysis commenting on her behaviour, this written by Kate Muir who, in a description of the film’s narrative, argued that David has no awareness of ‘his wife’s defiant display of her charms’ (2011: 10). It can only be assumed that the scene being referred to by Muir in her review of the remake of *Straw Dogs* is that in which, after expressing her disgust to David at the manner in which she is being harassed by Venner and his friends and his response is to suggest that she should wear a bra, Amy goes upstairs to have a bath, opening the window and undressing while staring directly at Venner and his friends as she does so. That this scene in the remake of *Straw Dogs* was described as being a ‘defiant’ gesture by Muir is distinctly different to the manner in which Amy’s behaviour was discussed and described in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original version of the film, which was as being *sexually provocative*. Notably, this scene in the remake is slightly different to that in the original. In the original version, Amy

begins to undress while walking towards the bathroom. David shouts to her ‘don’t forget to draw the curtains’ at which point she has just about reached the window (already topless) and she looks out to Venner and his friends who look in and she then walks away without drawing the curtains. One cannot help but wonder how much more Amy would have been criticised, labelled as a tease, and held further accountable and / or partially responsible for the rapes committed against her in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the original version of the film had the scene in the remake (in which she opens the window to undresses so that Venner and his friends can see her) appeared in the original.

In the press discourse that surrounded the release of the remake of *Straw Dogs* it was never implied that Amy’s behaviour was in any way responsible or to blame for her being raped by Venner. Amy was never described as a tease, nor was it suggested that her behaviour or dress could be interpreted as ‘asking’ to be raped. While I would not argue that this is reflective of a wider cultural change in which women’s behaviour is no longer, or less likely to be, interrogated or held either partially or wholly to blame / responsible for rapes committed by men against them (as exemplified in the introduction to this chapter, and indeed at other points throughout this thesis, this is obviously not the case) this difference between the manner in which Amy was described in the press coverage that surrounded the releases of the original *Straw Dogs* and its remake is quite striking and could be indicative of some degree of cultural awareness and change. That the scene in which Amy undresses in front of the window, staring directly at Venner and his friends whilst doing so, was recognised as a *defiant* gesture rather than as one used to ‘tease’ Venner and his friends suggests an acknowledgement of Amy’s dissatisfaction with the way she was

being treated by Venner and his friends, as well as the attitude expressed by her husband who suggested that the solution to this was for her to ‘wear a bra’. In the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake of *Straw Dogs*, Amy’s behaviour and dress was rendered almost invisible.

There is another significant difference between the original and remade versions of *Straw Dogs* that seemingly evaded the attention of journalists, this being how Venner is represented after he rapes Amy. In the original version of the film, Amy is shown succumbing to Venner’s advances. Consequently, her reaction towards Venner immediately after the rape (before Norman rapes her) is rather amicable. This changes, however, when Norman begins to rape Amy and Venner holds her down so that she cannot move. In the remake, after Venner rapes Amy he tries to talk to her but she ignores him. He asks her to look at him repeatedly, which she does not, and asks her what is wrong. It is implied through this representation that it all of a sudden dawns on Venner that Amy did not want to have sex with him. At this point, Venner is represented as being somewhat bewildered, almost upset by Amy’s response (though he was completely ignorant of her reactions prior to raping her). His facial expression appears somewhat puzzled and his demeanour changes as he tries to comfort Amy. Norman then makes his presence apparent, at which point Venner moves away from Amy taking a seat a few feet away, continuing to appear in a state of shock. At this point, the film differs again from the original, as Venner does not hold Amy down as his friend rapes Amy. Instead, the camera focuses on Venner who is represented sitting in a state of apparent shock and bewilderment, so immobilised by this that it renders him incapable of helping Amy when Norman begins to rape her. At this point, it is almost as if the audience are encouraged to

empathise with Venner as it is implied he truly believed that Amy wanted to have sex with him. This difference in the remake of *Straw Dogs* from the original was not acknowledged in any of the press coverage selected for analysis that surrounded the release of the remake. This is interesting considering that it is implied in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake that this scene was an improvement on the original (as Amy's reaction to being raped was not ambiguous) yet this scene, I would argue, attempts to encourage the audience to feel sorry for Venner who, it is implied through the representation in the film, believed that Amy wanted to have sex with him. While the rape myth represented in the original film is removed in the remake, it is replaced with another – this being that some men rape women when they misread signals (that the act was not intended to be malicious) - which was not acknowledged in any of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake.

### Summary and Conclusion

Over the forty-year period from when *Straw Dogs* was first released in 1971 up to the release of its remake in 2011, there has been some consistencies as well as some differences regarding the language of rape present in press discussions of the film.

In the press texts that surrounded the initial release of the film, the rape myth represented in the film was rarely acknowledged or challenged. This could be suggestive of a lack of awareness and understanding that could perhaps be explained by its release date when feminist discourses surrounding rape had yet to permeate



mainstream avenues of thinking. Another suggestion is that there were other topics of discussion that were considered to be of more interest to readers and that held more social currency. For example, with the press discussions surrounding the release of the original *Straw Dogs* this was debates about representations of violence in film and censorship. While the representation of rape included in *Straw Dogs* was often distinguished from the other representations of violence included in the film (in that it was discussed as a representation of rape rather than as a representation of violence), it was, more often than not, discussed in conjunction with debates about film censorship and what was considered to be gratuitous violence – subjects which held more social currency at the time the film was released. As such, the representation of rape in the film was adopted and used to further points about representations of violence and censorship debates, the issue/subject of rape mostly ignored, deflecting attention away from the real issue of rape in society and culture. In addition to this, with the bundling together of the representation of rape with the representations of non-sexual violence, the sex/gender specific elements of rape were lost in much of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film. The sex-specific nature of the sexual harassment and sexual violence represented in the film, notably only committed by men against women, ignored.

Rather than being directly challenged and/or countered, myths about rape and of female behaviour were just as likely, if not more likely, to be reinforced in the press coverage that surrounded the initial release of the film – mainly that women's dress and behaviour are at least partially responsible for rape. Later texts also did this, with the interpretation of Amy's behaviour being perceived as teasing, flirtatious and 'encouraging'. In such instances, Amy's voice, was ignored, with certain writers

seemingly more concerned with her appearance and their own interpretation of her behaviour than what she had to say, reflecting a (continuing) cultural response to women who express discomfort at the way they are harassed by some men where they are not taken seriously or ignored altogether.

Between the time that *Straw Dogs* was initially released in the UK and the early 1980s, there was a distinct shift in the way *Straw Dogs* was referred to and discussed in the popular press – a shift towards discussing it alongside other films (most frequently *A Clockwork Orange*) in terms of media effects. Considered in the context of rape (perpetrated by men against women) such texts alleviated men of personal blame and responsibility – ignoring the fact that men *choose* to rape women (and commit other acts of violence).

## Chapter 2

### Representations of Rape-Revenge

In this chapter, I analyse how the rape-revenge films *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978 / Dir. Steven R. Monroe, 2011) and *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Wes Craven, 1972 / Dir. Dennis Iliadis, 2009) have been discussed in the popular press.

As detailed in the introduction to this thesis, rape-revenge films have been of great interest to film theorists working with a range of approaches (Henry 2017: 7). These studies have debated and explored issues of definition (see, for example, Read 2000; Henry 2017); viewer identification (see Clover 1992; Lehman 1993); how discourses of feminism circulate within and across these films (see Read 2000); and the intersection of rape and revenge across time, national boundaries and genre (see Heller-Nicholas 2011).

Unlike the original and remade version of *Straw Dogs* (the focus of the previous chapter) that differ in their representations of rape (the original representing the rape myth that women ‘enjoy’ being raped and the remake not) the representations of rape included in the original and remade versions of both *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* are very similar. While there are slight changes in these films’ narratives, including in *The Last House on the Left*, a change in that the female protagonist survives, and in *I Spit on Your Grave*, a change between the passing of time from when Jennifer is gang-raped and her taking her revenge, the narratives

remain, on the whole, very similar. In both versions of *The Last House on the Left* the female characters Mari and Paige are abducted by a group of criminals who stab and kill Paige and one of whom rapes Mari. In both the original and remade versions, the group of criminals find themselves at the house of Mari's parents who come to realise that the group are involved in the disappearance/responsible for assaulting and raping their daughter after which they attack and kill them. In both versions of *I Spit on Your Grave* the female character Jennifer goes on vacation, renting a cabin in a quiet area of woodland. A group of men who first see her at a local petrol station find out where she is staying and subsequently gang-rape her. She then attacks, tortures and kills them all one-by-one.

I begin this chapter by providing some contextual information regarding the emergence of the so-called 'video nasties' and censorship debates within which *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* were initially brought to public attention through press discourse. I then go on to analyse and discuss more specifically how the original versions of the films *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* were implicated in these debates, focusing specifically on those press texts in which these films were mentioned directly.

While a number of studies have illustrated how the popular press supported and played a significant role in the campaigns to control/regulate/censor 'video nasties' (see for example Barker 1984a; Egan 2007), my aim with this case study is to focus more specifically on how *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* were implicated in these debates and the discourses of rape present within the texts.

As Kate Egan identifies:

In the early 1980s, a group of previously suppressed post-1950s American and European horror films were released on video in Britain, and became the target of a media panic orchestrated, centrally, by a group of moral campaigners and the right-wing British newspaper, the *Daily Mail* (2007: 1).

While some of these films had previously been released in Britain, and some produced years, even decades prior to their release on video, they had not been reviewed in the popular press. This had the effect of allowing the ‘majority of these horror films, whether previously released in Britain or not, to emerge *en masse*, as new and unknown, when they were released on video (ibid.: 41) and also as examples of new, extreme and unsurpassed horror (ibid.: 51). Such factors contributed greatly to the moral panic that followed. In the early 1980s, campaigns to introduce legislation to restrict access to the so-called ‘video nasties’ were initiated. Led by the National Viewers’ and Listeners’ Association, whose president was the well-known anti-pornography campaigner Mary Whitehouse, and supported by MPs, the campaigns quickly drew support and were ‘given unquestioning publicity by the media’ (Barker 1984: 4).

Video nasties were not, however, the first or only films that had included representations of rape and violence, so what was it about the video nasties that was proving particularly troublesome for campaigners? This can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, they were considered to be ‘far removed from the suspense of the traditional horror film’ (Chippindale 1982a: 7), Peter Chippindale arguing in *The Times* in May 1982: ‘They dwell on murder, multiple rape, butchery, sado-masochism, mutilation of women, cannibalism and Nazi atrocities’ (ibid.).

Secondly, there was concern regarding how these films' content could be viewed in the video tape format, with video recorders offering viewers the ability to 'freeze' a film at certain moments and to watch certain sequences from an individual film repeatedly (by rewinding) and to watch sequences in slow motion. This style of viewing, in which scenes from these films could be watched out of context (though there was no evidence or research that suggested that this was how audiences were viewing these films) was one of the reasons put forward by Graham Bright, a conservative MP who actively supported and sponsored the Bill (to ban these films) as to why legislation was needed to control access to such content.

In opposition to this, however, in part one of the *Video Violence and Children* report, which sought to analyse children's viewing patterns of 'video nasties', it was argued that watching depictions of violence and sadism in the context of the *whole* film could have a more damaging effect on children. The report refers to an event where a number of MPs were shown a twenty-two minute film which consisted of short clips from a number of different 'video nasties' and it was reported that many of the MPs were unable to stay until the end of the video as they found it too difficult to watch and argued:

...there is a major difference between watching short clips from a film and watching the entire story unfold. In a full-length feature film the characters are developed and the viewer identifies with them as specific human beings. Thus when they commit violence or are the victims of violence there is a heightened degree of realism from the mere viewing of a single sequence showing the mutilation of unknown bodies. We see such scenes on the TV news every day. Thus if these short scenes were sufficiently horrific to disturb a group of mature adults it is arguable that when seen in the context of a full-length feature film their effect must be considerably heightened (Hill 1983: 18).

Despite such inconsistencies in the campaign's claims (relating to what could cause harm and why) support for the introduction of legislation remained.

As well as concern being expressed in relation to *how* video nasties were being viewed, just *who* was watching, or rather presumed to be watching these films, also became a central concern for campaigners. That video release was unregulated and that there was no classification system in place for videos being released meant that any one of any age could, in theory, rent, buy and view videos, including feature films that included explicit representations of sex, violence and rape. Supporters of campaigns to not only regulate but to ban access to video nasties all together claimed that children were not only able to access and view video nasties with relative ease but that the video films had the ability to deprave and corrupt the minds of viewers – especially those of children. Notably, the easy access that children supposedly could gain to video nasties was, however, challenged by people opposed to such campaigns. Martin Barker, for example, notes in his essay how it had not been easy for him as a researcher to get hold of only ten so-called ‘video nasties’ and so questioned the validity of claims that children could access and view these films with ease (see 1984b: 104).

It was also suggested throughout the campaign that ‘video nasties’ could be responsible for increases in levels of violent crime. Such claims (unsubstantiated by any statistics or research) were made not only by journalists but also other professionals. For example, Superintendent Peter Kruger, head of the Yard’s Obscene Publications Squad was quoted in the press arguing: ‘We believe these terrible scenes could play a part in the general spread of violence. We are seeing murders in real life now of such horrible, perverted a nature that the perpetrators

must get it from somewhere' (Porter 1983: 1); and Dr. Vernon Cole wrote an article published in the *Daily Express* in which he argued:

I find it impossible not to conclude that there will be more and more violence in our streets. That friendly TV screen sitting quietly in the living-room will become little more than a subliminal training school for murderers and rapists, a day and night school for the hoodlums of tomorrow (1983: 8).

Notably, this all-encompassing notion that 'video nasties' had the ability to alter peoples' personalities and behaviour was not only discussed in relation to rape, but also other acts of criminality. For example, in the *Daily Express* it was reported that 'after watching two video "nasties" a man dreamt he killed his companion. Only later did he realise his nightmare had been reality' (Anon. 1983b: 7). In the *Daily Mirror* it was reported that a 'psychopath...was jailed for life...for killing a teenage friend after watching video nasties' (Anon. 1983c: 5); and the *Daily Mail* also reported on this incident in which it was argued that: 'a "video nasty" show was the trigger that finally turned a young psychopath into a killer' (White 1983: 1). Reports and stories such as these were relatively commonplace across the popular press as campaigns to ban the video nasties gained momentum throughout 1982 and 1983.

*The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Wes Craven, 1972 / Dir. Dennis Iliadis, 2009) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978 / Dir. Steven R. Monroe)

As exemplified in the previous section of this chapter, the context within which 'video nasties' were discussed extended far beyond those aligned with the subject and representations of rape and violence against women. However, the representations of rape and violence against women included in these films did play an integral role in the construction of these films as being harmful to viewers and in



supporting the notion that they should not only be regulated, but banned altogether. For example, in an article titled 'Nasties: the big clear out' published in *The Sunday Times*, Peter Chippindale reported that a number of 'video nasties' which had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions exploited 'extremes of violence, particularly towards women, and show multiple murder, rape, mutilation and cannibalism' (1982c: 3); and in another article also written by Chippindale for *The Sunday Times*, 'How High Street horror is invading the home', Conservative MP Peter Lloyd was quoted arguing: 'What worries me is not so much the pornography but the really harmful sadistic films with details of violence, especially violence against women' (1982a: 7).

*I Spit on Your Grave* played a prominent role in the 'video nasties' debates, with it being mentioned in the initial stages of protest against these films in the popular press. In August 1982, it was reported by Chippindale (who wrote extensively in *The Sunday Times* in favour of restricting access to and even banning 'video nasties') that the Director of Public Prosecutions was 'examining three of the horror video cassettes exposed by *The Sunday Times* to decide whether they should be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act' (1982b: 3). These three films were *SS Experiment Camp*, *The Driller Killer* and *I Spit on Your Grave* and their content was described in the article in the following way:

*SS Experiment Camp*...reconstructs Nazi concentration camp atrocities and has a number of explicit scenes of naked women being tortured; *The Driller Killer*...features a man having an electric drill put through his head, and other scenes of extreme violence; and *I Spit on Your Grave* in which a teenage girl is gang-raped by four men and then takes her revenge on each of them in turn, mutilating them (in one case by cutting a man's penis off) and then killing them (ibid.).

Over the course of the campaigns to restrict access to and/or ban ‘video nasties’ altogether, press reports shifted from simply proposing and speculating about the potential effects viewing ‘video nasties’ could have on audiences, to reporting incidences in which blame for criminal behaviour was directly attributed to the viewing of ‘video nasties’. The case of Martin Austin, who was arrested and charged with rape, was widely reported upon in the popular press and it was frequently suggested and strongly implied that *I Spit on Your Grave* had a direct impact on his behaviour. For example, in one article, the film was described as being ‘one of the videos watched by rapist Martin Austin, 18, who was sentenced to six years youth custody on Monday at the Old Bailey for brutally assaulting two women while acting out sex fantasies gleaned from sadistic tapes’ (Miles 1983b: 2). Another article titled ‘Films “made youth rape”’, published in *The Times*, opened: ‘A youth raped two women after watching violent video films, the Central Criminal Court was told yesterday’ (Anon. 1983a: 3). It was also reported in this article that Austin ‘told the police: “I got the ideas for the rapes from a so-called video nasty”’ (ibid.) and it was reported that the Judge in the case ‘agreed that the rapes were triggered off by films’ (ibid.). The *Daily Mail* also reported on this case in an article titled ‘Fury over the video rapist’, the sub-heading of which read ‘Boy, 18, attacked women after seeing films’ (Miles 1983a: 1). In each of these articles, the film *I Spit on Your Grave* was mentioned, the implication being that this film had the ability to transform men into rapists.

Bullet-pointed at the end of the ‘Fury over the video rapist’ article, was a reference to another incident in which it was reported that ‘A hooded man dragged a mother from her car in a car park at Bracknell, Berkshire, at lunchtime and raped her’ (Miles

1983a: 2). In this instance, a report of a rape that, in isolation, did not draw direct links with the ‘video nasties’, but was included supplementary to an article that called for the banning of ‘video nasties’ served, rather distastefully, as a tool to instigate further moral panic and to aid in the campaign to ban video nasties.

It was also proposed in another article that viewing *The Last House on the Left* had a similar effect on Christopher Meah, who it was reported ‘raped and nearly killed a neighbour after watching a multiple rape scene’ (Daily Mail Reporter 1983: 13).

Meah’s defence lawyer was quoted in the *Daily Mail* arguing: ‘Meah said that as he raped and stabbed that woman he felt he was watching a film of himself. This is not the first case in recent months where violent behaviour has resulted from watching such films’ (ibid.). Such claims were given unwavering support in a number of articles published in the popular press, providing further leverage to the campaigns to censor ‘video nasties’, with little attention being paid to the context within which rape defendants and their lawyers claimed that viewing ‘video nasties’ caused them to rape women – to alleviate as much responsibility from them as possible. From this perspective, these popular press articles simply bought in to the claims of a man charged with rape and his defence team whose job it was to try to get these men as little punishment as possible for the rapes they carried out. As acknowledged by Sue Lees in her book *Carnal Knowledge: Rape on Trial*, ‘myths are important, as rapists draw on them to justify their violence...rapists do not invent their rationalizations; they draw for their vocabulary on social myths reflecting ideas they have every reason to believe others will find acceptable’ (1996: xiii). I would argue that we saw a similar idea at play in the press texts discussed above, where rapists used the socially current ‘videos nasties are responsible for increases in crime and rape’ idea

(claims not substantiated by any research) in order to help alleviate them of responsibility and blame for their actions.

In such instances of reports of rape, there was, near enough, a complete lack of accountability attributed to the men that carried out these rapes (as well as other violent attacks also). Furthermore, the rapists were frequently portrayed as ‘victims’ of the ‘video nasties’, with an overwhelming focus placed upon the damaging effects that viewing ‘video nasties’ supposedly had on the individuals carrying out the attacks. This lack of accountability was further emphasised in press reports in which family members of men who had committed rape and/or attempted-rape spoke about how ‘video nasties’ had transformed their male relatives into rapists. For example, Austin’s mother was quoted in an article arguing: ‘I don’t want to read next week that another young lad has done something because he was imitating these films’ (Miles 1983b: 2); and Meah’s wife was quoted arguing:

He was always watching video films, but two in particular called *The Thing* and *The Last House on the Left* really twisted his mind. One was about multiple sex attacks and not long after watching it he was raping and stabbing an unfortunate woman. It’s sickening to think what these films can do to a person (Daily Mail Reporter 1983: 13).

Family members of other men who had also carried out sexually violent attacks against women were similarly quoted in newspaper articles seeking to explain and consequently excuse their relatives’ behaviour. In one of these articles, titled ‘Videos “made my son violent”’, the father of Ian Slater, who was jailed after ‘admitting causing grievous bodily harm to a ten-year-old girl and attempting to rape her’ (Anon. 1983d: 3), argued that ‘video nasties’ had turned his teenage son into a

vicious sex attacker' (ibid.) and called for 'video nasties' to be banned. In the case of Austin, it was also reported that:

Defence lawyer Mr Robert Francis said Austin intended only to burgle, but when he saw the housewife was wearing a bathrobe and the chambermaid was naked he 'lived out his fantasy' brought on by the videos, which often portrayed women as enjoying rape (Miles 1983a: 1-2).

While this article does not explicitly state that *I Spit on Your Grave* represents the female protagonist, Jennifer, 'enjoying' being raped, that the film was blamed for the behaviour of Austin implies that it does. Furthermore, the only video nasty title named in this article was *I Spit on Your Grave*. Yet, *I Spit on Your Grave* does not represent the female protagonist 'enjoying' being raped, quite the opposite.

As Egan notes, many of those who impounded or condemned video nasties never watched them and would often single out a particular video on the basis of its title or the extremity of its video packaging, rather than considering the film's contextual or formal treatment of sex and violence (2007: 3). This highlights the contradictory nature of some of the press reports that argued there was a link between viewing 'video nasties' and copycat behaviour, as the behaviour of the men didn't even reflect what is represented in the films. In spite of this, however, the idea that 'video nasties' had the ability to turn men, beyond their control, into rapists was very rarely challenged in the popular press discourse surrounding the 'video nasties' and the films *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave*.

While a small number of articles published in the popular press argued against the 'video nasties' being restricted or banned altogether, these arguments were framed primarily around maintaining the freedom for people to watch what they wished to

(see, for example, Nicholls 1984: 55). In the texts analysed for this study (in relation to *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left*) there was little critical engagement that challenged or outright refuted the claims being made that viewing ‘video nasties’ had the effect of turning men into rapists. One of the very few articles in which this was challenged was in ‘Your video film turned my son into rapist’, an article published in the *Daily Mail* in which Austin’s mother spoke to Meir Zarchi (the director of *I Spit on Your Grave*). She argued that films such as *I Spit on Your Grave* had corrupted her son, while Zarchi rejected this argument. The feature opened: ‘The mother of a double rapist came face to face last night with the film director she blames for turning her son into a vicious sex attacker’ (Miles 1983f: 11), and later quoted Joan Austin speaking to Zarchi:

I’m not making excuses for the crimes my son committed. But before he raped these two women his life was an open book and I believed he could never do anything like this. But I believe that videos like yours corrupted him and changed his behaviour. He became addicted to them and gave him urges that were never there before (ibid.).

It was then reported that Zarchi replied:

I’m a father myself and I have two teenage children. They see all kinds of pictures. It doesn’t mean they would go and do something wrong. I sympathise with you...but can you turn the blame away from your son and put it on my shoulders? Emotionally, you’re right to feel what you do. Rationally, I can’t make any judgement without knowing your son’s character. These movies may have triggered him off. As a father I’m on your side. As a film-maker it is not my role to be a censor and dictate what people can or can’t see (ibid.).

Zarchi was also questioned about the case of Austin in another article and refuted that his film was responsible for Austin’s actions:

Told that *I Spit on Your Grave* was branded, among other videos, as being responsible for triggering an 18-year-old Middlesex youth, Martin Austin, into two rape attacks, Meir Zarchi...conceded: ‘A picture like this one can release hatred, particularly in a disturbed mind...Maybe this guy needed a catalyst. He was on a short fuse and maybe he would have done it anyway. Who am I to tell? (Miles 1983d: 18).

Considering that a significant amount of the press discussions focused on the ‘effects’ of the ‘video nasties’ - that they could distort people’s concepts of reality and fantasy and make them behave in particular way - it is interesting that concern about how these films may effect *women* was not widely discussed. There was no indication that people were concerned about *women* imitating the revenge fantasies represented in both *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left*. There was also no concern expressed for the women who had been affected by these men’s actions. How such films could affect the social positioning of women was rarely discussed in the popular press as a separate and/or significant issue. Deep worries were expressed by members of the Women’s Liberation movement, who were concerned about the degradation of women in many of the ‘video nasties’ (Barker 1984: 4), yet feminist voices were not included in the press discussions surrounding *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave*.

The spokespeople who were often quoted expressing concern about the effects of ‘video nasties’ were usually those directly associated with the campaign – Mary Whitehouse, MPs, Lords and peers who supported the Bill. If, as proposed by supporters of the censoring of ‘video nasties’, these films were making men rape women, there was little concern expressed for the women who had been/may in the future be raped. Instead, I would argue that in the popular press at least, more concern was expressed for the men who were (allegedly) being turned into rapists – their lives ruined due to their viewing of ‘video nasties’. The measures being taken to ban the nasties, it appeared, had little to do with protecting women, but more to do

with protecting men. Men who raped women, were portrayed as being victims of the ‘drug-like effects’ of video nasties, it implied that they were completely incapable of distinguishing between reality and fantasy, and that they were simply unable to do anything about the urges that were aroused within them after watching the representations of rape included in the films. This idea is exemplified in an article in the *Daily Mail* in which the mother of Martin Austin was quoted arguing: ‘These films have helped destroy my son’s life...they must be banned before another boy’s mind is infected by them’ (Tim Miles 1983a: 1).

Noticeably absent from any press discussions about the supposed effects that ‘video nasties’ had on viewers and children were any instances where *women* had carried out violence or sexual violence claiming to be ‘under the influence’ of ‘video nasties’. While a number of press texts referred to *I Spit on Your Grave* as being a film in which a woman who is raped takes revenge on her attackers (see, for example, Chippindale 1982b: 3; Bence 1982: 5; Gosling 1983: 3; Miles 1983a: 1-2; Miles 1983c: 9; Miles 1983d: 18; Miles 1983f: 11) or that it was a story of revenge (see Miles 1983e: 13) no incidences of *revenge* being influenced by the film were reported in the press.

Framing real-life stories of rape in relation to the viewing of ‘video nasties’ enabled both campaigners and supporters of the campaign (including the popular press) to capitalize on real-life incidences where men had raped women by insinuating that ‘video nasties’ were playing an active role in incidences where men were raping women. If the focus that was placed upon the representations of rape in *I Spit on*



*Your Grave* were instead placed on the representations of the woman seeking revenge on her rapists, the popular press would not have been able to report on incidences similar to this. The simple fact that it was a woman carrying out this violence further diminished this possibility. In fact from the articles I have analysed, which included reports of people carrying out attacks ‘under the influence’ of ‘video nasties’, where the sex of the perpetrator was identified, these were all men. As such, what was undeniably an issue of *male* violence, whether this be men raping women or men killing other men, was instead positioned as a problem that could affect everyone.

In the years since the initial furore surrounding the so-called ‘video nasties’, both *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* have continued to be discussed in the press in terms of their effects on (male) audiences. An article published in the *Daily Express* in 1985, detailed the findings of a report in which it was claimed that a gang rape of a school girl was based on a scene from *I Spit on Your Grave*’ (see Wood: 5). This claim was not challenged, but listed as fact. *I Spit on Your Grave* was also discussed in relation to the abduction and murder of two-year-old James Bulger in 1993. While *Child’s Play 3* was the main focus of attention, it was suggested that 10-year-old Jon Venables (who was charged and convicted of Bulger’s murder along with 10-year-old Robert Thompson) may have watched *I Spit on Your Grave* as the film’s title was written on the label of a video he had lent to a friend. The implication here being that he had seen a number of films that contained explicit representations of violence and that this, along with other factors, directly affected his behaviour (see Anon. 1993a: 36-37; Anon. 1993b: 39). And in 2013, in an article published in the *Daily Star* discussing the October 2012 abduction and murder of five-year-old

April Jones, it was heavily implied that the remake of *The Last House on the Left* had influenced Mark Bridger's behaviour (who was charged and later convicted of murdering April). The article's title and description read: 'Evil lust of paedo who fuelled his fantasies before doing it for real: He watched sick rape movie then murdered April in a sexual frenzy' (Lawton and Riley 2013: 6-7) and opens:

Slaughterman Mark Bridger murdered schoolgirl April Jones in a sex frenzy after watching a brutal rape movie over and over again. The evil beast snatched five-year-old April and drove back to his cottage where he put on a remake of banned video nasty *Last House on the Left* (6).

This article also included a sub-section 'Killer paused brutal vid' in which Jerry Lawton wrote:

*Last House* is not the first film said to have inspired a real murder and is the third of 73-year-old film-maker Craven's to be linked to a killing. In 2004, Daniel Gonzalez murdered four people in London and Sussex after watching *Nightmare on Elm Street*...In 2009, Gina Castillo was murdered by her 16-year-old son and his 15-year-old cousin as they tried to re-enact Craven's horror flick *Scream* in Los Angeles. Belgian Thierry Jaradin stabbed his neighbour 30 times wearing the film's killer's distinctive mask. In 2003, Allan Menzies said he killed his friend after being told to by a character in vampire film *Queen of the Damned*. He stabbed his pal to death and ate part of his head. And in 1993, 10-year-olds Jon Venables and Robert Thompson murdered James Bulger, two, in Bootle, Merseyside after one of their dads rented horror movie *Child's Play 3* (2013: 6).

Evident in such examples is the continual perpetuation of the idea that external factors have the effect of provoking sexual reactions in men that are uncontrollable. Ignoring the fact that men make choices to harass, rape and murder women and girls.

The remakes of *The Last House on The Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave* were released in 2009 and 2011 respectively, both of which have been identified as being, or containing elements of 'torture porn' films (see Jones 2013a; Cox 2011; Phelan 2011: 16; Matheou 2009: 56; Robey 2009: 29).

In a 2006 article for *New York Magazine* David Edelstein coined the phrase ‘torture porn’ (Lockwood 2009: 41). The first decade of the twenty-first century saw the emergence of this new sub-genre of horror film. Similar to the debates surrounding the ‘video nasties’, they have fallen prey to criticism by politicians, pressure groups, and media pundits for what is held to be their potentially damaging sadism and moral vacuity (Lockwood 2009: 40). What is considered to be new and distinctive about ‘torture porn’ films is the graphic and explicit nature of the violence represented in them (Lockwood: 2009: 44), the spectacle of young adults frequently bound or otherwise restrained and subjected to an ingenious range of lurid torture procedures and devices central to the entertainment (Lockwood 2009: 41), and scenes of torture constructed as elaborate set pieces which are intended to serve as focal points for the viewer’s visual pleasure (Middleton 2010: 2).

Similar to press discourse surrounding the so-called ‘video nasties’, press discourse surrounding ‘torture porn’ films have also included debates and concern expressed about censorship (see Anon. 2007: 71), representations of violence (Goodwin 2007: 6), audience effects (see McCartney 2007b: 19; McCartney 2007a: 26) and representations of violence against women (see Cochrane 2007: 4).

Steve Jones argues in his study that ‘the majority of critics have arrived at the consensus that *all* torture porn films are misogynistic’ (2013a: 132). It is notable, however, that in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remakes of *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave*, neither of these films were described as being misogynistic. This is somewhat surprising considering that both

of these films (unlike a number of other ‘torture porn’ films which were described and criticised for what was perceived to be their misogynistic content) include graphic and sustained representations of rape – therefore providing the opportunity for those journalists who had previously argued that ‘torture porn’ films were misogynistic and revelled in representing women suffering to further support these arguments.

It is evident from my analysis of the press coverage that surrounded the release of these two films that by the time they were released press attention to this subgenre of horror films, including attention paid to their perceived misogynistic content, was waning. Unlike many of the other films selected as case studies for this thesis, where the films were discussed not only in reviews but also articles and special features, the press coverage that surrounded the releases of both *The Last House on the Left* and *I Spit on Your Grave*, consisted mostly of film reviews. In addition to not being described as being misogynistic, these films were also rarely discussed in terms of violence against women (either in relation to the films themselves or beyond this immediate context). This is suggestive of a waning of popular and public interest in torture porn films and of the debates that these films initially ignited – the subject of misogyny and violence against women (being discussed in relation to film at least) no longer considered to hold enough social currency/interest for readers for such discussions to be included in the popular press. The lack of attention these film received could also be attributed to other factors including that neither have big stars or directors and / or that they simply were not considered to be very good or interesting. However, it is notable that this did not prevent earlier torture porn films (that similarly did not include stars and were critically reviled) being discussed at

length in the press. This idea of the topic of violence against women, whether this be in relation to representations of violence or in relation to the subject of violence against women more generally, holding more social currency at particular times is also evidenced in Chapter 4 this thesis, discussed in relation to the films *G.I. Jane* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1997) and *The General's Daughter* (Dir. Simon West, 1999) and in the previous chapter where representations of violence and censorship debates dominated the press discourse surrounding the release of *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971).

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of each of these films, only one spoke of the subject of male violence against women beyond the immediate context of the film. This article, published in *The Guardian*, and written by Julie Bindel (a feminist activist), was titled 'I was wrong about ISOYG: The rape horror *I Spit on Your Grave* is in fact less exploitative than sugary fantasies about justice'. Bindel compares *I Spit on Your Grave* (discussing both the original and remade versions of the film) to the film *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) a film that also includes a graphic representation of a woman being raped by a group of men, the narrative of the film centring on the rape trial. In her article, Bindel writes:

Whereas *The Accused* serves as a warning to men who do nothing to stop rape, the punishment they receive in the film is highly unlikely to happen in reality. The revenge meted out in *ISOYG*, however, is something men should fear. It does not rely on the law of the land, but on a woman being pushed too far and deciding enough is enough...I still believe in our criminal justice system and am against vigilante attacks, but the fact remains that the majority of men who rape women get away with it. If I were gang-raped, aware as I am of the near impossibility of winning justice through the courts, I would not be sitting here fantasising about being saved by crusading lawyers and nice men. I stand by the pickets against the video-nasty genre 30 years ago, but on reflection I was wrong about *ISOYG* being harmful. It was and still is

exploitative, but at least it does not present the criminal justice system as a friend to women. If rape remains as easy to get away with as it is at present, films in which women get even through the legal system will become as unrealistic as *ISOYG* (2011: 30).

Here, in discussing *I Spit on Your Grave* (along with *The Accused*) Bindel highlights, and brings to the attention of readers (where they otherwise may not have been), problems with the criminal justice system's record of obtaining criminal justice for rape survivors.

In stark opposition to Bindel's article, some of the press coverage that surrounded the releases of the remakes of *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* reinforced rape myths. One review of the remake of *I Spit on Your Grave* argued:

Renting an isolated log cabin in the outer reaches of Hicksville, USA, has never been a good idea. Especially if you are on your own and a scantily-clad babe, who has already attracted the attention of the sex-starved, jug-eared locals at the gas station (Anon. 2011a: 37).

This statement implies, first of all, that Jennifer made a bad decision when she decided to travel on her own to holiday in an isolated area. Secondly, it implies that her appearance – in particular the way that she was dressed – attracted the wrong type of attention, from the wrong type of people. If she hadn't have gone to this isolated place on her own, and if she wasn't 'scantily-clad', the attack wouldn't have happened as *she* wouldn't have attracted the wrong type of attention. A similar comment was made in a review of *The Last House on the Left*, David Edwards writing that Mari, with her friend Paige, 'makes the unwise decision to buy pot off a creepy teenager' (2009: 2, 3) – the implication here being that it was Mari's 'unwise' decision that set the ball rolling for the following events. In another instance, when *The Last House on the Left* was screened at the National Film Theatre in 1988, an

article published in the *Independent* described the film's narrative in the following way:

*The Last House on the Left* tells the highly moral story of a nice girl who goes out on her seventeenth birthday with a dubious friend looking for kicks. They make the mistake of asking a youth for some marijuana and he leads them straight into the arms of an escaped convict and gang who proceed to mistreat them shamefully, eventually leaving them for dead (Allan 1988: 20).

In each of these instances, the actions of, and choices made by women who are later raped are described in a manner that criticises *their* actions – ‘unwise’, ‘mistake’, ‘never been a good idea’.

In a review published in *The Times*, the female characters who are kidnapped, one of whom is also raped, were described in the following way: ‘the victims are a couple of shapely 17-year-old girls, who look decidedly more interesting when they’re stripped to their underwear at knifepoint’ (JC 2009: 14). This language, which places a focus on the appearance of the young girls in a context that aligns this with them being attacked, describes them (at least in this moment of the film) in a way that is meant to be titillating, with a focus on their physique. The use of sexualised language to describe female victims of sexually violent crimes is well documented, particularly in relation to news reporting (see for example Benedict 1992, Soothill and Walby 1991). In *Virgin or Vamp: how the press covers sex crimes*, Helen Benedict notes: ‘men are never described as hysterical, bubbly, pretty, pert, prudish, vivacious, or flirtatious, yet these are all words used to describe the female victims of cases I have examined...Male crime victims are rarely described in terms of their sexual attractiveness, while female crime victims almost always are’ (1992: 20-21). The review continued:

Mari...is a Paris Hilton blonde on holiday with her parents in a lonely lakeside house in the middle of a forest. She and her best friend, Paige...are jumped by a small group of unshaven drifters. The mauling of these rich, young girls by these grubby, sadistic males excites the horror (JC 2009: 14).

Here, the social class of the victims – the fact that they come from a privileged background (mainly concerning their parents' financial situation) – it is claimed, adds further enjoyment to viewing them getting 'mauled'. It is implied here that there is pleasure to be had in viewing these two girls being attacked, and the way that they look and the fact that they are 'rich' adds to that pleasure. Similarly, in a review published in the *Daily Mirror*, David Edwards described Mari (played by Sara Paxton), the female character who is raped, as a '17-year-old hotty' (2009: 2, 3), as well as referring to Mari and her friend Paige as 'all teeth and hotpants' (2009: 2, 3). Exemplified here, again, is the sexualisation of the female characters in *The Last House on the Left*. In the previous chapter of this thesis, I discussed and highlighted how the female character in *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) – Amy Sumner (played by Susan George) – was frequently sexualised in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film, and how she was also described in a derogatory manner. While I acknowledge that in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Last House on the Left* such descriptions of the female characters did not dominate, still evident in these cases (almost forty-years after the release of *Straw Dogs*) is the most unnecessary, and not to mention irrelevant, comments on the appearance of the female characters in these films.

### Summary and Conclusion

As part of the 'video nasties' debates, the original versions of *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* were discussed in a very one-dimensional format. It



was argued that these films (along with others) distorted viewers' perceptions of reality and caused men to rape women. Most notable was the lack of attention paid to the subject and social significance of male sexual/non-sexual violence against women. Rapists were portrayed as victims of the 'video nasties', with an overwhelming focus placed upon the damaging effects that viewing 'video nasties' supposedly had on the individuals carrying out the attacks. It was frequently implied that they *alone* were having an effect on male behaviour that was positioned as being out of control and unable to restrain. As such, the idea that males 'can't help it' and/or that external factors have the effect of provoking sexual reactions in men that are uncontrollable were propagated. This also functions to alleviate men of responsibility of their actions. Similar ideas were also reinforced in press texts where the films were mentioned in 1983, 1993 and 2013.

While concerns about violence against women were present in the emerging discourses surrounding 'torture porn' films, it is apparent that interest in both of these topics had subsided when the remakes of *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* were released. While this could be attributed to a number of factors, one suggestion is that popular and public interest in 'torture porn' films had waned, consequently press texts that discussed 'torture porn' and violence against women were no longer current or relevant (as they were only a few years prior).

Similar to my analysis in Chapter 1, in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remakes of *I Spit on Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left*, rape myths were reinforced. Some were also victim-blaming. This indicates how

such ideas continue to permeate culture and exemplifies the necessity to analyse reviews and features of films that include representations of rape in the context of wider social discourses surrounding attitudes to the rape of women by men.

Also exemplified was the use of sexualised language to describe the female characters who are raped in a context specifically aligned to them being raped. This has implications for the way in which representations of rape are perceived as entertainment, the trivialisation of rape in culture and attitudes towards rape and sexual violence against women in a wider social context.

## Chapter 3

### Representations of Rape and the Criminal Justice System

In this chapter, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) which tells the story of Sarah Tobias' battle for legal justice after she is raped by a group of men in a bar in front of a crowd of cheering spectators. The film is 'inspired by' the events of the New Bedford rape where a woman was gang-raped on a pool table in a bar in New Bedford, Massachusetts, although the film carried the disclaimer that any similarity to a 'real' case was purely coincidental (Cuklanz 1996: 10). This case 'obtained worldwide publicity in the 1980s' (Lees 1996: 47) and the trial was televised on CNN. Notably, there are some significant differences between this real-life incident and the story represented in the film, and I will go on to discuss these, and the implications of these, in my analysis of the press coverage.

In both the United Kingdom and the United States of America, the Criminal Justice System has faced criticism for the way rape cases have been dealt with and, in the process of this, how women reporting rape have been treated. I begin this chapter by providing an overview of these criticisms and discourses as well as detailing changes that have been introduced to the legal system with the hope of improving the treatment of rape survivors going through the judicial process. This will provide some important social and historical context to the discussion and analysis that follows.

### Rape, The Criminal Justice System and Judicial Process

In the 1970s, feminists in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America exposed, and began to challenge, the Criminal Justice System's treatment of rape survivors. It was argued that the corroboration rule, the force and resistance requirement, the marital exemption, and routine introduction of a survivor's sexual history, embodied 'typical male perceptions, attitudes and reactions rather than female ones' (McGregor 2012: 78).

Rape cases that went to trial resulted in the victim being subjected to brutal and humiliating cross-examination of her life, particularly her prior sex life. The object of these cross-examinations was to make her out, no matter how violent or outrageous the alleged rape was, to be a 'bad girl' who either consented to the events or got what she deserved given her 'loose' lifestyle (ibid.).

In the U.K., in response to the campaigning of groups such as the Rights of Women, the Women's Aid Federation, Women against Rape, and Rape Crisis, as well as evidence found by committees set up to investigate the way in which the Criminal Justice System has dealt with rape, the judicial treatment of rape has, over the years, undergone some significant changes (Lees 1996: xiv). In 1975, the Heilbron Committee was set up in the United Kingdom to investigate the way that the Criminal Justice System dealt with rape cases and rape survivors. One of the main criticisms to emerge from their corresponding report was:

the fact that a woman's reputation judged by her assumed sexual character and sexual history (describing a woman as a 'slut', for example), was deemed to be relevant to whether or not she had consented. It was argued that the introduction of such evidence did nothing to advance the cause of justice, effectively putting the woman on trial. Accordingly, the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act (1976) was passed, aimed at limiting such evidence. Under Section 2 of this act, the defence is required to apply to the judge for permission to cross examine the complainant regarding her sexual history or sexual character (Lees 1996: xiv).

Such ‘shield rules’, which are ‘designed to prevent defence lawyers from routinely cross-examining victims about their sexual history as a method of undermining the victim’s credibility and playing into myths about women and sexuality’ (Kelly *et al.* 2006 referenced in McGregor 2012: 70), have been introduced in a number of countries, though, as Joan McGregor has acknowledged, just how well these have been, and continue to be used is debateable: ‘even in nations appearing to have progressive legal reforms, such as Britain and Canada, the old standards and myths get smuggled into the process through entrenched attitudes by agents in the system, namely, the police, judges and even the public’ (2012: 79, 87).

The Heilbron Committee report also acknowledged how the publicity of rape cases, and in particular that of the complainant, was harmful and served as a deterrent to bringing proceedings. In light of this, it was argued in the report that, other than in quite exceptional circumstances, the complainant should have anonymity (Home Affairs – Fifth Report 2003). Subsequent to such recommendations made in the Heilbron Committee report, anonymity for complainants in rape cases was introduced in 1976. Notably, however, while the Heilbron Committee recommended anonymity only for complainants, arguing that defendants in rape cases should be treated in the same way as any other crime, the Standing Committee ‘voted by a large majority to extend anonymity provisions to the defendant in rape cases’ (Home Affairs – Fifth Report 2003). Consequently, anonymity provisions were granted to both complainants *and* defendants in the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 1976. This ‘was seen to be necessary to ensure equality in the law between complainants and defendants’ (Home Affairs – Fifth Report 2003) as ‘it was argued that potentially innocent defendants needed to be protected from the social stigma of a

rape allegation, which often remained for life, notwithstanding an acquittal' (Home Affairs – Fifth Report 2003).

In 1988, anonymity for rape defendants was repealed. However, as Jennifer Temkin acknowledges, there have been, and indeed continue to be, some who oppose this change in law:

A number of defendants who have caught the attention of the press after their acquittal on rape charges have complained publicly about their lack of anonymity thus drawing even greater attention to themselves. Implicit in these complaints is an assumption that allegations of rape are prone to be false, so that men require special protection from them (2002: 308).

One prevalent myth is that men need to be protected from women who are perceived as being prone to make false allegations 'for all sorts of reasons, ranging from spite and revenge through fantasy and pretence (as a means of hiding their infidelity or sexual adventures) to confusing bad sex with rape' (Lees 1996: xxi-xxii). Such myths and stereotypes about rape operate not only at an individual level, they also infiltrate institutions – one of these being the legal system – and a number of studies suggest that stereotypes and prescriptive beliefs about rape affect attitudes and decision making by police officers and jurors when dealing with rape cases (see, for example, Lees 1996; Temkin and Krahé 2008; O'Keeffe, Brown and Lyons 2009).

Attrition rates in rape cases have also be the subject of much scrutiny and interrogation concerning rape and the Criminal Justice System. Historically, attrition rates, 'the proportion of cases that "fall out" over the course of the criminal justice process' (Walby, Armstrong and Strid 2012: 100), in rape cases have been (and

continue to be) high. This can happen for a number of reasons from the complaints being designated false, ‘no crime’, or victims declining to complete the initial investigative process and victim withdrawals (Kelly, Lovett and Regan 2005: xi). In their study *Sexual Assault and the Justice Gap: A Question of Attitude*, Temkin and Krahé propose that one way in which the problem of the ‘justice gap’ could be approached is by challenging the acceptance of rape myths in society, noting how:

judgements about rape cases are influenced by schematic processing, relying on stereotypical beliefs about rape which contain a restrictive and inaccurate understanding of what “real rape” is. By reducing the range of what is considered a genuine rape complaint, these stereotypes are a contributory factor in the justice gap. Rape stereotypes affect the judgements made by individuals dealing with rape cases, for example as police officers, judges or members of a jury, and thereby shape the understanding of rape as it is represented and dealt with in the criminal justice system (2008: 209).

*The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988)

*The Accused* was released in the U.K. early in the year of 1989 after a period in time where attention to the Criminal Justice System’s treatment of women reporting rape, and their treatment throughout the judicial process, had resulted in some significant changes in the legal system. While the film represents a rape trial taking place in the American legal system, some of the issues represented and engaged with (such as lawyers exhibiting victim-blaming attitudes and survivors being questioned about their sex lives) are the same as those that were criticised and challenged within the British legal system.

For example, in only the second scene of the film, it is suggested that Tobias’ behaviour on the night she was gang-raped will work against her in the criminal rape case she wishes to pursue against the men who raped her. When Kathryn

Murphy (Tobias' attorney) attends the hospital where Tobias is being treated, when reading some notes she has acquired relating to the evenings events the following exchange is represented between her and Carol Hunnicut (a woman sent from a Rape Centre to assist Tobias):

Murphy: A lot of alcohol.

Hunnicut: Legally drunk.

Murphy: And grass too, what else.

Hunnicut: What difference does that make? She was raped by three men.

Murphy: I'm not a rape counsellor. I'm a prosecutor and I have to make a rape case.

In a later discussion Murphy asks Tobias 'Did you have anything to drink before you went to The Mill? Or smoke anything?' She also asks Tobias how she was dressed the night she was raped to which Tobias responds 'What's that supposed to mean', and Murphy answers 'It means were you dressed provocatively? Showing a lot of cleavage? See-through blouse?' In the same exchange, Murphy also asks Tobias 'did how you dress make those guys think that they could have sex with you? Did you put on a show?', about her criminal record, and whether she had ever had sex with more than one man at a time. When challenged by Tobias about the relevance of such questioning, Murphy states:

It's the kind of question you're gonna be asked on the stand. You're also gonna be asked if Larry or any other man has ever hit you and if you liked it. You're gonna be asked about your drug bust and how many drinks a day you have to smooth out the edges, and how many joints, and how often you go to bars alone and whether or not you wear underwear when you go to them, and which diseases you've caught and how many abortions you've had and I will object to all those questions and sometimes the judge will sustain me. Sometimes not.



Tobias responds ‘That ain’t fair’ and Murphy continues: ‘Sarah, you’re a witness and it’s the defence’s job to show the jury that you’re a rotten witness because you’ve got a rotten character’. In another scene, in which Murphy meets with the defence lawyers of the men who are initially charged with rape, one of the defence lawyers argues: ‘She walked into a bar, got loaded and stoned and did everything but yank their dicks. No jury will buy her’. It is agreed in this meeting (without any communication with, or input from, Tobias) that the initial charge of rape made against the defendants will be reduced to reckless endangerment. One of the reasons attributed to why this decision was made was that it was considered that the only means through which the defendants would serve time in prison was if they pleaded guilty to a charge, which they would not do with a rape charge or any other sexual offence. If Murphy proceeded with the rape case, the men would not plead guilty, and because Tobias would not have been considered a strong witness (due to the fact she had consumed alcohol and behaved in a ‘provocative’ manner towards the men prior to them raping her) the jury would deliver a ‘not guilty’ verdict. As exemplified in the scenes described here, individuals working in the Criminal Justice System are represented in *The Accused* as either holding stereotypical beliefs about what factors contribute to why women are raped, or, at least, are represented as being aware that myths and stereotypes about rape infiltrate the Criminal Justice System and may significantly affect the procedures and outcomes of rape cases.

While, as exemplified above, *The Accused* is quite explicit in its engagement with some of the feminist criticisms that had been made about the treatment of females who reported rape in the years prior to the release of the film, the *legal* proceedings represented in the film were seldom criticised in the press coverage that surrounded

the release of the film. Few articles, features and/or reviews of *The Accused* engaged in discussions about how the Criminal Justice System (as represented in the film) responded to and dealt with Tobias' case or how myths and attitudes surrounding rape impacted her case, with the majority including references to the Criminal Justice System only through simple narrative descriptions. From the texts analysed for this study, only one explicitly criticised the Criminal Justice System and positioned it as negatively affecting Tobias' quest for (criminal) justice. This appeared in a review of the film published in the *Daily Express* titled 'Horrific rape that puts the law on trial' in which Ian Christie describes how 'Murphy's experience in the courtroom tells her that both judge and jury would consider that Sarah's background and her behaviour on the night would work against her' (1989: 28) and how the attitude would be that Tobias 'was inviting a sexual attack and, in a sense, deserved what she got' (ibid.). He then moves on to argue this is a 'deplorable attitude...and the film rightly accuses those holding it of prejudice' (ibid.). As such, in his review of the film, Christie openly criticised not only those working within the Criminal Justice System who held views that Tobias 'asked' to be raped, but also those that held that view more generally - contributing to media and cultural discourses that challenge rape myths such as those that blame victims for their rape.

In opposition to this, in a review of the film published in the *Independent*, Adam Mars-Jones argued that Tobias 'is relatively well treated by the authorities, and even if her wishes are not followed in full detail, at least there is no question of her attackers getting off with fines or suspended sentences' (1989: 15). In spite of Tobias being represented throughout the film as being *dissatisfied* with the way she is treated, in this instance, her voice was somewhat ignored by Mars-Jones in favour of

what *he* perceived to be the correct manner in which she should have been treated by the authorities (this is similar to the manner in which Amy's voice was ignored in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) as discussed in Chapter 1).

One possible suggestion as to why there was a lack of engagement with, and criticism of the Criminal Justice system (either as represented in the film or beyond this immediate context) in the press coverage is due to the film concluding on a positive note - with the men who cheered and encouraged the rape of Tobias being found guilty of criminal solicitation. As such, the prior criminal proceedings of the men who raped Tobias, and her dissatisfaction with how this case was dealt with are overshadowed by the message at the end of the film which is that justice prevails.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this film is based on a real-life story where a woman was raped by a group of men on a pool table in a bar in Massachusetts. This case 'obtained worldwide publicity in the 1980s' (Lees 1996: 47). The message that the ending of *The Accused* conveys is very different to the real-life story where, while after the rape, a candlelit vigil was attended by more than 2,500 people and money was donated to set up a Rape Crisis centre, 'after the conviction of the four defendants, the tide of sympathy turned from the victim to the perpetrators and a much larger demonstration of between 10,000 to 15,000 people marched in solidarity with the accused to protest at their convictions' (Lees 1996: 47).

This disparity between the ‘happy ending’ represented in the film and of the real-life story was not highlighted in any of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film. Where it was mentioned that the film was based on this real-life event (see Amiel 1989: 19; Bonner 1989: 13; Goodman 1989: 46; Johnstone 1988: 10; Mather 1989b: 18) this was usually to simply describe the event of the rape itself – something along the lines of a woman was gang-raped in a bar in New Bedford, Massachusetts – with no reference made to the treatment of the survivor by local people. Only a couple of references were made to the legal proceedings of the real-life case, Joan Goodman describing how ‘in real life, the case was successfully prosecuted’ (1989: 46) and Hilary Bonner arguing that the trial was difficult for the female survivor – ‘she was so emotionally wrecked by the ordeal [the rape itself] and the trial that three years later she drove her car into a lamp-post at 90 mph, killing herself and badly injuring her two children’ (1989: 13). Perhaps to reference this case in more detail would have destroyed the illusion of justice and closure that the film represents. Or, perhaps the press was more interested in the fantasy of justice represented in the film as opposed to the harsh reality of the real-life incident where, as Lisa Cuklanz notes, after national CNN coverage and local newspapers publicised the female survivor’s name, she was subjected to continued threats and harassment and subsequently changed her identity and left town (1996: 10). Either way, this lack of engagement (be it intentional or otherwise) contributes to a representation and illusion (or rather delusion) that the Criminal Justice system is on the side of women and that justice, in the end will prevail.

There was one other article (in addition to Christie’s and Mars-Jones’ articles discussed above) that engaged in more detailed discussions about the Criminal

Justice System. This was Barbara Amiel's article titled 'There is no problem with society's attitude to rape' and published in *The Times*, in which she expressed dissatisfaction with the recent changes to how rape cases were being dealt with and conducted in the American legal system. Amiel described how, in the United States of America, feminists had 'managed to get rid of the judge's warning to the jury about uncorroborated evidence in sexual cases', 'eliminated the "recent complaint" rule (which used to give additional value to a complainant's evidence if she goes to the police shortly after her assault)' and restrict cross-examination of rape survivors 'on grounds that her sex life or sexual behaviour is a private matter (1989: 19). Far from being considered progressive, these changes, which came about partly through feminist activism, were considered by Amiel to be unfair to the men who rape charges were brought against and managed 'to make rape the one crime in which the accused cannot make a full and proper defence' (ibid.). Amiel went on to claim that 'the situation is not as bad in this country [the U.K.], simply because here the judge has greater judicial discretion' (ibid.) but did go on to include a couple of examples of feminists in Britain who were 'copying' American feminists in their challenging of the conduct of legal professionals in cases of rape, reporting:

Only this week, a rape victim complained bitterly about her cross-examination in court and the feminists called at once for the firing of the judge. In fact, the judge had conducted the court in such a way that the jury had found the man guilty of attempted rape. Last year, Judge Turner, who found a youth guilty of rape, was a target of furious attacks after making the rather ordinary observation that "rape can be serious and not so serious". Leading feminist, Harriet Harman, MP, said she found this remark "appalling". The examples are endless and the danger is evident (ibid.).

In her article, Amiel expressed a discomfort at the legal and cultural shift that was occurring around the time *The Accused* was released, exemplifying a discomfort relating to changing attitudes towards rape as well as some of the legal changes that were introduced in attempts to improve the judicial process for rape survivors. In

expressing her opinions relating to these, the idea that there are rapes that should be considered and treated more seriously than others (by both the Criminal Justice System, as well as in society more generally) was reinforced and propagated.

As well as propagating the idea that certain rapes are and should be considered more serious than others (both within the legal system as well as in society), Amiel's article also supported and reinforced the idea that women 'ask' to be raped. She argued:

Traditionally, society divided rape victims into two categories. There were those who were innocent victims and those who were 'asking for it'. The innocent victims were protected to the hilt and no shame was attached to their predicament. Then there was the victim who may or may not have given consent, but whose provocative behaviour made the offence partly excusable. No doubt in some borderline cases this resulted in injustice to victims, but it was an attitude that reflected both balance and commonsense. What feminism is doing with much success is pushing for the abolition of this distinction in order to regard rape as an equally heinous offence regardless of circumstance (ibid.).

This idea was also reinforced in an article published in *The Daily Telegraph* titled 'The price of provocation' in which Nicola Tyrer, asked a 'panel of experts' for their verdict on *The Accused* and whether they believed Tobias was 'asking for it'. These included women who had been victims of assault (both sexual and non-sexual), a man who worked at a treatment centre with people who had committed rape and other sexual offences, a solicitor dealing in family law, and a counsellor at a Rape Crisis Centre – Tina Billings – who was raped in 'similar circumstances to the victim in *The Accused*' (Tyrer 1989: 15). One contributor from the 'panel of experts' was Diana Lamplugh, founder of the Lamplugh Trust aimed at making women safer in the working place. Diana Lamplugh's daughter, Suzy, went missing in 1986. Her body has ever been found, but she has been presumed murdered and was legally

declared dead in 1993 (Suzy Lamplugh Trust 2016). Diane was quoted in the article arguing that one of the messages of the film is that:

...although no woman deserves to be raped she should not let herself get into a situation where she is not able to say “no” quickly enough. There is no doubt that in the film the victim’s ability to protect herself is diminished by the fact that she had drunk alcohol and smoked marijuana...she did not recognise the fact that she was going too far. People often fail to realise the effect they are having on others and youngsters need to be taught, either by their parents or at school, what the dangers are (qtd. in Tyrer 1989: 15).

While Lamplugh was not quoted here explicitly stating (as did Amiel in her article) that certain women who are raped ‘ask for it’, she heavily implies that Tobias’ behaviour makes her at least partially responsible for the rapes committed against her. It is suggested that she got herself into a situation in which she was not able to say no ‘quickly enough’ and that due to the fact she had consumed alcohol and smoked marijuana, her ability to protect herself was diminished – it implied that if she had behaved differently she may not have been raped.

That women ‘ask’ to be raped was a topic frequently mentioned and discussed in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused*. Notably, however, unlike those texts discussed above in which this idea was supported, it was more likely to be rejected. While it was often acknowledged that popular prejudices concerning women and rape were prevalent in society (for example that women who wear skirts and/or behave provocatively ‘ask’ to be raped) rather than being endorsed/propagated these ideas were most often challenged, criticised or countered. This is particularly interesting considering that, as discussed in further detail in the previous chapter, newspaper reports of real-life stories of rape have been found to perpetuate myths and stereotypes about rape (perpetrated by men against women). In an article published in the *Daily Mirror*, titled ‘Asking for it? The provocative

question raised by Jodie's new movie', Hilary Bonner argued that the film's message 'is that it is any woman's right to dress and behave as provocatively as she likes and still say No' (Bonner 1989: 13). Sandra Horley, the director of a Family Rescue Centre was also quoted arguing in an article published in *The Sunday Times*: 'The good thing about the film is that it raises all the myths and prejudices – and explodes them. So what if she was wearing a short skirt?' (Horley qtd. in Wade 1989: 5); and Lynda Lee-Potter also argued in her feature published in the *Daily Mail* that film is:

...a horrifying account of a bright streetwise little waitress who rightly thinks that a girl should be able to look sexy and have a joke with the boys without them automatically assuming that she is fair game (1989: 12).

These discussions that took place in the popular press in relation to *The Accused* illustrate how feminist discourses surrounding rape, particularly those pertaining to women's right to bodily autonomy and challenging victim-blaming discourses, which were initiated by feminists in the 1970s, had permeated into more mainstream avenues of thinking (in this case the U.K. popular press) at the time *The Accused* was released. Importantly, these texts in which *The Accused* was discussed also contribute to these discourses.

Interestingly, however, while the discourses contributed to and supported in the examples above were initiated by feminists and through feminist activism, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused*, these ideas were not positioned as feminist ideas but rather as simple fact. Discussions about feminism and/or feminist ideas were relatively infrequent in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* (see Amiel 1989: 19; Bonner 1989: 13; Mather 1989a: 15; Wade 1989: 5). A couple of press texts from those selected and analysed for this case study did discuss the film in terms of its status as a feminist film – Bonner



describing how the film had been dismissed as a ‘feminist diatribe against men’ (1989: 13) and in another article, Jodie Foster (who plays Tobias in the film) was quoted arguing that the film ‘is a feminist movie because it talks about women in a real way...this film is powerful because it is real’ (Mather 1989a: 15). As Karen Hollinger notes, ‘Foster was, and probably still is, the only major Hollywood actress who consistently plays strong female characters and refuses to run away from the feminist label’ (2012: 43). In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused*, Foster was explicit in her discussions about the film and the subject of rape, contributing to discourses that sought to highlight the problem of rape and counter discourses that blame women for their victimisation. For example, in her review of the film published in the *Independent*, Sheila Johnston argued that the film ‘pivots on one core issue: can a woman ever be assumed to have invited rape?’ (1989: 29) and quotes Foster who argues:

I think the film asks that question. And answers it...You respond to Sarah as a human being whether you like her or not. She’s very sensual, confident; she has a strong sense of herself. And violence is not a valid response to that. When you see her not just abused but ignored, neglected, dehumanised, you see that this is a faulty question. Nobody deserves or asks to be raped (ibid.).

Foster was also quoted in other articles arguing ‘rape is not a sexual act, it is an act of violence’ (Mather 1989a: 15), ‘I don’t think that there is any way anybody deserves to be raped. That argument doesn’t exist’ (Bonner 1989: 13) and ‘rape is about domination, about oppression and the stripping of somebody’s will and making them an object...Women are plagued by double standards. Women are supposed to be sensual but not in public, or they get punished’ (Lee-Potter 1989: 12). She also argued that those involved in the production of the film (herself included) were doing something important:

Important on a practical level, to encourage people to report the many rapes that go unreported in this country. Important to women in opening up a topic which is still largely taboo. And important to men and women both: to encourage them to discuss, to create a conversation (Goodman 1989: 46).

It was revealed in some of the publicity surrounding the release of the film that the film's other female star, Kelly McGillis, had previously been raped by a gang of men (see Bonner 1989: 13; Goodman 1989: 46; Johnston 1989: 29). Similar to Foster, where McGillis was quoted, she was also explicit in her discussions about the subject of rape, contributing to discourses that sought to bring attention to, and foreground, the social problem of rape. She was quoted in one article arguing 'rape is a crime that has been hidden too long, been clothed in secrecy' (Bonner 1989: 13) and in another she was quoted saying:

What I hoped was that the film would help give other rape victims a voice, that it would open up the whole subject for discussion. Rape is a crime that has been hidden too long, been clothed in secrecy. I find it in myself. Even now I still feel embarrassment about discussing it, while intellectually I know I shouldn't (Goodman 1989: 46).

Also exemplified here, is how press discussions about *The Accused* were not limited to discussions solely about the film/Tobias but extended to women and the subject of rape in society more generally (for further examples, see Goodman 1989: 46; Mars-Jones 1989: 15; Johnston 1989: 29; Johnstone 1989: 7; Mather 1989b: 18; Tyrer 1989: 15, French 1989: 42), highlighting how press coverage of films contribute to media and cultural discourses surrounding rape, playing a role in constructing frameworks of thinking about rape.

While there was general consensus across the press coverage in which *The Accused* was discussed that the group rape of Tobias was a horrendous act and, as exemplified above, the idea that women 'ask' to be raped was frequently interrogated, challenged and dismissed, there was an overwhelming focus on Tobias'

personal character and her behaviour. This was the case for texts that mentioned, supported or challenged prejudices, myths and stereotypes surrounding rape as well as in more simple descriptions of the film's narrative. For example, Bonner's article 'Asking for it?' opened:

She is young, blonde and sexy. She has been drinking and smoking dope. Wearing a skimpy tank top and a skirt up to her armpits, she flirts with a group of men in a bar. A smooching dance session starts to go too far. She tries to get away. But the men noisy and excited now, will not let her go. Finally, three of them attack her in a gang-rape. Others watch, cheering as if they are at a football match. *After all, she was asking for it...wasn't she?* (1989: 13).

The format of this article, in which Tobias' actions in the moments before she was gang-raped were listed prior to revealing that she was raped was implemented in a number of other articles and reviews also. Mars-Jones described how:

After rowing with her boyfriend, a young woman (played by Jodie Foster) goes to a bar, where she drinks, smokes some dope, flirts, dances provocatively, and is raped by three men while the rest of the crowd cheers the rapists on (1989: 15).

In his review of the film, published in *The Sunday Times*, Iain Johnstone similarly described how in the film:

Jodie Foster plays Sarah, a young waitress who lives in a mobile home with a feckless boyfriend. After a row she stalks off to the local bar for sound entertainment. She is provocatively dressed, she has smoked a joint, she drinks too much, she dances flirtatiously with a young man and then she is gang-raped on a pinball machine by him and his chums (1989: 7).

As did Richard Mayne in his review of the film published in *The Sunday Telegraph*:

...Tobias, a working-class girl who quarrels with her lover and goes to commune, drink and smoke hash with a waitress friend at a roadside bar. She wears a mini-skirt, and her car registration reads SXY SADIE. Getting high, she flirts with a college-boy, then dances provocatively to a juke-box in the back room. Gang-rape follows, on top of a pin-table, in front of an excited claque (1989: 17).

It could be argued that these writers were simply describing the content of the film.

The rape scene does not only show the rape, but also the moments leading up to it.

We see Tobias enter the bar, consume alcohol (of which some is bought by one of the men who later rapes her), and also dance with one of the men that went on to

rape her. Throughout the film, these ‘factors’ are also repeatedly raised by a number of characters and the defence and prosecution teams. In addition to this, it could be argued that in order for the writers of these texts to counter the argument that it was Tobias’ behaviour (and in certain instances women’s behaviour more generally) that caused her to be raped, this behaviour had to be described and the most effective way to do this was to use the language most familiar in describing incidents of rape which do focus on female behaviour. While these descriptions appeared in articles that, at the least, questioned the idea that through their own behaviour women ‘ask’ to be raped, this focus on female/Tobias’ behaviour had the effect of making the behaviour of the men who raped her less visible.

The language used to describe Tobias in press discussions of the film often referred to and judged her sexuality. She was, for example, described as being ‘a bit of a tart’ (Bonner 1989: 13) and ‘a slut with a drug record’ (Mather 1988: 12). It was also claimed that she ‘generally led a “loose” life’ (Brown 1989: 20), and another concluded: ‘If anyone ever looked like “asking for it”, Sarah did: but even slags [implying that Tobias is a slag] – though they ought not to tease – deserve the right to say No’ (Mayne 1989: 17). Another article (notably the same one discussed earlier in this chapter propagated the idea that certain women ‘ask’ to be raped) described the scene in which Tobias confronts Murphy after she finds out the charge against the men who raped her has been reduced to reckless endangerment in a plea bargain made with the defence team, quoting how Tobias argues that ‘the whole world “thinks I’m a piece of shit”’ (Amiel 1989: 19), that ““everybody believes that. You told them”’ (ibid.). The article’s writer, Amiel then argued: ‘This baffles me. The world would have thought precisely as badly of the victim even if she had not been

raped. Her low status is not a stigma from the rape it is a stigma of her drug-filled, sluttish way of life' (ibid.). That Tobias' sex life was referred to in such a manner is particularly interesting considering the number of sexual relationships she has had is never disclosed in the film. All that we (the audience) are informed is that she has a live-in boyfriend and that the last time she had sex prior to being raped was two weeks ago (she is asked this at the hospital immediately prior to undergoing a forensic examination). In some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film there was, therefore, a disparity between what is represented in the film and how Tobias was described by journalists and critics.

Arguably, the name-calling is reflective of the way in which Tobias is discussed by other characters in the film, and the way in which her sexuality is questioned not only by her own attorney but also commented upon by other characters both involved and not involved in the criminal trials and court cases. From this perspective, the writers of these articles invest not in Tobias, but instead, in the version of her that is constructed by the men who raped her and their defence teams – her voice ignored (again).

This ignoring of Tobias' voice is also evident in Sean French's review of the film published in *The Observer*. He wrote:

Sarah seems vulnerable to virtually every charge that is made against rape victims. We hear that she had gone to a bar alone, dressed 'provocatively'. That she had got drunk and flirted with various men in the bar. She seems perfectly to fit the stereotype of the woman 'asking for it' or, as judges have put it more silkily, displaying 'contributory negligence'. Then, just before the conclusion of the court case, we are shown in flashback what really happened and we see that although the descriptions of her behaviour were accurate she

was also clearly not asking for sex. More important, we see that...rape is an act of deliberate violence and violation that no victim would ever ask for or enjoy (1989: 42).

In this instance, it took seeing the representation of rape to confirm what happened to Tobias – her word alone was evidently not sufficient (this is also the case for the film itself, in which the representation of rape appears not as reflecting Tobias’ testimonial but Kenneth Joyce’s) – the representation of rape functioning to confirm Tobias’ account of what happened to her.

At this point in the thesis, I feel it is important to highlight a common theme witnessed across the current and previous two chapters – that all of the female characters (albeit to varying degrees) have been described in a derogatory manner. Amy in *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) described as ‘a retarded adolescent, impulsive, a teaser’ (Melly 1971: 32), ‘the dim young wife’ (Hinxman 1971: 18) and as having ‘the mental equipment of a hamster’ (Powell 1971: 38). In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Dennis Iliadis, 2009) Mari was described as a ‘Paris Hilton blonde’ (JC 2009: 14), as a ‘17-year-old hotty’ (Edwards 2009: 2, 3) as well as being referred to along with her friend as ‘all teeth and hotpants’ (Edwards 2009: 2, 3); and in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake of *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Steven R. Monroe, 2010) Jennifer was described as a ‘scantily-clad babe’ (Anon. 2011a: 37).

Other texts focused on the actions of individuals and of society more generally. Dorothy Wade opened her article about the film, published in *The Sunday Times*: ‘*The Accused* is a direct, harrowing film about rape, the damage it inflicts on the

survivor, and the responsibility all of us bear when we prefer to ignore or cover up the problem' (1989: 5) and closed her article arguing that the best thing about *The Accused* is the spotlight it turns on the passive roles that many of us may play:

When we hear screams in the street at night and decide to do nothing, how much responsibility do we bear if a crime, perhaps a rape, is committed? None in law, but our streets might be safer for women if we were readier to act (1989: 5).

Mars-Jones similarly argued that 'the issue that the film really wants to address is the extent of a citizen's responsibility...' (1989: 15); and in her review of the film published in *The Daily Telegraph*, Victoria Mather argued that viewers would 'leave the cinema feeling angry because the director has effectively implicated you, too, as a voyeur, part of society that is all too guilty of not "getting involved"' (Mather 1989b: 18). It is implied here that if people are more willing to intervene when a crime is beginning/taking place that this would reduce rates of violent crime and rape.

Unlike any other case study included in this thesis, *The Accused* instigated discussions in which the role of individuals in society were interrogated in terms of how they contribute to the wider social and cultural environment in which men rape women. The way this was approached, however, was problematic, as, once again, we see responsibility for preventing rape located and positioned away from the men who rape (perhaps this is suggestive of a level of comfort we have in discussing, interrogating and criticising female behaviour in mainstream avenues that we do not have discussing, interrogating and criticising male behaviour). Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, these place a focus on people *intervening* in crimes as they are occurring rather than *preventing* them happening at all. Rather than

suggesting ideas about how to prevent men raping women, the focus was on how people can help, or their responsibility to help when a rape, or indeed any other act of violence, is already underway – again, male behaviour receiving little criticism or attention.

The behaviour of the men who raped Tobias, and of the men who cheered the rapes on, were rarely the subject of much in depth discussion. In the texts analysed for this case study, interrogation of the male rapists' behaviour occurred substantially less than the behaviour of Tobias. Even the texts that challenged the idea that women's behaviour and actions were at least partially accountable for a woman being raped, it was still *female* behaviour that was interrogated and became the focus. While the behaviour of the men who raped Tobias, as well as the men who watched, cheered, and encouraged the rapists, was undoubtedly perceived as being terrible, it is particularly interesting how male behaviour was framed in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* (when, indeed, it was discussed). Wade argued in her article about the film:

So what if she was wearing a short skirt?...Men have a responsibility to control their behaviour...The men were not doing it because she was flirting or because they were turned on by her: it was an act of violence used to control a woman (1989: 5)

This idea – that rape is about violence and power as opposed to being about sex – is one that has dominated discussions about rape in recent decades (Coyne 2003: 176). As further detailed in the introduction to this thesis, in the 1970s, rape and sexual abuse was re-envisioned by feminists as a symptom of a culture of violence against and disrespect for women that should be viewed as a form of sexist hate crime rather than an impulsive act of sexual need (Kitzinger 2009: 77). As Jerry A. Coyne notes,



these notions ‘originated not as scientific propositions but as political slogans deemed necessary to reverse popular misconceptions about rape’ (2003: 176).

Indeed, given that in most reported cases rapists are sexually aroused and often reach orgasm, it is hard to disagree with the claim that rape is at least a partly sexual act (Coyne 2003: 175). It is evident in press discussions about *The Accused* that feminist discourses of rape which focused on changing the way that rape was perceived, positioning it as an act of violence and power, had been somewhat successful, as exemplified by the quote above (and in some of the press texts discussed earlier in this chapter). Lee-Potter similarly argued that ‘nobody seeing *The Accused* would ever again believe that rape has anything to do with sex. It’s about hate and danger, about primeval urges in young men to prove that they have the right to take what they want’ (1989: 12).

Notably, however, while both of these texts engaged with the notion of rape being an act unrelated to sex, how they engaged with and referred to male behaviour was very different. In the first of these examples, we, most importantly, see men held accountable for their actions – it is argued that they *can* control their behaviour and that they have a responsibility to do so. In opposition to this, in the second of these examples, male behaviour is referred to in a way in which it is intrinsically linked to biology and ‘urges’. In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed and highlighted how, as Cheryl Brown Travis notes, ‘there is a cultural readiness to locate causes for human events in biology and a cultural receptivity for the idea that gender roles are the product of orderly laws’ (2003: 9) and that as such, the idea that rape is in some way attributable to genetics continues to be endorsed, receiving both media and cultural support in attempts to persuade us that ‘men can’t help it’. Evidenced in

Lee-Potter's feature is further endorsement of this idea as she talks about rape in a context aligned with 'urges'.

A handful of other texts similarly spoke about the behaviour of the men who raped Tobias, and of men more generally. In an article titled 'The taboo busters' published in *The Guardian*, it was reported that Foster, along with *The Accused*'s producers and director, wanted to 'expose the doublethink surrounding rape – the way women are expected to behave better than men or be punished for it. If a woman is provocative she "gets what she deserves". If a man can't restrain himself, he's excused' (Goodman 1989: 46). This article engages with the difference between how, in relation to cases of rape committed by men against women, male behaviour is excused, and female behaviour has been held either responsible or at least partially to blame. At the same time as this, however, it also positions male behaviour as being uncontrollable, unable to restrain, again the implication being that there is something within the genetic make-up of men that makes them rape women. In her review, Mather argued that the film 'raises the questions of whether a woman can display her body as freely as her brain in the Eighties; whether she is then responsible for the animal response of men and whether the bystanders who allow an act of violence to occur are partners in the crime' (1989b: 18). She then went on to argue later in her review that the representation of rape in the film 'succeeds in showing both the primitive machismo that drives men to prove themselves in front of each other and the fact that when the girl says no she means it...' (1989b: 18). While it is certainly not the case that male behaviours were explicitly excused in these articles, the use of language which positions male behaviour as being based in biology, primitive and animalistic, has the effect of representing their behaviour as

being uncontrollable. As such, female behaviour that is positioned as being controllable (choice of clothing, choice of how to interact with men), is posited as the solution to preventing rape, as opposed to male behaviour which is positioned as uncontrollable. From such a perspective, men are viewed as inherently rapacious – a view argued by Mary P. Koss as one that is ‘hopeless’ (2003: 202):

Alone, biological explanations will not solve social problems because people cannot change their evolutionary history. However, a conceptualization of biological influences not as hardwiring but as potential pathways that are shaped by the environment can lead to research with practical implications...knowing how harsh environments, lack of secure attachments, or social learning favor the development of promiscuous male sexuality sets a prevention agenda (ibid.).

### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter exemplifies how the press coverage surrounding the releases of films that include representations of rape can (and do) contribute to media and cultural discourses surrounding rape. Popular press discussions about *The Accused* were wide ranging in their approach to discussing not only the film but also the subject of rape in relation to contemporary society. Various discourses surrounding rape were engaged with, reflected, supported and challenged.

Considering that the film’s narrative revolves primarily around Tobias’ experience of the Criminal Justice System, discussions relating specifically to this were rare. While in certain instances, damaging notions pertaining to rape were reinforced and propagated, for example the idea that certain rapes should be taken more seriously than others (as argued by Amiel in her article) and that female behaviour is to blame for men raping women (see Amiel 1989: 19 and Tyrer 1989: 15), these were most often directly challenged, criticised and contested. This illustrates how feminist

discourses surrounding rape, particularly those pertaining to challenging victim-blaming discourses and women's right to bodily autonomy, which were initiated by feminists in the 1970s, had permeated into more mainstream avenues of thinking (in this case the U.K. popular press) by the time *The Accused* was released. This was also reflected in the texts in which rape was discussed specifically as an act of violence and power rather than about sex.

In challenging, criticising and contesting victim-blaming discourses, discussions about the film focused (quite overwhelmingly) on female behaviour. As such, while these texts and discussions were (I would argue) well intentioned, what they resulted in was a lack of engagement with and interrogation of the behaviour of the rapists. Furthermore, when male behaviour was mentioned and *described* (as opposed to being interrogated and discussed) it was frequently done so in a manner in which male behaviour was positioned as being somewhat uncontrollable. When suggestions were made about how to decrease rates of rape (and other crimes), it was argued by some that the solution was for bystanders to intervene in crimes in the midst of them being carried out. The way in which this was approached, however, was problematic, as, once again, we see responsibility for preventing rape located and positioned not where it should be, which is on the men who choose to rape women: *intervention* during a rape posited as being the solution rather than any approach that focused on male behaviour and *preventing* men from raping women.

## Chapter 4

### Representations of Intra-Military Rape

In this chapter, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of two films that include representations of male military personnel raping or attempting to rape their female colleagues. The two films I use as case studies are *G.I. Jane* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1997), which includes a representation of an attempted-rape, and *The General's Daughter* (Dir. Simon West, 1999), which includes a representation of a gang-rape.

While these films were released relatively close together – *G.I. Jane* in 1997 and *The General's Daughter* in 1999 – and bear similarities in that they are both mainstream Hollywood productions with narratives that revolve around women in the military, I analyse the press coverage for each of these in two separate case studies. I believe this necessary as while both films include references to, and representations of attempted-rape or rape, the narrative context within which these representations appear are significantly different.

The attempted-rape represented in *G.I. Jane* occurs in a narrative that revolves around the military training process and Jordan O'Neill's (the female protagonist's) experience of this, throughout which she is subjected to sexual harassment and sexual violence by both the male Navy SEAL candidates she is training alongside as well as a male drill sergeant who attempts to rape her. As such, while the subject matter of women in the military is a central focus of the narrative in *G.I. Jane*, the

subject of male sexual violence against women in the military is not. In opposition to this, the representation of rape in *The General's Daughter* occurs in a narrative in which sexual violence against women *is* a central focus. When a female Captain is found murdered on a military base, it is presumed that she has been raped and murdered (though it is later determined that she was not raped) and the investigation into her murder reveals that years prior to her murder, she was raped by a group of male colleagues whilst on a military exercise.

I begin this chapter by providing an overview of the history of the relationship between women and the military, outlining the debates concerning the inclusion/exclusion of women in the military in which the subject of sexual violence against women has played an integral role. Both *G.I. Jane* and *The General's Daughter* include references to a number of the debates outlined in this section, it providing important information regarding the historical and social context in which these films were initially released and frameworks through which they were initially viewed. As I will go on to further detail, the historical and social context within which these films were produced and released is highly significant. This is particularly the case given the string of revelations in the early-mid 1990s about the sexual harassment and sexual violence that women in the American military had been subjected to, which received a significant degree of press coverage in the U.K. (see, for example, Cornwell 1994: 14; Fletcher 1992; Greig 1992; Macintyre 1993; Usborne 1992: 12; Usborne 1993: 14; Walker 1992: 22).

### Women and the Military

It has been acknowledged that women have always been involved with the military, and that, in fact, they were a normal part of European armies at least from the fourteenth until well into the nineteenth century (Trustring 1984: 2; Hacker 1981: 643). The service of women was not only considered to be normal in these early years, it was also vital to the functioning of the armies (Hacker 1981: 643). Labelled 'camp followers', women performed important tasks such as finding, cooking and serving food, caring for and providing medical treatment for the wounded and working as seamstresses and laundresses (Hacker 1981: 653; Trustring 1984: 11). By the nineteenth century, however, 'the centuries-long process of bringing military support services under direct military control had been completed' (Hacker 1981: 645) and this militarization of support services led to the vanishing of women from these environments (Hacker 1981: 645). The army of the nineteenth century became more professional, bureaucratic and streamlined and, in the process of doing so, also became more male (Trustring 1984: 3, 15).

During the First and Second World Wars, women in the United Kingdom and the United States were actively encouraged to help and support the war efforts. In the First World War, women volunteered for factory and munitions work as well as for jobs on the buses and on the land in the forces (Harris 2000: v). When the Second World War broke out, the civilian population of Britain found themselves involved in an international conflict as they never had been before (ibid.). With men fighting abroad, essential jobs including keeping up with the production of weapons, food and other essentials of everyday life needed to be filled and it was hoped that female

volunteers would fill these gaps (ibid.). It soon became apparent, however, that ‘if Britain was to stand any chance of meeting the required levels of production and strength in its fighting forces, women would have to be compulsorily involved’ (ibid.) and this resulted in the conscription of women. The roles open to women in the military were, however, restricted, with many only open to males.

Sex and gender stereotypes have, and indeed continue to play a significant role in debates surrounding the integration of females into various military roles.

Traditionally, the role of the ‘warrior’ has been considered to be a masculine, and, more specifically, male domain. In opposition to this, the role of the ‘nurturer’ has been considered to be feminine. These have functioned together to both create and maintain the ideal in which men go out to fight, while women, being child bearers, take care of the home and raise children.

Writing about the participation of women in the Second World War, Gerard Degroot has noted that whilst females were considered useful during the war, they also seemed to represent ‘a dangerous threat to the social order after it’ (2000: 15):

Those interested in preserving the *status quo* (not all of them men) took steps to reassert feminine standards in order to curb any consequent improvement of women’s status...Posters depicting auxiliaries in Britain in the Second World War almost always showed them in clean, neat, well-pressed dresses and almost never depicted them doing tasks which involved using their muscles or getting dirty. During the last year of the war, these women were given time off for mothercraft lessons, in order to prepare them for and remind them of their peacetime role (ibid.).

During the Second World War, both British and American female auxiliaries also ‘had to endure a vicious whispering campaign which cast them as promiscuous adventurers who spread venereal disease and corrupted noble warriors’ (ibid.: 16),



this effectively discounting the contribution of women to the military and limiting their empowerment as they were presented as dangerous sexual predators (ibid.). Presenting women in such a way as to suggest that they were not ‘normal’ women further emphasized that their accomplishments ‘had no relevance to the status of women as a whole’ (ibid.).

From the beginning of the 1970s, however, most Western armies began to admit women in a way that marked a break with tradition (Carreiras 2006: 1):

...from their original role as simple auxiliaries, women have progressively gained military status, have been given similar training as men, and have performed functions in various areas which have not been traditionally feminine (ibid.).

These changes have not, however, occurred without anxiety, debate or resistance; the debates revolving around a number of topics including females’ physiological and psychological capacities, and the ‘effect’ that female integration into previously male-dominated and often all-male environments would have on the interpersonal dynamics of these units.

It has often been argued that there are innate physiological and psychological differences between males and females meaning that *all* women are inferior to *all* men and incapable of performing certain tasks. For example, in his essay ‘The Argument Against Female Combatants’, Jeff Tuten vehemently argues:

Exhaustive work has been done in defining male-female anthropometric differences. The results are clear. Men are substantially larger, heavier, stronger, and faster. Men have greater physical endurance. A larger percentage of their body weight is devoted to muscle and bone mass. They can carry heavier loads longer distances at greater speeds. They can throw heavier objects (such as hand grenades) farther and more accurately. Finally,

they can do all these things under greater extremes of temperature. It should be noted that these male physical advantages are genetic – no amount of physical conditioning will change them (1982: 247).

Arguments against allowing women into certain roles in the military (particularly combat roles) that place an emphasis on their physicality contend that, ultimately, women are physically weaker than men and, therefore, that this would result in defeat on the battlefield. It has often also been implied that biological determinism (pregnancies, menstruation, and lower physical strength) render women ill-suited to warfare (DeGroot 2000: 16). Carol Burke has noted how the biological/evolutionary argument has stigmatized women as ‘physically unfit for combat’ (2004: 54), and that ‘because of their physiological differences, because they can become pregnant rather than impregnate, be raped rather than rape, women supposedly threaten the readiness of the troops’ (ibid.). From such perspectives, it is argued that preventing the integration of women into combat roles prevents defeat.

Along with debates about the physical (in)capabilities of females having detrimental effects on military power, another argument often put forward, to argue against the integration of women into certain roles within the military, is the (presumed) effect that it would have on the interpersonal dynamics of previously all-male environments and, consequently, how this would affect how military units performed. In her essay ‘The Argument for Female Combatants’, Mady Weschler Segal discusses how, based on stereotypes and traditional social structures concerning men and masculinity and women and femininity, one argument proposed to prevent the integration of females into combat roles was that ‘the men in the units may act to protect the women in ways that interfere with the functioning of the units’ (1982: 283). In such instances, however, it is not the physical or mental abilities of

women that are questioned but, instead, the actions of men, it being suggested that men would seek to protect their female colleagues rather than doing the job in hand and that this would have a negative impact on the functioning of military units.

Rather ironically, however, it has become apparent that women serving in the American military have been sexually harassed, abused and raped by their male colleagues. The US Navy has, in the past, acknowledged that it has had a major problem with rape and sexual assaults in its training centres (Wheelwright 1994: 125). After a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, Senator Dennis DeConcini commented that American women serving in the Gulf were in greater danger of being sexually assaulted by American troops than by the enemy (qtd. in Wheelwright 1994: 125). Other incidents followed. At a military symposium held in September 1991, eighty-three women and seven men were sexually assaulted (this became known as the Tailhook Scandal) and in 1996 the Aberdeen Scandal saw a number of charges brought against male officers for sexual assault on female trainees.

These events conflicted greatly with the representation of America and the American military that had been presented in the British media throughout the Gulf War (August 1990 – February 1991). With American servicewomen vastly outnumbering their British Counterparts, ‘it was the American woman in Marine fatigues, packing her gun under the desert sky who became the *British* media’s stock image of the female warrior’ (Wheelwright 1994: 117). In the British press, the American servicewoman was often juxtaposed with the ‘shrouded Saudi woman – a visual comment on the presumed “backwardness” of Arab cultures’ (ibid.). When the

American servicewoman Melissa Rathbun-Nealy was kidnapped by the enemy *The Sun* put the story on its front page and stated that ‘Allied military chiefs think the Iraqi’s – who treat their OWN women appallingly – might abuse or even rape the captive’ (quoted in Wheelwright 1994: 124). In this context, America was represented as an idealised culture and society where men and women worked alongside each other, respected each other as equals, and where, as opposed to Arab culture, women were not oppressed or subject to misogynist attitudes or behaviours.

The revelations in the early 1990s of the levels of sexual harassment and sexual attacks that women (and, indeed, a number of men also) were being subjected to by male colleagues in the U.S. military prompted the enforcement of new measures to help tackle the shocking levels of sexual violence that had thus far been ignored and simply accepted as part of military culture.

Notably, the problem of sexual violence has not been, and continues not to be, limited to the American military. It has also been found that sexual harassment occurs in the British Armed Forces (see, for example, Rutherford, Schneider and Walmsley 2006; Ministry of Defence 2015).

*G.I. Jane* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1997)

This chapter’s first case study film, *G.I. Jane*, was released five years after the exposure of the Tailhook scandal and at a time when reviews on the policy of

admission of females into particular roles in the military were taking place both in the U.K. and the U.S.

The narrative of *G.I. Jane* centres on the character of Jordan O'Neill (played by Demi Moore) who is selected to be the first woman to take part in the U.S. Military's Navy SEALs Combined Reconnaissance Team Training alongside male recruits. She is used as a test case for women in combat – if she succeeds in her training, she is informed that it could change the military's official policy on women in combat. The film's narrative, for the most part, revolves around this process of training throughout which O'Neill is verbally and physically harassed by her male colleagues, both sexually and non-sexually. In the middle of a training exercise in which O'Neill and her male colleagues have been 'captured by the enemy', a male superior in command – Master Chief Urgayle (played by Viggo Mortensen) – attempts to rape her, his 'justification' for his actions being that he is simply enacting what would happen to her if she did ever find herself captured by the enemy. After this brutal beating and attempted-rape, Urgayle says to O'Neill's male training partners (who witness this taking place): 'Guys, I'm saving her life and yours. Her presence makes us all vulnerable and I want you learning that inconvenient fact'.

As such, the content of the film represents one of the main arguments made against the integration of women into combat roles within the military, which places an emphasis on the 'vulnerability' of the female body. This idea was also debated in some of the press texts in which the film was discussed. For example, in an article published in *The Guardian* titled 'Head to Head: Into the Breach' the question of

whether *G.I. Jane* should become reality was asked. The article takes the form of Gulf War veteran, John Nichol, and journalist, Caroline Young, communicating back and forth with each other, asking and responding to questions about the integration of women into combat roles in the military. Nichol describes how he spoke to a male frontline Squadron Commander who argued that females would be as effective as males in battle. Nichol agrees with this, but then details how he asked the Squadron Commander about his reaction to female prisoners of war ‘being raped, or worse still, coming home pregnant or bearing the enemy's children’ (Nichol and Young 1997: 4). He describes the Squadron Commander’s reaction to his question: ‘His face contorted in horror and he admitted that the thought had never crossed his mind’ (ibid.). In this instance, questions about the integration of women into combat roles in the military revolved not around their *ability*, but rather how they would be treated by the enemy and the possible consequences of this treatment – that they could be raped and become pregnant.

Another reason Nichol argued that women should not be allowed to be involved in military combat, was that men would be more likely to risk their lives in order to help or save their female colleagues, weakening the effectiveness of the unit as men would be so overwhelmed with a need to protect women that they would be unable to do their jobs. This type of behaviour (men protecting women) was represented by Nichol as being ‘natural’ and instinctive. He argued:

The simple fact is that men will react differently when a female is under fire...No amount of politically correct mumbo jumbo or 'gender awareness training' can change the way a man thinks and reacts to the fairer sex. God forbid that it could (ibid.).

In attempts to represent and position male military personnel as innately protective of female colleagues, what is ignored by Nichol in this article is the harassment and abuse that female members of the U.S. military were being subjected to by their male colleagues, which, by this time, had been exposed and well-documented. In her response to Nichol's claim, Young did not challenge Nichol's ideas by referring to the well-publicised and well-documented accounts of men sexually harassing and being sexually violent towards their female colleagues in the military but, instead, argued that there was no evidence that men would behave in such a chivalrous manner as there had been little opportunity to gather evidence in a combat environment to support this. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, female military personnel serving in the Gulf War were more likely to be assaulted by their male colleagues than by the 'foreign enemy'. Not only were such findings ignored in this article (by both Nichol and Young), as was the treatment of women in society more generally.

Speaking in a context specifically aligned to the United States of America, though I would argue that the ideas expressed in this passage can easily be transferred to the culture and society of the United Kingdom at the time *G.I. Jane* was released (as well as today), Segal notes:

One important component of the stereotype of the ideal man, and of a male-dominated society, is the protection of women. Men feel they have failed to live up to this ideal if they allow their women into combat...In assessing the degree to which male protectiveness of women is indeed a value in American society, the prevalence and tolerance of violence against women suggest that this ideal is often not attained. Women are often raped on the streets of our cities (not to mention on our college campuses) and we have a serious and widespread problem of wife abuse (1982: 283-284).

Such facts were ignored by Nichol and Young in their article, resulting in a representation of men as heroic and as instinctive protectors of women. In a review published in the *Daily Mail*, Christopher Tookey even went so far as to suggest that ‘the heroic but near-suicidal defence of Jordan [O’Neill] in combat by a male soldier’ (1997: 45) could act as ‘further evidence that having women active in the military front line is not a good idea since it encourages men to commit foolishly chivalrous acts’ (ibid.).

Some of the press coverage surrounding the release of *G.I. Jane* did mention the well-documented incidents of the mistreatment and sexual harassment of female soldiers by their male colleagues in the American military – demonstrating that these events continued to hold some resonance. Ed Vulliamy described the film as being ‘an unpleasant movie about the cult of violence – not least sexual and psychological – that is the quintessence of the American military’ (1997: T2) in his feature published in *The Guardian*. He also argued that:

with its scenes of “character building” ritual abuse, *G.I. Jane* – Demi Moore’s much-hyped new movie – is adding even more flak to a battle of the sexes raging in US military institutions (ibid.).

And gave detailed descriptions of the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals, describing how the film was released:

after months of soul-searching over a spate of what is politely described as “unlawful command influence” in the US military - cases entwining rape and rank, the violent sexual abuse of female recruits, notably at the Aberdeen “Proving Ground” in Maryland. Ten soldiers have been charged with sexual offences, with one drill sergeant accused of 18 rapes. The Aberdeen case is the latest in a long line of rape crises in the US military that began with the 1991 “Tailhook Affair”, with an apparent orgy of sexual abuse against female officers at a naval get-together in Las Vegas implicating 140 officers, including 32 admirals (ibid.).



In a feature published in the *Independent*, Dennis Lim also described the film in the following way:

The film's fictional scenario mirrors real-life military PR disasters, among them the 1991 Tailhook Affair (a mass sexual assault on female officers at a naval convention), and last year's reported "hazing" incidents at a Citadel academy, where female cadets were brutalised as part of an initiation ceremony (1997b: 27).

A final example of real-life incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence committed by male military personnel against their female colleagues being referred to the press coverage that surrounded the release of *G.I. Jane* was in Erica Wagner's feature with the film's director, Ridley Scott published in *The Times*. Wagner argued that the issue of women in combat situations and of women in the military more generally was 'live one...both in Britain and in the United States' (1997). In this feature Wagner argued that a number of cases, including those of the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals, had made the issue of women in combat and women in the military 'particularly sensitive' (ibid.). That these events were raised in discussions about *G.I. Jane* exemplifies, again, how film representation can instigate media discussion about real-life incidences of male violence against women, highlighting the importance of analysing texts in which films are discussed as they contribute to frameworks of thinking surrounding certain subjects and/or events – in these instances those of male sexual violence against women in the military which was highlighted as a problem in the U.S. military.

Interestingly, however, while a number of articles, features and reviews referred to real-life cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence perpetrated by men in the military against their female colleagues, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *G.I. Jane*, few of these texts discussed or even mentioned the

representation of attempted-rape in the film or the other moments within the film in which O'Neill is sexually harassed (verbally) by her male colleagues. Furthermore, in those few instances where attention was directed to the physical sexual violence represented in the film, these texts often positioned these instances (and consequently the persistent threat of sexual violence) as simply another test for O'Neill to endure in her training to be a Navy SEAL. This is exemplified in a number of press texts in which the non-sexual physical violence O'Neill had to endure was discussed, but the attempted-rape was not. For example, in a feature published in *The Times*, Lesley O'Toole described how O'Neill is put through 'military hell' (O'Toole 1997). Tookey described in his *Daily Mail* review of the film how O'Neill is 'beaten up and tortured by her commanding officer' (1997: 45). And in his review of the film published in *The Times*, Geoff Brown described how O'Neill 'hauls herself over obstacle courses, gets dragged through mud and beaten black and blue' (1997) and how she is 'subjected to constant harassment and practical jokes' (ibid.). In instances such as these, in spite of the fact that in the film it is only O'Neill that is subjected to any form of physical *sexual* violence, the sexual harassment and sexual violence that O'Neill is subjected was not discussed as a specific form of male violence against women – the sex specific nature of the violence being ignored (this was also evidenced in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971) discussed in Chapter 1). As such, criticisms of military culture (as represented in the film) were more aligned to the brutal nature of the training process (for both men and women) rather than the misogyny of military culture or of male sexual violence against women within military institutions.

In only five texts (see Vulliamy 1997: T2; Shone 1997; Lim 1997b: 27; Wagner 1997; Fisher 1997: 15) from those collected for this case study was the attempted-rape represented in the film discussed or even mentioned. These ranged from brief mentions in descriptions of the film's narrative, to discussions about misogyny – both in relation to the film as well as extending to real-life and contemporary society. For example, in his feature about the film, Vulliamy describes:

While the platoon gathers behind a stockade (no one helps out), the bootcamp batterer pushes Demi, her wrists tethered, against a fence, and simulates (I think) raping her, meanwhile ranting how the frailty of women is diluting standards in his platoon. Demi eventually escapes and applies a boot to the most important particle of his manhood. As though to self-inaugurate into his weird world, she tells him to 'suck my dick', while the lads cheer. Cracking a celebratory beer, she is accused of being a lesbian. It's a relief when the credits roll (Vulliamy 1997: T2).

Lim placed more of an emphasis on the experience of watching the film, the representation of attempted-rape described as being 'agonising to watch' but that 'the horror gives way to euphoria when Jordan breaks free, gets in a few blows of her own, and tells her tormentor to "Suck my dick!"' (1997b: 27). This feature also included quotes from an interview with the film's director Ridley Scott discussing the sequence within which with the attempted-rape of O'Neill is represented. Scott is quoted arguing that this segment in the film contains the movie's most psychologically revealing moment: 'Viggo's character says, "She's not the problem – we are." In a situation like that, the weakest link wouldn't be the woman, but the men' (ibid.). Lim, wrote: '*G.I. Jane* is more reality-based than Scott's films tend to be, and it presents an unflinching critique of what it sees as the military's deep-seated misogyny – a view the director believes to be "totally accurate"' (ibid.). In the same text, Scott is also quoted discussing men's attitudes toward women, him arguing: 'Misogyny is a male reflex...It's probably genetic. I've never had a problem with strong women because I think my masculinity has been gradually

conditioned' (ibid.). Scott was also quoted in other press texts making similar comments to this. For example, he was quoted arguing:

In a broad stroke, if you took all the males in *Thelma and Louise* and rolled them together you'd probably have one complete male. The problem is the men's reaction to the women. It's the same thing in *G.I. Jane*. What we showed in the film was that she really wasn't the problem, they were. And it was their attitude towards women which is genetic, historic, the natural tendency of the male to assume the position of protector and therefore the dominant entity. I don't think it should be that way (Wagner 1997).

Whilst there are contradictions both within each and across these statements from Scott (or at least in the way Scott's expressions have been constructed and represented within these texts) particularly with regards to his statements about misogyny, genetics and social conditioning, his frank statements regarding misogyny and masculinity are important based purely on the fact that they bring such subjects to public attention, even if they are being discussed in relation to a film.

The way Scott was quoted and referenced in a number of press texts that publicised the release of *G.I. Jane* can certainly be seen to reinforce his celebrity branding as a film director concerned with representations of women. At the time *G.I. Jane* was released, Scott had acquired a reputation for the representations of women in films he had directed, a recurring theme being that of strong women, and this was regularly observed in the popular press coverage that surrounded the release of the film. The character of O'Neill was perceived as a continuation of the theme of strong women in Scott's work, including the character of Ripley in *Alien* (1979), and of the central, eponymous characters in *Thelma and Louise* (1991). For example, Scott was described as having a reputation as 'Hollywood's foremost feminist male director' (Lim 1997a: 13), as having a 'long-standing fondness for strong female characters' (Lim 1997b: 27) and as having 'often showcased strong women (look at *Alien*, or

*Thelma and Louise*), but this [*G.I. Jane*] is his boldest parade yet' (Brown 1997). It was also argued that his films 'speak volumes about his favourite women: strong ones' (O'Toole 1997). Scott's quoted comments on misogyny and male attitudes towards women also furthered and solidified his reputation as a director who represented strong women. Whether his statements are agreed with or not, their presence within the popular press as a possible source of instigating further discussion or thought is significant. Texts such as those discussed above highlight how film releases and film subject matters can instigate further media discussion about those subject matters more generally, with discussions extending beyond the immediate context of the film and in relation to contemporary society.

In opposition to Scott who, as exemplified above, was, on occasion, quoted discussing matters related to gender and sex equality and male attitudes towards women, Moore's voice was surprisingly absent from such subject discussions. Interviews with, and indeed any article that discussed Moore, were more likely to focus on one or a combination of the following: her recent lack of career success, her physical appearance (both in the film and upon meeting a journalist/interviewer) and/or her private life. At the time *G.I. Jane* was released, in November 1997, Moore's popularity was waning and her recent, less-successful ventures, in particular *Striptease* (Dir. Andrew Bergman, 1996), were often mentioned in press texts in which *G.I. Jane* was discussed (see, for example, Brown 1997; Anon. 1997a: 45 and Anon. 1997b: 17). The release of *G.I. Jane* was pitched by critics and commentators as Moore's 'last hope of maintaining her position as Queen of Hollywood' (Kelly 1997: 6, 7, 8), 'her final chance to get it right' (Smith 1997), her comeback film or the movie that would sink her career without trace (Wallace 1997: 3; Smith 1997).

An article written for the *Daily Mirror*, titled ‘Dirty Dozen Tough Facts on G.I. Demi’, did not express much interest in the film at all, with the only references to the film being in the article’s title and its opening two sentences. The remainder of this article listed ‘a dozen tough facts you never knew about gorgeous Demi’ (Wallace 1997: 3), these ‘tough facts’ including information (or rather claims) about her family, sex life, lifestyle, and her posing nude for magazines. A feature written by Marianne Macdonald published in *The Observer* opened with the following paragraph:

Goodness, Demi Moore is small! When you meet her it's like peering down the wrong end of a telescope you expect a muscle-bound giant and in prances this child. How on earth did she get to be a star? I mean, she has some obvious disadvantages: her skin is really not very good; her eyes (those famous green eyes) are more piercing than beautiful; her build is almost freakish. For at 35, she really is like a child: like an anorexic 12-year-old with a very large and rounded bosom (1997: 6).

Similarly, in another feature, this one published in the *Daily Mail*, Jane Kelly described Moore’s appearance at the time of the interview:

Her black hair had been twisted into abundant ringlets, and under them the famous triangular face looked pale and waxy. The beautifully shaped jaw line looked like nothing but bone (1997: 6, 7, 8).

The physical transformation that was required of Moore to undertake the role of O’Neill was a favourite topic of discussion. A feature published in *The Sunday Times* discussed Moore’s transformation with those who helped transform her body for this role (and other films she starred in) (see McKee 1997: 41). She was described in an article published in the *Sunday Mirror* as putting herself through ‘a gruelling training schedule worthy of any raw recruit’ (Anon. 1997a: 45) and that ‘to make sure she passed muster as one of the boys, the glamorous 34-year-old star of *Indecent Proposal* and *Ghost* even had her head shaved’ (ibid.). Another article published in the *Daily Mirror* described how for the role she ‘had all her hair shaved

off and spent months in the gym getting fighting fit' (Anon. 1997b: 17). It was also claimed in another *Daily Mirror* article that Moore had 'admitted the slash was a shock' (Ward 1997: 20) and was quoted: 'The scene has a big impact and reflects the character's total commitment. I had five or six months to prepare myself for it' (ibid.). Moore was quoted in a feature published in the *Daily Mail* describing her transformation and her and others' reactions to it:

I shaved it off to an eighth of an inch and it felt like velvet...I realised it would be the only time in my life when I could try that...Cutting off your hair is really taboo. There is an idea that women should be attached to their locks. People were fascinated. It was the only time, apart from when I've been pregnant, that people have actually touched me. Then I shaved it right to the skin. It felt weird the way it stuck to my pillow (Kelly 1997: 6, 7, 8).

Considering that the narrative of *G.I. Jane* revolves around the treatment of women in the military and, more broadly, around women's opportunities in general, it is surprising that texts rarely included quotes of Moore discussing these issues. In such instances, reviews, articles and features revealed little interest in the film's narrative or subject matters (such as the sexual integration of women into the military), nor the representations of violence and/or sexual violence contained within the film. That is not to say that such discussions did not take place – they may well have done so, but other topics of discussion took priority when it came to editing for the final publication pieces. One interview feature published in the *Daily Mail*, represents Moore as distancing herself from the film's more political themes. As opposed to wanting to participate in the film's production for reasons surrounding the film's narrative which included themes surrounding sexism, sexual harassment and sexually violent behaviour committed by men against women in the military, Moore places more of an emphasis on the film genre, she is quoted:

There were only male action films, until I made this one...But I didn't do it for other women, I did it for myself. I wanted to gain from it, but I am happy

if the film presents opportunities for other women in future (Kelly 1997: 6, 7, 8).

Notably, the way that Moore's attitude is represented in this article is very similar to that of the character that she plays. Prior to going to training, O'Neill discusses with her partner how the sexual politics scare her and that she is not interested in being some poster girl for women's rights. In another article, it was reported that Moore 'chose the film precisely because of the action involved' (Anon. 1997c: 10) and she was quoted:

It's the whole reason for doing this film in the first place...I was looking for something a bit more physically challenging for my next film but I wasn't interested in just stepping into a man's character in an action movie. What *G.I. Jane* afforded me was the opportunity to deal not only with the enormous physical demands of the action genre but also to be involved with something that had great substance (ibid.)

Just what Moore meant by, and was referring to as the 'great substance' aspect of the film was not specified in the article. None of the press texts selected for analysis for this case study included quotes from Moore in which she discussed the sexual harassment and sexual violence that her character is subjected to during her training by her male colleagues. The absence of her voice on such subjects is even more surprising given the topicality of the subject at the time. One possible explanation as to why this could have been was that due to the film's subject matter (women in the military), it was perceived as being less confrontational if a man (in this case Scott) discussed this as opposed to a woman (Moore). When men and women talk about male violence against women and the oppression of women they are often reacted to in very different ways. Women who speak out against the oppression of women and male violence against women are often denigrated, perceived as 'man-haters', whiners and self-pitying. On the other hand, men who speak out against the oppression of women and male violence against women receive little backlash and



are perceived as being heroic in their quest to help women. As discussed above, the interviews with Moore, as with features about her and the film, were much more likely to discuss her personal life and her appearance. Her (edited) discussions of her role in the film, similarly, focused on her physical transformation and what was required of her to undertake the role of O'Neill.

*The General's Daughter* (Dir. Simon West, 1999)

Released only a couple of years after *G.I. Jane*, the narrative of *The General's Daughter* centres around the murder investigation of Captain Elizabeth Campbell (Leslie Stefanson) who is found deceased on a military base. Warrant Officer Paul Brenner (John Travolta) and Warrant Officer Sara Sunhill (Madeleine Stowe) lead the investigation into her death. Due to the way in which Captain Campbell's body is found – naked and tied down – it is initially assumed that she has been sexually assaulted and/or raped and murdered. As the investigation in to her murder proceeds, however, it is found that she was not raped prior to or after her murder. But it is uncovered that years prior to her murder she was raped by a group of male colleagues while on a military training exercise. It is this rape that is represented in a flashback sequence in the film. Upon further investigation the rape, Brenner and Sunhill find out that Captain Campbell was encouraged by her father, General Joseph Campbell (James Cromwell), and other senior personnel to forget it had ever happened as this would be the best thing for both herself and the reputation of the training Academy.

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter*, very few texts (3) mentioned or discussed the uncovering of the previous rape of Captain Campbell (see Landesman 1999; Quirke 1999: 3; Ojumu 1999: 8). Two of these mentioned the rape in brief descriptions of the film's narrative – Akin Ojumu describing in his review published in *The Observer* how 'Travolta uncovers a gang rape' (1999: 8), and Antonia Quirke describing in her review published in the *Independent* how 'Travolta's snoopings uncover her [Captain Campbell's] gang-rape while a trainee at West Point' (1999: 3). Notably, however, while these articles mentioned (albeit very briefly) that the rape was *uncovered*, they did not mention or discuss that it was *deliberately* covered-up by members of the military. In only one of the three texts in which the uncovering of the gang-rape of Campbell was mentioned was this made explicit, and a more overt emphasis placed on the deliberate cover-up of the rape. This review, written by Cosmo Landesman and published in the *Daily Mail*, directly questioned the motives of General Joseph Campbell asking 'was he a monster of personal ambition, or a man who truly believes that in covering up the rape of his daughter – seven years before her murder – he was doing the right thing?' (1999). The lack of engagement with this aspect of the film suggests that the authors of these press texts considered other elements of the film's narrative and/or subject matter to be of more importance or were likely to be of more interest to readers and potential viewers of the film (revealing this narrative information would not act as a spoiler).

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter*, it was the sex life of Captain Campbell – particularly that it is revealed during her murder investigation that she'd had sexual relationships with a number of her male

colleagues – that was much more frequently discussed. In his review published in *The Times*, Paul Connolly described that it soon becomes apparent in the film that ‘the slain girl was involved in some bizarre sex games with a number of officers’ (1999). Quirke described in her review that ‘Travolta’s snoopings uncover her [Captain Campbell’s]...sexual junketing involving a string of male officers’ (1999: 3); and Landesman described in his review that as Brenner ‘starts digging for the truth’ he discovers a trail of lies, sleaze, scandal – and yes, a sexy videotape’ (1999). Other texts were less explicit in terms of what investigators found out about Captain Campbell’s sex life, but still hinted at it. For example, in his review of the film published in *The Times*, Adam Mars-Jones described how ‘her squeaky-clean-but-I’ll-beat-you-at-arm-wrestling image concealed a murky private life’ (1999); Mariella Frostrup proposed in her review published in the *News of the World* that Brenner and Sunhill were ‘overloaded with suspects, thanks to Captain Campbell’s regular and energetic sexploits at the base’ (1999: 52); and in his review published in the *Daily Mail*, Christopher Tookey similarly proposed that ‘there is no shortage of suspects, since the dead woman turns out to have had a string of sadomasochistic relationships with virtually every officer on the base’ (1999: 52). Such statements may be considered problematic as they imply that Campbell’s death is linked to her sex-life – positioning her (sexual) choices and behaviour as being at least partially responsible for her death. Notably, this is also represented in the film. When Brenner and Sunhill discover a concealed room in the basement of Captain Campbell’s accommodation where she videotaped some of her sexual encounters, Brenner instantaneously proposes while watching one of the videotapes: ‘how she died does appear to be linked to how she lived’. The focus on Captain Campbell’s previous sexual relationships in discussing her murder, both in the film by Brenner and in

some of the press coverage of the film, bears similarities to the way in which women's sexual history has been used against them in rape court case proceedings (discussed in further detail in Chapter 3). In this court-case context, information and details about a woman's sexual history has been used in attempts to place blame, or hold her partly responsible for sexually violent crimes committed against her, or to imply that she is lying about the incident.

The way that Captain Campbell's sexuality was mentioned and discussed in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* is also similar to the way in which real-life stories of male sexual violence against women have been reported in the popular press – with a focus on the woman's appearance and sexuality, described in a way meant to be titillating.

The manner in which Captain Campbell is both represented in the film, and the way in which a significant number of texts in the press described her (with a focus on her sexuality) is reflective of a particular trend in terms of the representation of the military woman. Rachel Woodward and Trish Winter have identified that:

When the 1997 announcement about the increase in the number of jobs open to women in the British Army was made, this prompted the appearance in the tabloid press of cartoons featuring crudely sexualised representations of women soldiers (2007: 84).

How the female army character from *The General's Daughter* was described in the texts analysed above bore similarities to other representations of the female soldier that have appeared in the popular press in which she is sexualised and a focus on her appearance is apparent. The references to her sexuality serve to further represent and position Captain Campbell in an overtly sexualised manner. Yvonne Tasker has noted how media coverage continues to express fetishistic interest in military women

(2011: 10) and the overwhelming focus in the articles about *The General's Daughter* (regarding Captain Campbell's sexual behaviour) implies that this fetishistic interest is also evident in discussions of fictional representations of military women with press coverage of the film more likely to discuss her sexuality and sexual relationships than the gang-rape and subsequent cover-up. Arguably, this was considered to be of more interest to readers of the publications in question (what they would prefer to be reading about) when discussing a young, stereotypically-attractive female soldier, falling into the wider representational trend of the military woman that place an overt emphasis on the military woman as a 'figure of fantasy' (Tasker 2011: 13). Tasker has also noted how popular imagery 'retains a fascination with the exotic, even erotic associations of the armed military woman' (2011:13), and that 'she is a figure of fantasy and anxiety' (2011: 13). I would argue that the way in which Captain Campbell's sexual behaviour was referred to in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* serves to further reinforce the military woman as a 'figure of fantasy' – particularly a figure of sexual fantasy.

Interestingly, while a significant amount of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* described Captain Campbell in a way that emphasised her sexuality, one of the elements most criticised about the film was its combination of violence, sex and sexual violence. Tookey, for example, argued that the most 'questionable aspect' (1999: 52) of the film was its 'exploitative approach to sex, nudity and violence' (ibid.), that the sequences in which 'the entire length of her [Captain Campbell's] body is lovingly, and lengthily, caressed by the camera' (ibid.) and the 'long flashback of her being painfully gang-raped' (ibid.) struck him 'as neither necessary nor entertaining – just unpleasantly misogynistic [sic.] and

very, very, sleazy' (1999: 52). Frostrup similarly argued that the film contained 'endless and gratuitous flashbacks to a rape scene' (1999: 52) which looked 'suspiciously like a nasty sexual fantasy brought to life to gratify anyone who happens to like that sort of thing' (1999: 52) and that the film was 'morally questionable' (ibid.). Anthony Quinn also argued in his review of the film published in the *Independent*, that 'the film turns that cheapest of Hollywood tricks, preaching to us about violence against women but none the less eager to show the murder victim pinned down and weeping in the starfish position' (1999: 11); Jane Simon argued in her review published in *The People* that the film 'ties itself in knots trying to be politically correct yet sleazily exploitative at the same time' (1999: 14); and Nick Coleman argued in a feature published in the *Independent* that the film was 'a pretty ghastly film; an incoherent, clanking military-noir thriller with ugly misogynist gashes' (1999: 13) (for other examples of such criticisms of the film see Quirke 1999: 3 and Landesman 1999). As exemplified here, for some, the film's representational content, or, more specifically, its combination of what was considered to be its gratuitous representations of sex, violence and rape, meant that the film could not be considered as serious about depicting the real issues that women face in the military. This is somewhat surprising considering the film's thematic content revolves primarily around the treatment of women in the military, sexual violence against women in the military and how this is handled and dealt with within the military. In addition to the film including a representation of rape, it also includes a number of references to, and representations of, women being mistreated in the military by their male colleagues. As part of their investigation, Brenner and Sunhill interview a female soldier who, in discussing her experience of working in the military as a woman, states: 'there's a lot of shit – I mean, there's a lot of stuff if

you're a woman in the army to...that you got to put up with and, uh...a lot of people don't like that we're here'. In a meeting with General Sonnenberg before visiting his daughter in hospital after she has been raped, General Campbell tells Sonnenberg: 'I want justice for my daughter', to which Sonnenberg replies:

I would give anything that this had never happened. But it did, and I'm trying to tell you the reality of the situation. We'll never find them so we'll never know who did it. But we do know this. A co-ed academy's a good call, a necessary call. Better one unreported and unvindicated rape than to shake the foundations of West Point. To cast suspicion on a thousand soldiers who did not gang-rape a woman that night. And all you have to do is convince your daughter that she, the academy, the army and the call of equality would be best served if she just forgot about the whole thing.

General Campbell is subsequently shown visiting Campbell in hospital after she has been raped, telling her:

Try not to think about it anymore...listen to me I only want what's best for you. Trust me...don't ever think about any of this again. I know, I know, it was an awful thing. A terrible, terrible thing. But thinking about it won't help. So, close your eyes. It never happened. None of this ever happened.

In another instance, when Sunhill interviews one of the men present when Captain Campbell was gang-raped, he argues:

I tried to stop it. I did everything I could, but they hated her. They hated her so much. They hated that she was smarter than them. They hated being out there with someone who had to squat to piss.

When Sunhill returns to the scene of Captain Campbell's murder she is attacked by a number of male military members. We hear one of the attackers say:

Hold that bitch down, let me get in here. This is the Army so you tell Brenner you don't shit on your brothers. Rape investigator, huh? Want to know what it feels like? Huh? Maybe it'll make you better at your job, huh?

When Brenner and Sunhill track down one of these attackers who is also a male colleague of Campbell and ask him what he can tell them about Captain Campbell he responds: 'What about her? She was raped and killed. You know what rape usually

is? It's a woman who changes her mind afterward'. That women only accuse men of rape when they 'regret' having sex with them is a very common rape myth. Such an attitude is not endorsed in the film however, as both Brenner and Sunhill express disgust at this statement.

In spite of such representations, as exemplified above, in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter*, it was deemed that a film in which a graphic representation of rape and repeated shots of a murdered woman who was naked and tied to the ground could not possibly be seriously concerned with the subject of violence against women. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, these comments can be taken at face value – that the individuals writing these articles really do believe that the film is not worthy of serious discussion due to its representative content that they perceived to be gratuitous, exploitative and/or misogynist. On the other hand, it could also be argued that for them to take this position is simply an easy way to avoid having those discussions about women in the military and male violence against women in the military. While I understand that the representational content of the film could be considered as somewhat problematic for a number of reasons (aligned with those highlighted by film reviewers above), I disagree that this relegates the film to being unworthy of any critical discussion regarding the representation and subject of women in the military, military culture, and male sexual violence against women (both within and beyond the immediate context of the film). It is certainly interesting that a film that is essentially a narrative that primarily revolves around women in the military, and more specifically male violence against women in the military, can be so easily dismissed.



This is certainly not helped, however, when the film's female star is represented as being dismissive about the film's thematic content. The following is an excerpt from a feature published in *The Times* that included an interview with Madeleine Stowe:

Invited to enlarge on some of the film's more portentous themes – women in the military, morality versus loyalty – she [Stowe] erupts into gales of infectious laughter. “I just find it fun!” she twinkles. She is right: the film is flashy nonsense (Cliff 1999).

Of the press texts analysed for this chapter, two of them were features that included interviews with Stowe. In neither of these is she quoted discussing the subjects of women in the military or male sexual violence and harassment against women either in relation to the film or otherwise. Even when prompted to do so (as in the above interview) Stowe does not discuss these aspects. It does of course have to be acknowledged that this account could be entirely fictional, or manipulated to appear in a particular kind of way – there is, indeed, every possibility that Stowe's quote ‘I just find it fun!’ could have been taken completely out of context. In spite of these possibilities, however, it is important to consider what the message of this construction implies – which is that the film is not to be taken seriously, that it is ‘fun’ and ‘nonsense’. This is problematic, when much of the film tackles serious issues such as the mistreatment of women in the military by male colleagues which, only a few years prior to the release of the film, was revealed as being a serious issue that faced women working in the American military. That a film including representations of a woman being gang-raped, and that revolves around the murder investigation of a woman, can be considered to be fun and flashy nonsense implies that these are not subjects that need to be discussed or worthy of serious discussion.

In the first case study of this chapter, I highlighted how *G.I. Jane* instigated discussions in the press about real-life incidents where female military personnel had been sexually assaulted by their male colleagues (these being the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals). In spite of similarities between the films *G.I. Jane* and *The General's Daughter* – that they both include representations of male military personnel either raping or attempting to rape their female colleagues – none of the press texts that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* mentioned or discussed the film in relation to these. Even in instances where the film was described as being a ‘movie about cover-ups in the military’ (Quinn 1999: 11) or about the status of women in the military (see, for example, Ojumu 1999: 8; Mars-Jones 1999) this never led to the film being discussed in relation to real-life events. This is somewhat surprising as the narrative of *The General's Daughter* bears more similarities to those real-life events than the narrative of *G.I. Jane*. *The General's Daughter* representing the group rape of a female Captain and the subsequent cover-up of this.

One suggestion as to why *G.I. Jane* was, at times, discussed in relation to these real-life incidents and *The General's Daughter* was not, was due to the films' release dates. *G.I. Jane* was released a couple of years prior to *The General's Daughter* and it could be argued that these stories held more social currency and/or were more topical when *G.I. Jane* was released. While I would argue that such issues and subjects are always socially relevant (in so far as that they almost undoubtedly occur, albeit at differing rates, in society) it is evident that their social currency and/or topicality, particularly for the media, varies at different times.

### Summary and Conclusion

The popular press coverage that surrounded the releases of the films *G.I. Jane* and *The General's Daughter* were remarkably different, especially considering the narrative and representative similarities between the films – each revolving around women in the military and the inclusion of representations of women being sexually harassed and men either raping or attempting to rape their female colleagues. A range of discourses surrounded the release of each of the films with a number of factors that could be suggested as contributing to why this was the case.

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *G.I. Jane*, real-life incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the military, such as those of the Tailhook scandal and the Aberdeen scandals, were frequently mentioned and discussed.

Instances such as these highlight how film releases and film subject matters can instigate further media discussion about those subject matters more generally, with discussions extending beyond the immediate context of the film and in relation to contemporary society. This being said, those texts that did mention real-life incidents often took a specific form. The mentioning of Tailhook (along with a number of other real-life events that exposed military treatment of female soldiers) in texts about *G.I. Jane* was often used to provide some context to the film and to position the film as being topical due to these events. This topicality, however, did appear to be more focused on the *presence* of women in the military and on the wider subject of female integration into the military, rather than the specific problem of sexual violence against women either within the military or more generally. Even in those

texts in which more explicit discussions about male attitudes towards women did take place, these tended to revolve more around the attitudes of men towards the *presence* of women in the military and how men reacted to their presence. From this perspective, it was the subject of the integration of females into more military roles that was considered necessary to be interrogated rather than the behaviour of the men perpetrating such violence. Such discussions could also be attributed to the fact that when *G.I. Jane* was released, both in the U.K. and the U.S., was a review on the policy of admission of females into particular roles in the military.

The sexual violence represented in *G.I. Jane* was rarely discussed and the specifically *sexual* nature of the violence O'Neill encounters in her training was rarely specified in press coverage. In such instances, the sexual violence perpetrated against O'Neill was positioned as being simply another aspect of training that she had to endure as part of the military training process along with the beatings. There was little engagement with the fact that she was subjected to a *different* kind of violence than her male colleagues – sexual violence – because she is a woman, the patriarchal aspects of this violence consequently being lost.

In opposition to *G.I. Jane*, the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The General's Daughter* did not include any mentions or discussions about real-life incidents of male military personnel sexually harassing or sexually abusing their female colleagues (such as those of the Tailhook or Aberdeen scandals). This film was often criticised for, what was considered to be, its gratuitous representations of sex, violence and rape; and it was argued that these representations meant that the

film (and its makers) were not seriously concerned with the film's subject matter of women in the military and dismissed.

The popular press discourse surrounding the release of *The General's Daughter*, was dominated by discussions of Captain Campbell's sex life and criticisms about the film's representations of sex, violence and rape. Some of the language and structure of statements could certainly be considered as problematic as they implied that Campbell's death was linked to her sex-life – positioning her (sexual) choices and behaviour as being at least partially responsible for her death.

The representations of each of the films' female stars in the press coverage that surrounded each of the films' releases were similar in that they were represented as not being particularly concerned with the subject of women in the military or of sexual violence against women more generally. When invited to enlarge on some of the themes of *The General's Daughter*, including women in the military, it was reported that Stowe erupted into 'gales of infectious laughter' (Cliff 1999) and responded that she just found the film to be 'fun' (Cliff 1999). The way that this interview was edited for publication implies that the film was not to be taken seriously, which is problematic considering that the narrative revolves primarily around the subject of (both sexual and non-sexual) violence against women.

Similarly, in the press discourse surrounding the release of *G.I. Jane*, Moore was not quoted discussing the film's subject matters, whether this be the subject of access to job roles in the military for women, or the treatment of women working in the military. Instead, the discussions foregrounded were those in which Moore discussed

how the film posed a challenge for her physically and that it was for this reason why she wanted to take on the role of O'Neill. As such, Moore was represented as being somewhat disinterested in the film's subject matter/s. In opposition to this, on the occasions when Ridley Scott was interviewed for features about *G.I. Jane*, he was represented as being much more open to discussing subject matters such as the role of women and male attitudes towards women in the military.

## Chapter 5

### Representations of Domestic Violence and Rape

In this chapter, I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of two films that include representations of rape within domestic violence narrative contexts. The two films I use as case studies are *What's Love Got To Do With It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993) and *Lovelace* (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2013), both of which tell the story of a female celebrity and their abusive husband.

Released in 1993, *What's Love Got To Do With It* represents Tina Turner's rise to fame and her relationship with her husband and manager Ike Turner. The film includes graphic representations of Ike beating and raping Tina. Released twenty years after *What's Love Got To Do With It*, in 2013, *Lovelace* represents the relationship between Linda Boreman (more commonly known as Linda 'Lovelace') star of the pornographic film *Deep Throat* (Dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972) and her husband and manager Chuck Traynor. This film also includes graphic representations of Traynor beating and raping Boreman.

While there are similarities between these two films – each representing the story of a well-known female celebrity who is beaten and raped by their husband – there are also significant differences which I take into account throughout my analysis of the press coverage that surrounded the release of these films. These differences include that the female celebrity in *What's Love Got To Do With It* rose to fame singing popular music, while the female whose story is represented in *Lovelace* became a celebrity after starring in a feature length pornography film; that Tina was actively

involved in the production of *What's Love Got To Do With It* whereas Boreman was not involved in the production of *Lovelace* (she died in 2002); and that *What's Love Got To Do With It* is about a relationship between a black man and a black woman, and *Lovelace* is about a relationship between a white man and a white woman. This difference between the race of the main characters in *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* is of particular importance as ideas about, and perceptions of, domestic violence between partners vary *across* different races, cultures, religions and classes as well as *within* different races, cultures, religions and classes (see, for example, Bent-Goodley 2004; Esqueda and Harrison 2005; Nair and Osman 2013; Mama 2000; Mazibuko and Umejisi 2015). For example, speaking specifically about the black community in the U.K., Amina Mama notes:

African and Caribbean women generally report that the authorities respond in ways which suggest that they are not easily perceived as victims of male violence. Perhaps because they are typecast as aggressive, they tend not to be believed when they call for help. Asian women, on the other hand, because they are viewed as passive, docile child-brides forced into arranged marriages, are more easily seen as victims, as responded to as such (2000: 50).

Finally, I also take into account that the celebrity status of the women whose stories are represented in these films most likely impacts the reception of these films based on the idea that prior to the films being viewed, audiences (including film critics, journalists etc.) already 'know' certain information about them.

This chapter begins with an overview of dominant cultural and media discourses that have surrounded domestic violence and rape as a form of domestic violence (particularly those concerning heterosexual relationships in which men abuse their female partners/wives). This section, therefore, provides the framework through which I then go on to analyse and discuss the press coverage that surrounded the



releases of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace*, looking at whether these dominant cultural and media discourses are echoed and consequently reinforced or whether they are challenged.

### Discourses Surrounding Domestic Violence and Rape

In the early 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement began to expose and campaign against the abuse and violence committed by men against their wives (Hague and Wilson 1996: 7). This was not 'the first time that wife beating had been discovered by the public and taken up as an issue of general concern rather than remaining hidden as a personal tragedy only specific to the women involved' (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 3). This had happened at least twice before – in the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century – but these turned out to be short lived periods of public concern (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 3). As such, prior to the Women's Liberation and the Battered Women's Movements of the 1970s 'the abuse of wives within families was almost invisible in public discourse' (Hague and Wilson 1996: 7).

In 1971, almost no one had heard of battered women, except, of course, the legions of women who were being battered and the relatives, friends, ministers, social workers, doctors, and lawyers in whom some of them confided. Many people did not believe that such behaviour actually existed, and even most of those who were aware of it did not think that it affected sufficient numbers of women or was of sufficient severity to warrant wide-scale concern. There was very little press or television coverage, and it was almost by word of mouth that women all over Britain began to hear about battered women and began to try to organize their own groups and set up shelters for women and children in their own areas (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 2).

The subject of domestic violence was also 'both novel and controversial in that it was widely believed to be rare and directed to poor women living in inadequate housing. This meant it was of little interest across the general population' (Nicolson

2010: 20). With the work of feminists involved in the Women's Liberation and Battered Women's Movements, public awareness of male violence against wives increased. This was helped, to some extent, by the media, as Women's Aid groups secured media support (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 3), with the press proving to be 'especially enthusiastic' (ibid.):

Once they had also discovered the issue of battered women, they launched an all-out campaign, which although sensationalist at times was usually supportive (ibid.).

History and culture has clearly supported old-fashioned wife-beating, giving it a legitimacy (Jones 1994: 84). This support has manifested itself in a number of ways. For example, male behaviour including controlling and possessiveness has been (and continues to be) interpreted and perceived as a man showing that he cares for his female partner. As Ann Jones, author of *Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering & How to Stop It*, argues, traditional notions of romantic love give men a head start on coercion (1994: 93).

Certain forms of domestic violence have also been legally sanctioned. Prior to the marital rape exemption being abolished in 1989 in Scotland and 1991 in England, 'under British common law, husbands were exempted from prosecution for raping their wives based on the understanding that marriage meant implied consent to sex' (Hart 2014). Rationales for the common law marital rape exemption were based on notions that at marriage a woman becomes the property/chattel of her husband, and that when two people marry, they become one, rendering marital rape impossible because a husband is incapable of raping himself (ibid.). While we have seen changes in the law, and continuing feminist campaigning to bring public awareness to issues surrounding domestic violence and wife/partner rape, what we have also

seen is a continuation of myths and stereotypes surrounding these issues. Similar to the subject of rape, domestic violence ‘is an arena full of myths, stereotypes and misunderstandings’ (James-Hanman 2000: 275). As mentioned earlier, ideas about and perceptions of violence between partners vary across different races, cultures, religions and classes as well as within different races, cultures, religions and classes. Stereotypes of certain communities, classes and/or races affect how domestic violence is viewed. These include ideas about which people are perceived as perpetrators of domestic violence as well as who are ‘genuine’ victims such as that ‘domestic violence is more common in working-class families’ (James-Hanman 2000: 275), that ‘domestic violence happens everywhere but it’s much more brutal and accepted in Asian families’ (ibid.) and that ‘battering women is an acceptable aspect of black culture’ (Mama 2000: 50). Other myths surrounding domestic violence relate to what causes domestic violence, such as that ‘domestic violence is mainly caused by alcohol’ (James-Hanman 2000: 275), alleviating abusers from the responsibility of the crimes they commit.

Attitudes towards survivors of domestic violence can also be victim-blaming. For example, the idea that women’s behaviour provokes their husbands/male partners to be physically/sexually violent. There is also ‘a feeling on the part of some people that battered women have “asked for it”’ (LaViolette and Barnett 2000: 8) and ‘if a woman remains with her abuser, she is criticized and quite often blamed for her own victimization’ (ibid.). Women who stay in relationships with men who are violent have also been viewed as being masochistic. Such attitudes/discourses function in a similar way to those that question (and often blame) the behaviour of female rape

survivors with the responsibility and blame for the rape placed on them as opposed to the male perpetrators of the rape.

*What's Love Got to Do With It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993)

Tina Turner was born Anna Mae Bullock in 1939. At the age of eighteen she was discovered by Ike Turner, who she went on to perform alongside. Their act 'Ike and Tina Turner' propelled the two of them to fame, though Tina became highly sought after in her own right. The two also became romantically involved and married in 1962; they divorced in 1977 and Tina went on to perform as a solo act. When the two divorced, Tina fought to keep her stage name 'Tina Turner' and has continued to perform under this name, her celebrity and brand built around this name. In 1984, Tina's career was relaunched with the release of her album *Private Dancer*. The sound of this album was a departure from the style of music she had released previously (both with Ike and as a solo performer) – it having a more rocky edge. With this album release, Tina's celebrity image was transformed, her brand rejuvenated and her profits soared - celebrities are, after all, 'developed to make money' (Turner 2007: 193). A couple of years later, in 1986, Tina's celebrity image was once again transformed with the release of her autobiography *I Tina* (co-written by Kurt Loder). In this book, Tina wrote explicitly about the abuse (both mental and physical) that she faced at the hands of her ex-husband (Ike Turner). While it might appear cynical (and somewhat distasteful) to discuss the release of a book in which the celebrity author details her experiences of domestic violence in terms of its moneymaking ability, it does have to be acknowledged that in the world of celebrity, 'the celebrity is a brand; their performances (on or off stage, public or private) are

marketing and self-promotion exercises’ (Redmond 2014: 49). Up until this point, Tina had built her career (and received most recognition) singing popular music – a section of the entertainment industry that does not ‘normally offer strong prospects of longevity’ (Turner 2007: 194). One of the ways in which artists in this field can ensure commodity longevity is with techniques of renewal and transformation (Redmond 2014: 69). It could most certainly be argued that the release of *I, Tina* acted as a form of rebranding of the public image and persona of ‘Tina Turner’. It portrayed and revealed aspects of her life in much more detail, enabling fans to get to know her better, and her image as a whole to be (once again) transformed. The film *What’s Love Got To Do With It* is based on this book, the narrative of the film centring on the relationship between Ike and Tina (played by Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett) and includes graphic representations of Ike beating and raping her. Tina was involved in the production of the film (working closely alongside Angela Bassett who played her) and also released a new album (also titled ‘What’s Love Got To Do With It’) which coincided with the release of the film.

Through analysing the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What’s Love Got to Do With It*, it is apparent that for some journalists/film critics that Tina’s status as a celebrity afforded her little sympathy with regard to her relationship with Ike. For example, in his review published in the *Daily Mail*, Chris Tookey described how he found himself ‘less convinced by Tina’s portrayal of herself as a kind of secular martyr (did she really never take drugs? Or stay with Ike for the sake of money and the record sales?), but this may be my innate cynicism...’ (1993: 53). In this instance, the reason Tina stayed with Ike was not attributed to fears for her personal safety (or that of her children), but rather for reasons aligned with money

and her career. It was not suggested in this article that Tina was focused on her career (and the money she would get from this) for basic survival needs but, instead, aligned with greed and mass profit. From a similar standpoint, Carol Sarler opened her article published in *The People* and titled 'Tina's insult to battered wives': 'I don't buy Tina Turner's sob story. Never have. And I shall not be going to see *What's Love Got to Do With It* – the film that is her latest attempt to exploit the whole tacky business one more time' (1993: 29). Sarler argues throughout her article that with Tina's 'privileged' position she could have left Ike had she really wanted to, the article reading 'Tina Turner had an absolute choice in the matter', a choice which Sarler argued is denied to thousands of other battered women who:

are isolated, locked away from people who might be able to help. Tina was surrounded by influential admirers who would have done anything for her, had she but asked. Most of them are economically dependent on the violent husband – without him they have nowhere to go, no way of feeding their children. Tina, a star in her own right, had only to pick up a phone to get a new manager, a new and lucrative record deal...(ibid.).

Sarler concluded her article: 'I do know that for her [Tina] to whine on about imprisonment in two decades of cruelty is for her to demean all those tragic women who actually know what it means' (ibid.). Such attitudes and opinions were not only evidenced in discussions in which Tina's celebrity was foregrounded (the implication being that she either stayed with Ike for the fame and the money or that her story was exploited in order for her to make money). In articles, features and reviews of *What's Love Got To Do With It*, questions surrounding, comments on, and suggestions regarding why Tina stayed in the relationship with Ike were frequently asked and, on occasion, answers to these questions proposed. For example, in a review that appeared in *The Times*, Geoff Brown argued that there was 'one overriding problem' (1993) with the film which was that the:

passing years bring so little change to Tina herself. She becomes stuck in the rut of the saintly abused wife, taking it on the chin scene after scene. This may well accord with some of the facts, but it is aggravating watching a woman who seems such a glutton for punishment: you start to lose sympathy (ibid.).

In his article published in the *Sunday Express*, Sheridan Morley asked:

...how come, if Ike was so abusive for so long, li'l ol' Tina didn't get out years earlier. Her own explanation, that she had seen her mother leave home when she was a child and was determined her children should not have to repeat the experience, is more than a little lame when you consider that she could have got a court order restraining Ike's violence whenever she chose (1993: 54).

As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, females who are in relationships with abusive and violent men face similar prejudices to female survivors of other forms of male violence against women (particularly that of rape) with them either blamed or held partially accountable/responsible for the violence perpetrated against them. Exemplified in the instances above (along with Morley's ignorance of the fact that the police do not hold the best track record for protecting women from violent male partners) are the victim-blaming attitudes that appear (all too often) when men perpetrate violence against women.

In her analysis of *What's Love Got To Do With It*, Diane Shoos argues that although the film 'doesn't blame the victim for the abuse itself, it continues to place the burden of change solely on her shoulders' (2003: 69) and number of press texts in which the film was discussed similarly placed the burden of change solely on Tina. This is exemplified above in the articles and reviews that posed the question 'why did she stay?' or made comments pertaining to this question. Such comments serve to reinforce myths and stereotypes surrounding domestic violence particularly with

regards to how it is presumed easy for women to simply walk away and leave abusive husbands/partners.

In addition to Tina being held either wholly or partially responsible for the violence perpetrated against her by Ike, it was also implied in another review that she enjoyed the violence committed against her. Brown argued in his review that Tina seemed a ‘glutton for punishment’ (1993). Sarler also argued in her article that Tina didn’t leave Ike because she actually enjoyed being beaten and raped by him. She wrote: ‘We hear of “brainwashing.” Hmmm. But we also hear of people who thrive on a sadomasochistic ritual of mutual destruction’ (1993: 29). In *Rape in Marriage*, first published in 1982, Diana E. H. Russell notes how ‘wives who stay in abusive marriages have been assumed to be masochistic’ (1982: 223) and this misconception was also supported and further perpetuated in this article about *What’s Love Got to Do With It* some ten years later.

Also evident in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What’s Love Got to Do With It* was that one of the reasons Tina was afforded little sympathy was because she stayed with Ike for as long as she did. There was, after all, according to a number of texts written about the film (exemplified above), a number of ways that Tina could have ‘freed herself’ from the relationship, one of these being that she could have ‘simply’ left. Interestingly, the segment in the film in which Tina is first shown attempting to leave Ike, waking her children in the middle of the night and beginning a bus journey to her mother’s house until Ike tracks her down, repeatedly telling her to get into his car while hitting her around the head, was



seemingly and appropriately ignored in press discussions that suggested it would have been easy for her Tina to leave. This scene in the film represents the difficulty that some women have in leaving abusive partners. The idea that a woman can choose to leave an abusive partner and he will simply accept her decision is a misconception, with women ‘actually at the greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner’ (Refuge 2016). The danger posed to women when leaving an abusive partner, and the fear women experience in doing this, was not acknowledged in the popular press discussions that sought to explain why Tina remained in the relationship with Ike. Wheeler notes in his essay ‘The representation of domestic violence in popular English-language cinema’, how ‘reviewers lost sympathy with Tina in the period where she is a battered woman’ (2009: 166). What we see in some of the press texts discussed above is not only a lack of sympathy but also, and perhaps more importantly, a lack of *understanding*. A lack of understanding about power dynamics in relationships in which one person is an abuser. A lack of understanding of the fear that women have when considering to, and leaving partners who are violent. These are attitudes that are *learned* in our society and culture and the texts discussed above contribute to and reinforce this framework of thinking.

Shoos argues that *What’s Love Got to Do With It* ‘conforms to Hollywood’s much-analyzed penchant for narratives of individual triumph over those that chronicle collective action or the possibility of social intervention or systemic change’ (2003: 69) and similarly, the idea that the solution to domestic violence is for a woman to take action and leave was also evident in some of the press discourse that surrounded

the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, with Tina held responsible for making this change.

Notably, there were instances in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* which exhibited an (albeit simple) understanding of some of the social and economic factors and constraints that make it difficult for women to leave relationships with abusive and violent men. For example, in his review of the film published in the *Independent*, Quentin Curtis posed the question 'why did she wait so long, enduring 16 years of abuse?' (1993: 19). He then went on to highlight the financial constraints that Tina faced when she left Ike, describing how in the film 'when she first tries to leave, she cowers in a Greyhound bus, though her earnings must already be huge' (ibid.) and that 'when she does escape she has just 36 cents on her' (ibid.). The stranglehold that Ike had on Tina in terms of her career (and consequently her financial security for both herself and her children) was also acknowledged by Ian Johnstone in his review of the film published in *The Sunday Times*. He argued:

The sight of the bruised and bleeding Tina probably earned the film its 18 certificate and makes one wonder why she didn't depart years earlier. But she wasn't just a battered wife, she was a battered professional partner. There was undoubtedly the feeling that, without Ike, her career might disappear (1993: 9/9).

In these instances, a focus on the damage that leaving Ike would have had on her career was proposed as one of the reasons that Tina stayed with him, highlighting the socio-economic factors that limit women's choices when in relationships with abusive and violent men – the idea that the solution for women in relationships with

abusive and violent men is for them to ‘simply’ walk away being challenged and rejected.

Similar to the way in which the character of Tina (as represented in the film) received an array of reactions from journalists (ranging from understanding to criticism), so did the character of Ike. The range of expressions used in the popular press to describe Ike (and Fishburne’s portrayal of Ike) was broad. These included: ‘memorable monster’ (Tookey 1993), ‘pathetic loser’ (Tookey 1993), ‘seductive’ (French 1993), ‘despicable’ (French 1993), ‘heart-rendingly pathetic’ (French 1993), ‘oddly sympathetic’ (Johnston 1993), ‘vicious’ (Churcher 1993), ‘macho-tryant’ (Hutchinson 1993), ‘violent and unpredictable’ (Malcom 1993: 4). One article described how Fishburne gives an ‘oddly sympathetic performance’ (Johnston 1993: 20) as Ike; and another described how the strength of Fishburne’s performance was in making Ike’s violence ‘almost pitiful in its jealousy’ (Hutchinson 1993: 40).

While there was, undoubtedly, a general acknowledgement across the popular press that Ike beating and raping Tina was a terrible thing to do, certain texts did appear to exhibit a certain kind of empathy with, and sympathy for, Ike. For some journalists, that he is represented throughout the majority of the film and in Tina’s autobiography as little more than a wife-beater was deemed to be somewhat unfair to Ike. In his article published in the *Independent* article, titled ‘Something to like about Ike’, Phil Johnson detailed Ike’s professional achievements. The article description read: ‘Ike Turner beat up his wife and shot a newspaper boy, and everybody hates

him for it. But, wonders Phil Johnson, aren't we all forgetting something?' The article opened:

Ike Turner must be a bitter man. First his ex-wife tells the world he's a vile, callous thug; then the film of her book not only repeats the accusation but gives him a ridiculous Beatle-cut to boot. As the film, *What's Love Got To Do With It*, is about to be released here...and the spectre of a priapic, coke-snorting, wife-beating monster raises itself again, it is worth asserting that despite his shortcomings as a husband, Ike Turner was, for a short while, one of the most important talents in black popular music this century (1993: 14).

Johnson was explicit in his condemnation of Ike's actions, but implied that his professional reputation should not suffer, arguing:

What you can't forgive is his brutality with his wife, but who can tell how the reputations of even the most universally acclaimed artists would suffer given a similar kiss and tell treatment? Philip Larkin could turn out to be a racist, Michael Jackson a child molester. Even Cliff Richard might come out of "The Sue Barker Story" less than squeaky clean (ibid.).

This reference to other male celebrities has the effect of suggesting that others have faced allegations of wrongdoing and have not been publicly rejected and that this should also be the case for Ike. The term 'kiss and tell' (usually used to refer to a person revealing that they have had some form of sexual relationship or encounter with another) which was used to describe Tina's telling of her story also serves to trivialise the abuse that Tina was subjected to by Ike. That this term was also used to refer to a case where Michael Jackson was accused of sexually abusing a thirteen year old boy is also problematic in not only its trivialisation of the situation but also as it implies sexual consent on behalf of the survivor of sexual abuse, this meaning that any sexual activity was consensual and desired as opposed to being abusive.

Other articles, features and reviews also used language that downplayed the level of violence represented in the film. One review described how throughout Ike and

Tina's relationship 'their squabbles grow' (Hall 1993: 42); and another described how 'when the Turners check into a hotel after a spat in a limo, they look like survivors from the Somme' (Johnstone 1993: 9/9). In the film, prior to the scene in which the Turners check into a hotel after a 'spat' (ibid.) and looking 'like survivors from the Somme' (ibid.) Ike and Tina are in a limousine when Ike begins to hit Tina repeatedly. He takes off his shoe and begins beating her with it at which point Tina retaliates by hitting Ike. As opposed to describing this incident as another in which Ike beats Tina, Tina only retaliating after she has been repeatedly hit by Ike, this scene in the film was instead positioned as an argument and physical altercation which they were *both* equally involved in and accountable for. The terms 'squabbles' and 'spat' downplaying the level of physical violence involved and also neutralising the power dynamic involved in the situation, again, the implication being that they are both equally accountable for the violence which is not what is represented in the film.

A number of articles, reviews and features implied that Ike turned/transformed from one man (a good man) into another (the man who beat and raped Tina). For example, one review described how 'as the Svengali turned nasty' (Johnston 1993: 20), Fishburne 'gives a wild but oddly sympathetic performance' (ibid.); another described how 'Ike Turner may have guided Tina and the Ikettes on the road to fame, but then he turned bad...' (Johnstone 1993: 9/9); and another described how:

Ike changed her [Tina's] name and her fortunes when he took her into his backing group, and their briefly tender relationship was sealed in marriage. That's when the trouble started. Ike turned to drugs and terrible violence, yet Tina survived to walk away and become a solo star (Anon. 1993d: 31).

A number of articles, features and reviews sought to explain this transformation. In one review of the film it was argued that ‘when drugs and envy addle his [Ike’s] once-sharp mind, his forcefulness tips over into violence’ (Curtis 1993). In the same text, Fishburne was described as giving a ‘harrowing portrait of a man bullying to salvage some pride’ (Curtis 1993). In another review it was argued that the film was a:

standard story, familiar from endless Hollywood biopics about female showbiz stars whose macho partners cannot accept the superior success of their consorts and turn to drink, drugs and violence (French 1993).

Similarly, William Leith argued in his *Independent* feature that in the film ‘you see Larry Fishburne, as her [Tina’s] husband Ike, being pretty scary, throwing her to the floor and punching her repeatedly, also raping her in the recording studio, jealous because her success was overtaking his own’ (1993); and in another it was argued that Ike was portrayed as ‘an angry, frustrated man who could only watch as his wife rocketed to stardom’ (Anon. 1993c: 11). Derek Malcolm also commented on Fishburne’s performance, claiming:

He makes us see why Ike behaved as he did and, if not to sympathise with his treatment of Tina Turner, at least to understand his predicament. She was, after all, his creature - plucked out of obscurity, fitted up for stardom and worked like a dray-horse to achieve it. And when that stardom came, and his own faded, the black rages and the consuming jealousy seem part and parcel of the same nerve-crunching celebrity game James Mason played with Judy Garland in George Cukor’s *A Star Is Born* (1993: 4).

In these instances, two reasons (or a combination of these) were proposed as to why Ike ‘turned’ into the man that beat and raped Tina: firstly, because he was jealous of Tina’s success, secondly that he drank alcohol and took drugs (implying this caused the violence), or both of these - he was so tormented by Tina’s success overshadowing him and his own success that he turned to drugs and alcohol. Ike was represented in these instances as ‘changing’ uncontrollably, out of his power, into the

man that beat and raped Tina. While I would not argue that the writers of these reviews explicitly/intentionally seek to excuse or justify his actions, what is evident in such instances is that responsibility for the crime moves away from the fact that Ike made a choice to beat and rape Tina, regardless of whether he was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol or whether he was ‘jealous’ of Tina. In such instances, the myth that domestic violence is caused by alcohol was also reinforced and further propagated.

Arguably, the way in which the film’s narrative is constructed, and the sequence of events presented to the audience, contributes to the idea that Ike transforms into the man that beats and rapes Tina. The representations of Ike hitting, beating and raping Tina all occur in the latter part of the film once Tina has acquired fame and her popularity is greater than Ike’s (indicated in the film by interviewers wanting to speak to her rather than Ike, and well-known music producers asking her to sing on their records). Also, in the majority (three out of four) of the scenes that contain graphic representations of Ike being violent towards Tina, he is shown taking drugs, or, it is implied (through dialogue) that he is under the influence of drugs. In the scene in which we first see Ike hit Tina he is shown at the opening of this scene snorting drugs. The second time, where Ike tries to force Tina to eat some cake, Tina complains ‘you high, you embarrassing me’. A short time after this, Ike smears the cake on Tina’s face, pushes her off the seat she is sitting on and then hits her friend as she tries to protect Tina. In the third of these scenes, which is the one in which Ike rapes Tina, he is shown snorting a huge amount of drugs after which his demeanour changes, him becoming increasingly more irritable and his skin visibly clammy. Notably, this representation in the film is different to that in the book in which Ike is

represented as being violent towards Tina well before his ‘drug problem’. These small changes between the representation in the book and the film are significant as they further the idea and reinforce the framework of thinking that alleviates men of blame and responsibility for the crimes they commit, which is then (as exemplified above) further reinforced even through simple descriptions of the film by journalists and film critics – highlighting the importance of film representation.

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, domestic violence was rarely discussed beyond the context of the film, beyond the story of Ike and Tina. The film was, for the most part, discussed as being a story about Ike and Tina – their story, their circumstances, an isolated incident as opposed to an indication or representation of an issue affecting society at large. One of the few texts in which domestic violence was discussed beyond the immediate context of the film was Sarler's article in which it was argued that in Tina's ‘privileged’ position she could have left Ike had she really wanted to, a choice which Sarler argued is denied to thousands of other battered women who:

are isolated, locked away from people who might be able to help. Tina was surrounded by influential admirers who would have done anything for her, had she but asked. Most of them are economically dependent on the violent husband – without him they have nowhere to go, no way of feeding their children. Tina, a star in her own right, had only to pick up a phone to get a new manager, a new and lucrative record deal...(1993: 29).

Ultimately, Sarler argued in her article that the film was an insult to women who ‘actually know what it means’ (ibid.) to be imprisoned. Memuna Forna also argued in her article published in *The Guardian* that Tina was in a ‘privileged’ position. She wrote:



While many women will identify with the financial and emotional constraints that kept her with him for so long, Tina had two advantages most don't: her name and her fame. She walked out of her marriage and into a five-star hotel. The majority of battered wives do not. Neither will black women's groups find the film an important and realistic portrayal of woman-abuse in the black community (1993: 12).

As exemplified in this quotation, Forna also discussed the subject of domestic violence in a context aligned with race – this being the only press text selected for analysis for this case study that did this. Forna was critical of the film's representation of domestic violence, particularly that of domestic violence within the black community and included quotes from Amina Mama, author of a comprehensive study of domestic violence within black communities, Lennox Thomas who worked for Nafsiyat (a counselling organisation for black and ethnic minority communities) and Luke Daniels (a counsellor at the Everyman Centre an organisation that helps violent men change their behaviour). In these discussions, while factors such as socialisation were explored in relation to why black men commit violence it was also stated by Daniels that such factors should not be used as an excuse for violence. He was quoted: 'Men must take responsibility for their behaviour. When a man hits a woman, he makes a decision to hit; until he accepts that, he cannot change' (Forna 1993: 12). This was the only article that was *explicit* in stating that men hit women because they make a decision to. While it is indeed important to explore factors that may contribute to acts of violence, these must not be used to justify or exonerate men's actions. It is also important to note that Forna's was also the only press text in which experts and professionals working within the field of domestic violence were quoted, and how, in doing this, the message of the text differed significantly from many others – positioning responsibility for the abuse solely on Ike. I would argue that this highlights the importance of having people who have experience and knowledge about the facts of domestic violence (and indeed

other forms of male violence against women) discussing these subjects in the popular press and across the media as a whole (whether this be in relation to a film or otherwise).

*Lovelace* (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2013)

Similar to the film *What's Love Got to Do With It*, *Lovelace* represents the relationship between a female celebrity, Linda 'Lovelace' Boreman, and her husband and professional manager, Chuck Traynor.

Boreman rose to fame after starring in the feature length pornographic film *Deep Throat* (Dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972), released at a time when the so-called 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s and 1970s had brought about a change in attitudes towards sex, sexual relationships and pornography.

One result of the 'sexual revolution' was that pornography was 'derepressed'. The pornography industry exploded into growth in the late 60s and early 70s and became a massive, multi-billion-dollar industry. It also became visible in a way that it had not been before. Pornography no longer had to be under the counter, but appeared on news-stands and at supermarket checkouts (Jeffreys 1990: 250).

Whereas pornography and access to pornography had previously been considered to be underground and relatively seedy, throughout this time, the relationship between popular culture and pornography became increasingly intertwined and, as *Deep Throat* propelled pornographic films into the mainstream, Boreman became the poster girl for the so-called 'sexual revolution'. In 1974, the two books *Inside Linda Lovelace* and *The Intimate Diary of Linda Lovelace* were published in which Boreman spoke candidly about her sexual experiences in which she is represented as

being a willing participant. Less than a decade later however, in 1980, Boreman released a third autobiography, *Ordeal*, in which she revealed that she had been forced into performing in pornography by Traynor (her husband and manager). She also revealed how she became a best-selling author with the release of *Inside Linda Lovelace*:

Every night for two weeks you get a list of questions to answer; Chuck Traynor tells you how to answer these questions and you give those answers to a tape recorder; then a professional writer types it, arranges it, spells it right, and calls it *Inside Linda Lovelace*. The publisher adds a centrefold and a bunch of other near-naked pictures and then you have a best-selling book (Lovelace and McGrady 1980: 203).

The film *Lovelace* is split into two sections. The first represents Boreman's life as it was perceived to be prior to her revealing that Traynor had forced her into performing in pornography. The second section of the film represents the same time period as that which is represented in the first section of the film, only in this section we see scenes represented in the first section of the film extended and other scenes added, revealing that Traynor was beating Boreman, raping her, forcing her to perform in pornographic films, and pimping her out to men so that they could rape her. For example, in the first section of the film, we see Traynor and Boreman enter a room and they begin to kiss on the bed at which point the next scene is cut to – it implied that they go on to have sex. In the second section of the film this scene is extended. While kissing on the bed, Traynor puts his hand around Boreman's throat, at which point she says no and a few moments later asks him to stop but he continues. The next scene is then cut to, it implied that Traynor continues to rape her. In another scene in the first section of the film, people socialising in a hotel hear noises coming from the room next door and it is assumed that the noises heard are of

Traynor and Boreman having sex. In the second section of the film, the camera pans from the room people are socialising in, to the room in which Traynor and Boreman are present showing that the noises they could hear were of Traynor viciously beating Boreman. In the first section of the film we see Traynor and Boreman attending an event where *Deep Throat* was being screened. The representation of this evening ends with Boreman on the stage after the screening being applauded by the audience. In the second section of the film we see Traynor take Boreman to a room, when she attempts to escape, Traynor threatens her with her gun telling her ‘you’re gonna do this’. We then see him discussing and exchanging money with a group of men. As Traynor leaves the room, the group of men enter, one of whom holds Boreman down on the bed. The scene ends here, it implied that Traynor pimped Boreman out to these men who she was then raped by. *Lovelace*, therefore, includes not only representations of Traynor raping Boreman, but also of other men raping her. Notably, however, the men directly involved in the production of *Deep Throat* are represented in a relatively positive manner in the film, with them not being represented as perpetrators of physical and/or sexual violence against Boreman or even aware of the fact that Boreman was being forced into performing in pornography by Traynor.

Considered from the perspective that the film represents Traynor (as opposed to the pornographers and/or the men who paid Traynor to rape Boreman) as the primary reason for Boreman’s victimization – he beats Boreman, he rapes her, he forces her to perform in pornography, he sells her to other men for them to rape her, *Lovelace* is a film primarily about domestic violence (as opposed to being about pornography and the pornography industry). Furthermore, the film not only represents domestic

violence, it also explicitly engages with traditional notions of marital relationships in which domestic violence and rape (as a form of domestic violence) has in the past been legitimised and excused. For example, segments of the film deal explicitly with notions of husbands' sexual access to their wives and what being a wife means in this context – that a husband has an entitlement and right to sexual access to his wife. This is evidenced in the second section of the film in the scene after which it is implied that Traynor has raped Boreman. Traynor approaches Boreman who is sat looking out a window, appearing withdrawn and upset with Traynor who says to her 'come on baby, you're my wife, don't trip out', to which she responds 'you really hurt me Chuck', to which he then replies 'that was passion'. Also engaged with here is the idea that when men rape their wives it is an expression of their 'passion', of how much they love and are sexually attracted to their wives. Another scene that engages explicitly with ideas about marital relationships is that in which Boreman goes to her parents' house to ask her mother if she can move back in with them. Despite revealing to her mother that Traynor has been physically violent towards her, Boreman's mother tells her 'God gave you a husband who provides for you, and you...look at me...go home to Chuck, be a good wife, listen to him and obey him'. Boreman's mother also blames her daughter for the violence perpetrated against her by Traynor. When Boreman informs her mother that Traynor has been physically violent towards her, her mother responds 'I can't say I'm surprised. What did you do?' Boreman replies 'What do you mean what did I do?', to which her mother responds, 'What did you do to make him angry? He didn't just hit you out of the blue'. This scene also explicitly engages with ideas and attitudes surrounding domestic violence that position responsibility and blame on the person who is abused as opposed to the abuser.

While, as exemplified above, the narrative of *Lovelace* is primarily about domestic violence, more so than being about pornography or the pornography industry, the subject of domestic violence was rarely discussed beyond the immediate context of the film itself. One of the texts that did this drew on similarities between how people in the public eye as well people with more private lives can be subjected to abusive behaviour, Brooke Magnanti arguing in her article for *The Telegraph*'s website that:

The narrative of an abused woman who leverages a less-than-ideal situation to leave her abuser is a powerful one. It's easy to look in from the outside and say 'I would never put up with that' - well, no one knows for sure until they've been there. And for many people in such a situation, they find that the strength to get up and leave has to be mustered again and again as they fight rumour, misrepresentation, and vindictive exes. This is as true for people in the public eye as those with more private lives (2013).

From a different perspective, Peter Bradshaw argued in his review of the film published in *The Guardian* that the film 'robustly (and unfashionably)...links porn and domestic violence' (2013: 18) and went on to discuss the story of Boreman and Traynor in relation to 'showbiz exploitation' (ibid.) and other female celebrities who were abused by men who they worked alongside, the review reading:

There is a resonance with Julian Jarrold's recent TV movie *The Girl* (2012), which tactlessly showed Alfred Hitchcock's campaign of intimidation and harassment against Tippi Hedren: not as culpable as what is shown here, but not so very far away from the culture of evasion and silence that enable abuse. And there is of course the grim personal story of Marilyn Monroe, abused and assaulted by her husband Joe DiMaggio, who was excited and enraged by his wife's sexy celebrity in precisely the same way as Traynor (ibid.).

Bradshaw's article was not confined to the abuse of women by male partners but instead extended to a discussion about a wider trend concerning showbiz exploitation. Similar to a number of the articles, features and reviews about the film *What's Love Got to Do With It*, which implied that Ike's behaviour was caused by

Tina's success (him being jealous of her), in this review of *Lovelace* it is also suggested that Traynor abused and assaulted Boreman because he was enraged by her success. Notably, however, unlike in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, where descriptions of Ike often referred to his use of drugs and alcohol and/or Tina's success – it suggested that these contributed to, or were the reasons why Ike beat and raped Tina – in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, Traynor's actions were rarely sought to be explained/excused (whether this be through Boreman's success or otherwise). One suggestion as to why there was this difference in discussing the actions of Ike and Traynor was due to their individual public profiles and celebrity statuses. While Traynor was involved in the production of *Deep Throat*, and was the manager of Boreman, he did not have celebrity status. Ike, on the other hand did have a successful, prior music career and a celebrity status. What I am suggesting here is that, unlike Traynor, Ike's celebrity status and career credentials afforded him some sympathy from journalists and film critics who sought to find reasons as to why he behaved in the way that he did.

Another significant difference between the press coverage that surrounded the releases of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* was the manner in which Tina and Boreman were discussed. In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, although some journalists questioned Tina's 'motives' (whether this be in relation to her selling her story or speculating about the dynamic of the relationship between her and Ike) it was mostly represented Tina *was* abused, to some degree, by Ike (only a couple of texts denying that Ike was abusive towards Tina and instead suggesting that she enjoyed the abuse, that she was

masochistic). As such, generally speaking, across the popular press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, there was a belief that Tina was abused by Ike, a belief that was not evident in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*.

Boreman has proven to be a highly contentious figure, herself and her story acquiring a range of reactions from support, to criticism and scepticism. In spite of Boreman revealing that she had been forced into performing in pornography, and that Traynor effectively wrote *Inside Linda Lovelace* (see Lovelace and McGrady 1980: 203), it is evident through analysis of the press articles, features and reviews in which *Lovelace* was discussed that there continues to exist some uncertainty surrounding whether she should be believed or not. A number of reviews, for example, discussed the structure of the film, speculating which part was, or was not, 'the truth'. One described how in the second part of the film 'we view the story told in Linda's autobiography - the accuracy of which was later questioned - with violence and rape never far away' (Quinton and Zane 2013: 62-63); and another argued that the 'problem' with the film's two-part structure was that the second part:

...feels too little too late and doesn't ring entirely true. If this was the true version of events why not make it the whole story? What's the point of the ambiguity? You suspect the truth lies somewhere in the middle (Fitzherbert 2013).

In his review of the film, John Patterson similarly discussed the structure of the film, arguing:

I can see why, as documentarians, Epstein and Friedman did this. They have a courtroom's need for balanced argument; and Lovelace's [Boreman's] post-porn autobiography has been assailed by as many witnesses as have confirmed its truth (2013: 19).



Women not being believed when they reveal that their male partners are violent, continues to pose a significant problem in tackling beliefs about, and attitudes towards survivors of domestic violence (as well as other forms of male violence against women), and in these instances, not only was the film's representation questioned in light of the 'truth' but also Boreman herself – was she telling the truth when she revealed that she had been forced into performing in *Deep Throat*? And did Traynor beat and rape her?

Unlike how the story of Tina was discussed in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, the story of Boreman – that she was beaten and raped by her husband – was represented as a *version* of events, her *claims* about what *allegedly* happened to her. For example, it was argued that 'Boreman *allegedly* suffered great physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband and self-appointed manager Chuck Traynor' (Kim 2013); that she 'went on to *claim* she had suffered domestic violence from her husband Chuck Traynor' (Day and Night 2013) and that she '*claimed* Traynor had raped her and abused her' (Jones 2013b) (for other examples of such language being used see Iggulden 2013: 22; Pukas 2013: 21).

Notably, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* (the previous case study) such language was not used. Similar to the manner in which I suggested that Ike and Traynor's individual public profiles and celebrity statuses contributed to the manner in which they were discussed, I would argue that the difference between the individual profiles and celebrity statuses of Tina and Boreman may have attributed to the difference in the manner in which they were

discussed also. When *I, Tina* (Tina's autobiography in which she first revealed Ike had beaten and raped her) and *What's Love Got to Do With It* were released, Tina was a well accomplished star in her own right. It could, therefore, be assumed and perceived that Tina had accumulated a significant degree of personal wealth and that she was not revealing that she had been beaten and raped by Ike as she *needed* the money she would acquire from this publicity (while it was on occasion suggested that her story had been exploited for her to benefit financially it was not suggested that she *needed* the money or that she was making up a story to make money from). In opposition to this, it could be perceived that at the time *Ordeal* was initially released in 1980, Boreman's fame had all but disappeared and that she did need the money, and that she had to sell a story (whether this story be true or not) for the publicity and money. The fact that Boreman was involved in the production of pornography (throughout the time of which she was represented as being a willing participant) as well as her descriptions of her more personal sexual encounters in her first two books, further adds to the air of scepticism that has surrounded her (in spite of the fact that Boreman revealed that she had been forced into performing in pornography and that Traynor effectively wrote her first autobiography). This is exemplified in one review of the film in which it is argued that the two-part structure of the film 'mirrors Lovelace's [Boreman's] changed attitude to having been involved in *Deep Throat* - firstly an enthusiastic expression of liberation, then years later her revulsion at the violent abuse she received from her husband-manager Chuck Traynor' (Gritten 2013). Here, Boreman's voice is ignored as it is suggested that, as opposed to her being forced into performing in pornography, she simply had a change in attitude later in life. The idea that women (often) lie about being raped has a long history. One common rape myth is that women are prone to making false

allegations of rape as a means of hiding their sexual adventures (Lees 1996: xxi-xxii) and I would argue that a similar idea is at play here in relation to how Boreman was perceived – that she had a change in attitude to her sexual behaviour in the past, that she regretted her actions, and that one of the ways to rid herself of the stigma attached to her because she appeared in pornographic films was to claim that she had been forced into performing these acts and that she was raped. While, as discussed earlier in this case study, the relationship between pornography and popular culture has become increasingly intertwined, there still exists a stigma against pornography ‘performers’, particularly of female ‘performers’. A number of women, for example, have revealed the difficulties they have faced trying to get and/or keep a job after appearing in pornography, that they have been discriminated against and ‘let go’ when employers have found out that they were involved in the production of pornography (see, for example, Berlatsky 2012; Dickson 2013).

Notably, however, a significant number of articles, reviews and features used more decisive language in describing the abuse that Boreman faced at the hands of her husband. Some texts even included a combination of language that both cast suspicion as well as supporting Boreman. For example, while, as discussed above, David Gritten argued the Boreman had a change in attitude, he also argued that in the second section of the film ‘the mood abruptly changes and Linda is seen taking a polygraph test for the publishers of her second autobiography, which *details* the coercion and intimidation she suffered’ (2013a) and that ‘some scenes from the first half are reprised to show how appallingly Traynor *really* behaved’ (ibid.). Similarly, others argued that that the film is ‘a very grim story about a woman who *was* a victim of extreme abuse, both on camera and at the hands of her ultra-sleazy

husband, Chuck Traynor' (Battersby 2013); that the film 'tells of the punishing ordeal endured by porn star Linda Lovelace at the hands of her pornographer husband Chuck Traynor (Peter Sarsgaard)' (Tookey 2013) and another how Boreman 'rejected porn, and in 1980 published a memoir entitled *Ordeal*, which *revealed* that she *was* beaten, raped and abused by the film's co-producer, her slimeball husband Chuck Traynor, together with his various porn associates and investors' (Bradshaw 2013: 18) (for other examples of such language being used see Adams 2013: 37; Dassanayake and McNally 2013; Long 2013: 12-13; Maher 2013a: 4-5; Phelan 2013: 50; Retter 2013: 30-31). Exhibited in these instances was an unwavering belief that Boreman *was* exploited, coerced, and sexually and physically abused by Traynor and to see such a significant number of texts that expressed a belief in Boreman is encouraging.

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, individuals involved in the production of the film also spoke out in support of Boreman. For example, Rob Epstein, one of the film's directors, described his approach to the film:

Ultimately we had to pick a point of view...The circumstances of how she did porn were connected to the fact she was in an abusive relationship, at a time when the culture had little understanding of domestic violence and the cycle of it. So we take Linda at her word (Gritten 2013b).

Amanda Seyfried (the actress who plays Boreman in the film) was also quoted in an article describing how, for her as an actress, the story of Boreman was 'a very dark place to go' (McCormack 2013b) and that the film 'couldn't show half of what she went through' (ibid.) again, exhibiting a belief that Boreman had had to endure some terrible things. Kevin Maher also described in his article how Seyfried 'rails against those who still doubt the veracity of the late actress's abuse claims' (2013a: 4-5),

including a quote from Seyfried who argued ‘I don't really understand the point of being cynical about her [Borean] any more, just because they want to think she enjoyed doing all this crazy shit’ (2013a: 4-5).

The idea that at *all* female ‘performers’ involved in representing sex in pornographic films enjoy what they do and ‘perform’ because they have *chosen* to, is very common in popular discourses surrounding pornography, as is the idea that the pornography industry is a haven for women to explore their sexuality and be sexually liberated. These popular discourses surrounding women working in the pornography industry highlight ‘choice’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘agency’, though do not usually acknowledge the social or economic factors that *limit* some women’s choices. In *Lovelace*, these popular discourses surrounding women involved in the pornography industry are countered as Borean is represented being manipulated and forced into performing in pornography by Traynor. In addition to this, they were also countered in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film and by one of the film’s directors and by Seyfried (as exemplified above) who emphasised that Borean was not a willing participant and was forced and coerced into performing in pornography by her husband.

While, as discussed earlier in this case study, the subject of male violence against women within the context of domestic violence was rarely discussed beyond the immediate context of the film, the subject of male violence against women within the context of the pornography industry was. In fact, it was the subject of pornography that was most likely to be discussed beyond the immediate context of the film and

these included a range of discourses – some supportive and some critical of the pornography industry. As mentioned above, Seyfried was vocal in her support of Boreman and in the same article she was quoted arguing:

I'm not going to judge porn. And for all people, to each their own. However, illegal porn, bestiality and child porn are absolutely wrong. It's illegal, and you'd have to be sick to enjoy it. But mainstream porn is not that big of a deal...Back in the Seventies, there were so many corrupt, dirty, monstrous men behind porn. They were taking advantage of women, and just using them. The porn industry today is different, but it's probably still corrupt (Maher 2013: 4-5).

As exemplified in this quotation, Seyfried's discussions (or at least how her discussions were represented) about Boreman and the pornography industry of the Seventies were very different to her discussions about contemporary pornography productions and the contemporary pornography industry. While Seyfried argued that the contemporary pornography industry is different to the pornography industry of the Seventies, she did not elaborate or go onto discuss why she perceived this to be the case (or, if she did, this part of the discussion was not published). In a number of other texts she was also quoted discussing the contemporary pornography industry. For example, it was claimed in one feature that she was a 'fan of certain blue movies' (Walker 2013: 6) and she was quoted arguing: 'Some of it's produced in a way that's safe and positive, like Kink, run by women in San Francisco...That's a beautiful thing. Why not? But there's trouble everywhere' (ibid.); and in another article, she was quoted arguing:

You can't put a ban on it [pornography]. I mean, kids under age are still drinking. It's always going to exist, it's freedom; we should be free to watch whatever we want...In terms of how it's made and produced, there are a lot of issues, some is safe and positive but there's trouble everywhere (Day and Night 2013).

A similar exchange of words was quoted in another review which read:

we figured Amanda, 27, might be quite against the mucky movie industry. But she had the opposite view when we caught up with her at the Lovelace gala screening at the May Fair hotel, London. She told us: 'You can't put a ban on porn. Of course not. Each to their own, right? It's always going to exist. 'I mean, kids under age are still drinking. It just makes it that much more powerful. It's freedom, You should be free to watch it whenever you want' (Dyson 2013: 14-15).

Seyfried's discussions of the contemporary pornography industry (as represented in these texts) engage with the most popular discourses defending the pornography industry, these revolving around freedom of individual choice (for a person to watch whatever they wish to completely ignorant of the conditions that something has been produced in). Also evidenced above is a difference in the way Seyfried spoke about/was represented speaking about the treatment of women in the contemporary pornography industry and that of the Seventies – with her being much more critical of the pornography industry of the Seventies. While Seyfried suggested that, in comparison to the pornography industry of the Seventies, the contemporary pornography industry is 'probably still corrupt' (Maher 2013: 4-5), that 'in terms of how it's made and produced, there are a lot of issues, some is safe and positive but there's trouble everywhere' (Day and Night 2013) she was not represented engaging in explicit discussions about the treatment of women in the contemporary pornography industry. As such, with Seyfried's emphasis on freedom of choice, arguing that some porn is safe and positive, and that there is always going to be trouble, engagement with the serious issue of the treatment of women in the contemporary pornography was largely avoided by Seyfried as she is represented skirting around this serious issue and, instead, foregrounding freedom of choice. Seyfried was represented as being far less critical of the contemporary pornography industry than she was of the 1970s pornography industry. Arguably, it was considered safe for Seyfried to discuss the pornography industry's treatment of

women more specifically and explicitly in relation to the 1970s than it was to discuss the contemporary pornography industry in such a manner. To openly criticise the contemporary pornography industry specifically in relation to its treatment of women may have been considered risky for Seyfried's future career prospects as it would lessen her appeal to the masses.

As noted by Karen Boyle:

Numerous testimonies collated by anti-pornography feminists reveal a range of abuses linked to the production of commercial and non-commercial film, video and pictorial pornography, including:

- physical and emotional coercion into performances
- defamation through pornography (a strategy frequently used against feminist anti-pornography writers)
- nude photos sold and/or distributed without the consent (or knowledge) of the woman pictured
- discomfort, pain and physical injuries sustained in the posing and performance of pornographic scenarios
- unsafe sexual practices resulting in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and risk of HIV infection
- the filming or photographing of actual sexual violence – including war rape and spousal abuse – to be used as pornography
- the sexual murder of women on screen in so-called snuff movies

(2005: 33)

Attention to the harm of which is done to some women (as well as children and men) in the making of pornography has received limited media attention. For example, discussing the Pornography Civil Rights Hearings that were held across the United States throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, where victims of pornography (including Boreman) told their stories, Catharine A. MacKinnon notes how 'media reports of victims' testimony at the time of the hearings themselves were often cursory, distorted, or nonexistent' (1997: 9), and how 'some reports by journalists covering the Minneapolis hearings were rewritten by editors to conform the testimony to the story of pornography's harmlessness that they wanted told (ibid.). In



her book, *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*, Gail Dines similarly notes that ‘the mainstream media largely ignore what actually happens to women in porn, the acts they need to perform, their short shelf life, and the ongoing risk of STDs’ (2010: 40). Notably, however, while, as exemplified above, Seyfried was not overly critical of the contemporary pornography industry’s treatment of women, a number of other texts did engage more explicitly in discussions about this. For example, in one review it was argued that:

...the film boldly exposes the lie that underpins the mythology of porn: that the female participants have nymphomaniacal tendencies and are, secretly or not so secretly, loving it. What *Lovelace* depicts, coolly and without equivocation, is entirely the opposite...The film boldly exposes the lie that women are secretly loving it (Maher 2013b: 7).

Other articles, features and reviews published in the popular press consulted with people involved in either the making of the film, academics, cultural commentators and people working in the pornography industry, to present voices critical of the contemporary pornography industry. In one of these, the film was discussed with Dines (author of the aforementioned *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*) who was quoted arguing:

What happened to her [Boreman] in real life was so much worse than anything that was on the screen, it was incomparable...Until you understand the degree to which this was non-stop ongoing daily beatings I think it's hard for people to understand why she stayed...They don't understand the daily terrorism that women get [from people working in the pornography industry] (Goldhill 2013).

From a similar standpoint, for her feature, Hannah Marriott discussed the film with anti-porn feminist activists Catharine MacKinnon and Gloria Steinem both of whom worked with Boreman in the 1980s campaigning against pornography as well as participating in the production of *Lovelace* by acting as consultants, the article reading:

Steinem...wanted audiences 'to connect Linda's experiences to the experiences of thousands of women who, as we speak, are being conned by pimps and being imprisoned in the same way' (Marriott 2013: 2).

Katie Glass also made reference to MacKinnon in her feature about *Lovelace*, who, it was reported, 'believes abuse is still endemic in the porn industry' (2013: 16-21).

Glass also argued that Boreman's 'story is a timely one. With the proliferation of online pornography, a new generation is struggling with the industry's treatment and depiction of women' (2013: 16-21); and the feature also included quotes from Boreman's son who, similarly, argued that women today are in similar circumstances to Boreman. In these instances, discussions about the (mis)treatment of women involved in working in the pornography industry extended beyond Boreman's story in the 1970s to women working in the contemporary pornography industry. In the instances above, while the articles and features about and reviews of *Lovelace* didn't engage in lengthy discussions or explorations about how women may/may not be treated by people working in the contemporary pornography industry, they were nevertheless mentioned – enabling these subjects a visibility they often do not receive in popular, mainstream media. In addition to this, the press discourse surrounding the release of *Lovelace* enabled popular/mainstream discourses about pornography (which are usually positive, see, for example, Dines 2010) to be countered in the mainstream media, bringing attention to the issue of the mistreatment of women in the pornography industry where it may not have been otherwise.

Notably, however, articles, features and reviews that discussed or mentioned the mistreatment of women in the contemporary pornography industry sometimes included counter-arguments to these claims – presenting both sides of the argument.

For example, in the feature discussed above in which MacKinnon was quoted arguing that abuse is still endemic in the pornography industry, this argument was countered directly after the quote from MacKinnon, the feature reading:

Not everyone agrees. The former porn star Sasha Grey stopped making adult films more than three years ago to focus on mainstream acting, but claims to have found her time in the business empowering. 'I don't doubt that [Lovelace's] husband was abusive, but that doesn't mean the entire industry is abusive,' she says. 'That stereotype is perpetuated because of people like her, who didn't think about the decisions they were making.'

Despite her portrayal of Lovelace, Seyfried believes that some women enter porn because 'they feel that it's empowering' (Glass 2013: 16-21).

Evident again here is the idea that Boreman was lying about the mistreatment she faced by the pornographers she was made to work with. In this article, the pornography industry was even accredited for *saving* Boreman, Glass reporting that 'some argue that it was the business itself that ultimately saved Lovelace, by giving her the confidence to eventually leave Traynor' (2013: 16-21) going onto quote Candida Royalle, an 'adult-movie actress turned director' who reportedly argued:

She admitted that the people she met making *Deep Throat* were the first to make her feel at all good about herself... They were kind to her, they made her laugh, they made her feel welcome and special - and ultimately they helped her escape. They felt very betrayed by her claims about pornography later, that it wasn't how it had happened at all (Glass 2013: 16-21).

This idea that the pornography industry 'saved' Boreman and was fundamental in her ability to leave Traynor was also voiced in another feature, in which it was argued:

The irony though is that while Boreman said *Deep Throat* shows her being raped, the fame she gained when the film went massive was the catalyst to her escape from an abusive relationship. (Her ex in his turn had liberated her from abusive and highly religious parents ... boxes within boxes.) Without the platform of being Linda Lovelace, her story would perhaps have turned out a little different from the many people who find themselves manipulated into bad situations and never escape (Magnanti 2013).

Evident in these instances, again, is the ignoring of Boreman's voice, and an emphasis on the good of the pornography industry as it ultimately helped her to escape. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the film takes a less critical and damning approach towards the pornography industry than it does with Traynor. This choice by the filmmakers is particularly interesting as in *Ordeal* Boreman is explicit about how she was also abused by Lou Peraino (Perry), the producer of *Deep Throat*, who came to an agreement with Traynor that Boreman would perform sexual favours for Peraino (see Lovelace and McGrady 1980: 120-122). Perhaps it was considered too risky to represent the pornography industry in a critical manner in such a mainstream production.

Along with a focus on pornography in press texts that discussed *Lovelace*, there was also an overwhelming focus placed on the appearance of the film's female star, Amanda Seyfried, her nudity in the film and how she looked and dressed on the film's promotional trail. *Lovelace* acquired a significant amount of publicity across the national press (and their online counterparts) both prior to and surrounding the time of its release, and through analysis of the articles, features and reviews in which the film was discussed, it is evident that this can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, due to the involvement of Amanda Seyfried whose popularity was on the rise after appearing in *Mamma Mia* (Dir. Phyllida Lloyd, 2008) and starring in *Les Misérables* (Dir. Tom Hooper, 2012). The second factor was that Seyfried would be playing a porn star, meaning that she would (presumably) appear partially nude and be involved in representing scenes of a sexually explicit nature. Discussions about the sexual representations in the film and how these representations were enacted appeared relatively frequently in articles about the film (see, for example,

McCormack 2013a; Watkins 2013; Retter 2013: 30-31; Carpenter 2013b; Daily Mail Reporter 2013a) and it was repeatedly reported that Seyfried was afraid that playing Boreman in *Lovelace* could ruin her career (see, for example, Daily Mail Reporter 2013b; Watkins 2013; Retter 2013; McCormack 2013b; Glass 2013: 16-21; de Burca 2013: 22; Flint 2013), this risk frequently attributed to the nudity required of Seyfried to play the role of Boreman. Comments on Seyfried's physical appearance in the film – what she wore and what she didn't wear, how her hair was styled – were also common (see, for example, McCormack 2013a; Watkins 2013; Carpenter 2013a; Daily Mail Reporter 2013a; Flint 2013; Daily Mail Reporter 2013b).

### Summary and Conclusion

Though the primary subject matters of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* are similar (both being about domestic violence), the ways in which each of these films were publicised and discussed across the popular press were remarkably different.

One striking difference between the press coverage of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* was the manner in which the male characters (the perpetrators of the violence) and the female characters (the victims/survivors) were discussed. The language used to discuss Ike and Tina in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* represented and expressed a belief in Tina and that Ike beat and raped her. This is very different to some of the language used in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace* which was much more tentative, and more cautionary in tone, in terms of whether or not Boreman was

actually beaten, raped and forced into performing in pornographic films by Traynor.

I have suggested that this difference can perhaps be attributed to the difference in Tina's and Boreman's individual public profiles and celebrity statuses. For example, Tina Turner's continued career success, in her own right, has meant that she has acquired a believability, whereas the less successful career trajectory of Boreman means she is viewed more cautiously. In her analysis of the public discourse that surrounded Sir Paul McCartney and Heather Mills' divorce, 'which was conducted, among other things, under the spotlight of accusations of domestic violence' (Nicholson 2010: 112), Paula Nicholson notes how 'the case was depicted as one in which the "gold digger" wife was accusing the "loving family man"...of behaviours that she allegedly exaggerated or lied about' (ibid.). She then goes on to describe how McCartney and Mills were not socially and morally equals, with McCartney being nearly twice Mills' age, acknowledged as a talented musician whose work spanned many years, and a popular music 'royal' whereas 'Mills was a former model with no prior reputation for any particular skills although arguably ambitious to maintain a status as a celebrity' (ibid.), suggesting that this difference in social and moral status (along with other factors) contributed to the perception and media representation of the McCartney and Mills case. I would argue that we have also seen this more recently in the press when the actress Amber Heard revealed that she had been physically assaulted by her husband Johnny Depp, where a number of press texts contributed to a discourse that represented Heard as a young aspiring actress who married an older successful man for her own gains (i.e. publicity and money), then divorces him, demands money and accuses him of battery. When it was first reported in the press that Heard and Depp had separated (and prior to it being revealed that Heard had requested a restraining order against Depp) it was reported

that it was Heard who had filed for divorce and that she did this only days after the death of Depp's mother (see, for example, Kelly 2016; McGrath 2016; Merriman 2016; Shenton 2016). As such, prior to it being revealed that Heard had requested and been granted a restraining order against Depp, Heard had already been represented in the media as a cruel woman. This representation of Heard as an uncaring and self-serving woman was further exacerbated by reports that she was requesting spousal support, that there was going to be a battle over Depp's cash (that he was seeking ways to protect his money) and that she was lying about the abuse in order to get a higher divorce settlement (see, for example, Anon. 2016; Cable 2016: 17; Cross 2016: 9; Halls 2016: 13; Madsen 2016). These more contemporary reports certainly suggests the potential for further research concerning press discourses that have surrounded female celebrities' revealing of their experiences of domestic violence.

Another striking difference in the press discussions that surrounded the releases of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* in regards to how the male perpetrators of violence were discussed, with Ike's actions frequently 'explained' and partly justified – the suggestion being that he beat and raped Tina because he was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and/or because he was jealous of Tina. In opposition to this, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, Traynor's actions were rarely 'explained'. Again, I would argue, that this could perhaps be attributed to the difference between the individual public profiles and celebrity status' of these two men, whereby Ike's celebrity status and career credentials afforded him, in certain instances, a little more sympathy from journalists and film critics, who sought to explain why he beat and raped Tina. I would also

suggest that Depp's celebrity status similarly worked in his favour, whereby, he was represented as a man who had had been taken for a ride by a younger woman who was represented as being selfish and after his money.

One similarity (which is also perhaps the most striking) between the popular press discourses surrounding the releases of *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* was that the subject of domestic violence was rarely discussed beyond the context of the films. In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, it was the subject of pornography that was most likely to be discussed beyond the immediate context of the film, these including a range of discourses – some supportive and some critical of the pornography industry. There was also an overwhelming focus placed on the appearance of the film's female star, Amanda Seyfried, her nudity in the film, how she enacted the representations of sex in the film, and her physical appearance – the appearance of a young, stereotypically attractive actress appearing half-nude in the film and representing scenes of a sexual nature considered by journalists to be the films proprietary characteristic.

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* although the subject of domestic violence was rarely discussed beyond the immediate context of the film, there were instances where myths and misunderstandings surrounding domestic violence were reinforced and further perpetuated. These included myths that men being physically abusive toward their female partners is caused by their consumption of alcohol and/or drugs, that it is easy for women to leave abusive partners, and that women who are in relationships with



men who are violent towards them stay because they are sadomasochistic. In other instances the language used to describe Ike's violent behaviour towards Tina had the effect of downplaying the level of violence, as well as neutralising the power dynamics involved, representing and suggesting that both Ike and Tina were equally involved and equally accountable for the violence.

## Chapter 6

### *Gone Girl* and Rape Myths

In this final chapter, I explore and analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* (Dir. David Fincher, 2013).

The narrative of *Gone Girl* centres on the married characters Amy and Nick Dunne (played by Rosamund Pike and Ben Affleck). When Amy goes missing from their home, the ensuing police investigation leads to Nick becoming the prime suspect in his wife's disappearance, with the police suspecting that he has murdered her.

Approximately half-way into the film, however, it becomes apparent that Amy has framed her own disappearance – we see her in a car driving away from her home and her accompanying voice-over narration confirms this. From this point onwards in the film, we learn more about Amy's plans – that she originally intended to kill herself but then changed her mind to go back to Nick. She then frames another man Desi Collings (played by Neil Patrick Harris), for her kidnap before murdering him in another elaborate plot in which she claims she had to kill him to escape. It is as part of this plot that Amy is represented inflicting physical injuries on herself to support claims that as well as kidnapping her, Collings also raped her. As well as lying about Collings raping her, it is also implied that prior to her relationship with Nick, Amy also accused an ex-boyfriend of raping her. Within the context of the film, there is no way of knowing whether her ex-boyfriend, Tommy O'Hara, raped Amy or not, but because she has lied about Nick being abusive towards her, the implication is that she must have been lying about O'Hara raping her. We (the audience) know that the

abuse claims that Amy makes against Nick are fabricated as she tells us through her voice-over narration, describing how she executed her plan to frame Nick, one element of this being her diary entries in which she describes how she started ‘with the fairy-tale early days – those are true and they’re crucial. You want Nick and Amy to be likeable. After that, you invent. The spending, the abuse, the fear, the threat of violence’.

The myth that women *often* make up stories or lie about being raped has a long history. As Nicola Gavey and Virginia Gow detail:

From the ancient Greek myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra to the biblical tale of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife (*Genesis* 39: 7-23), the act of claiming rape is portrayed in mythology and historical narrative as a woman’s device for covering her deviant sexual behaviour, an act of revenge, fury or fantasy, and/or an instrument for pulling the wool over her husband’s and society’s eyes. The trace of these stories has long been kept alive in western societies (2001: 343).

The idea that false allegations of rape are common has sometimes been amplified by popular culture, ‘where references to women “crying rape” have gained much credence in recent years – and done a great deal of damage’ (Rape Crisis Scotland 2010). A number of academic studies have highlighted the disparity between media reporting of false accusations and actual rapes, Julie A. Allison and Lawrence S. Wrightsman arguing that most actual rapes do not receive anywhere near the same attention in the media that false accusations of rape receive (1993: 11). Kitzinger similarly notes how ‘increasingly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries there has also been a tendency to focus on the issue of false allegations’ (2009: 76), with the media often paying ‘more attention to supposedly false allegations than they do to established facts about sexual violence’ (2009: 82).

*Gone Girl* contributes to this media trend and to a wider cultural environment in which the idea that women frequently lie about being raped (and that it is easy for women to get away with) is propagated. While the film itself does this, what the film's release also did, was instigate press discussion that explicitly challenges this idea. For example, in her article '*Gone Girl*'s recycling of rape myths is a disgusting distortion', Joan Smith, writing for *The Guardian*, criticised what she considered to be one of the film's key themes - 'the notion that it's childishly easy to get away with making false allegations of rape and domestic violence' (2014: 30). As such, this article, contributes to a discourse in which rape myths are challenged.

In her article, Smith also refers to a Crown Prosecution Service report in which it was found that during a 17-month period there were 5,651 rape prosecutions and 111,891 for domestic violence with only 35 women prosecuted for making false allegations of rape and only 6 for false claims of domestic violence, highlighting that 'occasions when a suspect deliberately makes a false allegation of rape or domestic violence "purely out of malice" are "extremely rare"' (ibid.). This report was also mentioned in two other press texts that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* (see Saner 2014: 10 and Jones 2014). Notably, however, the context within which this report was mentioned did differ. As exemplified above, Smith used the report to challenge the rape myth that women often lie about being raped and to criticise this aspect of the film. In 'The *Gone Girl* backlash: What women don't want', Emine Saner, writing for *The Guardian*'s 'g2' supplement, summarised some of the arguments that had been made about the film (one of these being a reference to

Smith's article) concerning whether the film is misogynist (as it represents myths about female behaviour and rape) or whether it was empowering (as the female protagonist defies the female victim stereotype). As opposed to explicitly arguing one way or the other, Saner presented both sides of the argument in her article. She referred to a blogger who, she described, 'neatly summarised the objections to the character saying she "'is the crystallisation of a thousand misogynist myths and fears about female behaviour..." (2014: 10) and to *The Guardian* writer David Cox who, it was reported, worried that film could bolster its misogynistic viewers – that Amy's adventures in the film could foster the idea that women are 'self-serving, venomous and deceitful but can get away with whatever they want' (qtd. in Saner 2014: 10). Saner also included quotes from Gillian Flynn (author of the book and of the screenplay) and Rhiannon Lucy Coslett who proposed that Amy is a feminist character as she is not a female victim stereotype. Coslett was quoted arguing:

By using society's propensity to pigeonhole women as vulnerable victims against her drunken sexist of a husband, you could argue that (Amy Dunne) is taking back the power in her relationship. As a woman, she has been forced to embody a succession of tedious female stereotypes, but she twists this oppressive force in order to get her own way (qtd. in Saner 2014: 10).

In an article published in the *Mail on Sunday*, Liz Jones similarly argued that 'Pike's Amy should be hailed as a heroine, given she refuses to take her husband's addiction to computer games and twentysomething mistresses lying down' (2014) and also mentioned the Crown Prosecution report in her article, though the context within which this was discussed was very different to Smith's and Saner's articles. In her article, titled 'Sorry sisters...but some women really are nasty', Jones argued that the timing of the release of *Gone Girl* was unfortunate given the 'year's number of accusations against men, and the terrible abuse against young girls in South

Yorkshire' (ibid.) but then moved on to justify the film's representation in the following way:

But, first, the film is entertainment. Second, it portrays a woman as someone not to be messed with: give Pike a bow and arrow and she is an older version of Jennifer Lawrence. Third, not all women are nice, and to say they are does us all a disservice (ibid.)

Jones concluded her article:

Some women trap men by getting pregnant, and spend all day at work discussing childcare with the nanny and what colour the new leather floor in the master suite should be. Some women are manipulative. Most men are decent and don't deserve to live in fear (ibid.).

In opposition to Smith's article, which focused on how the representation of Amy lying about being raped in the film reinforces rape myths (her article contributing to a discourse that challenges rape myths) Jones' article contributes to an opposing discourse supporting and perpetuating the idea that men should not have to live in fear of women, whose behaviour is constructed as deceitful, manipulative and self-serving. Intrinsically linked to the myth that women often lie about being raped are myths about female behaviour – that they are deceitful, manipulative and that they seek to destroy men's lives. Similar to the manner in which the film *Gone Girl* contributes to a cultural environment in which the idea that women lie about being raped and that it is easy for them to get away with is propagated, some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the film similarly contributed to a cultural environment in which myths about female behaviour (that they are deceitful and seek to destroy men's lives) were also further propagated.

Exemplified in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* was an undercurrent of concern about female behaviour towards men and sympathy

for men who were represented as being mistreated by women. For example, a significant number of press texts spoke of the film in relation to the subject of marriage. These included an article in *The Daily Telegraph* entitled ‘Do Wives Today Expect Too Much’ (Anon. 2014b: 22-23); an article written by Henry Fitzherbert for the *Sunday Express* titled ‘Can your marriage survive seeing *Gone Girl*’ (2014: 48); an article written by Erin Kelly for *The Daily Telegraph* titled ‘Why we are all in the grip of suburban noir’ its by-line reading: ‘*Gone Girl*, which opened this week, is the latest hit film with toxic marriage at its heart. Author Erin Kelly examines our obsession with marital narcissism’ (2014: 25); an article written by Melanie Phillips written for *The Times* titled ‘We’re the voyeurs in this nasty marital mess’ (2014: 30); an article titled ‘*Gone Girl* and this worrying demonising of husbands’ published in the *Daily Mail* and written by Amanda Platell (2014); an article written by Deborah Ross for *The Times*’ T2’ titled ‘A perfect marriage is easy – just lower your expectations’ (2014: 2); an article by Sarah Vine titled ‘Yes, women do expect too much of their marriages’ published in the *Daily Mail* (2014); and an article written by the film critic Brian Viner for the *MailOnline* titled ‘Watch this film and you will never look at your other half the same way again’ (2014).

Evident in some these texts was an emphasis on men being dealt an unfair hand both in media representation and in society more generally, with their female partners/wives expecting too much of them, and men being demonised when they do not, or rather cannot, live up to the impossible standards demanded by their female partners (these discussions revolving primarily around heterosexual relationships). For example, in ‘*Gone Girl* and this worrying demonising of husbands’, Amanda Platell argued that the casual demonising of husbands as ineffectual, unreliable, selfish oafs has become a constant refrain in popular culture today, inevitably

portrayed as irritating, inadequate, barely house-trained Neanderthals and that like the husband in *Gone Girl*, they disappoint at every level (2014). In a nutshell, Platell argued that women should think more about how they disappoint their husbands, and that they should treat their husbands better. This subject of discussion appears to have been instigated by a comment from Rosamund Pike (the actress who plays Amy in the film), who, it was reported in a number of articles, said that people have ridiculous expectations of a partner (see, for example, Anon. 2014b: 22-23; Glennie 2014a; Glennie 2014b; Vine 2014) and was also quoted in another text arguing: ‘now we want all our needs met by one person, and I don’t believe that’s possible’ (Vine 2014). Notably, as evidenced in this reference to Pike’s statement, she did not refer specifically to marriage, nor did she refer specifically to a particular sex or gender in terms of *who* was expecting too much from their partners, but when this was further discussed in press texts it was most often in relation to heterosexual relationships, with women being those expecting too much of their male partners/husbands. One of these articles was titled ‘Do wives expect too much?’ (Anon. 2014b: 22-23). Another was titled ‘Yes, Women do expect too much of their marriages’ (Vine 2014), and another, ‘*Gone Girl* star Rosamund Pike says women have “ridiculous” expectations of marriage’ (Glennie 2014b). Evidenced here in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* is how perceptions of the character of Amy extended to discussion about women more generally. In her article titled ‘Sorry sisters...but some women really are nasty’ Jones also argued that ‘some women trap men by getting pregnant’ (2014) and that ‘some women are manipulative’ (2014). A few weeks after the film’s release, an article published on *The Telegraph*’s web page titled ‘“I’m never getting married”: Twitter’s best reactions to *Gone Girl*’, published a number twitter users’ reactions to the film.



These included: ‘Just saw Gone Girl. Now scared of marriage. And women. And pretty much everything else’ (Brown 2014), ‘Jus been to see Gone Girl...that film has truly changed my perception on women seriously no marriage for me lol’ (Brown 2014), and another ‘Gone girl has taught me not just to respect women. But to actually fear them...’ (Brown 2014). As such, the character of Amy was considered as a kind of ‘everywoman’ character. While I acknowledge that some of the comments discussed above were, most likely, made in jest and were not meant to be taken literally and/or seriously, it is very interesting how press discussions about Amy developed into discussions about women more generally. Such discussions are unlike any that appear in the press coverage of the other films analysed for this thesis in which male characters perpetrate various forms of violence and/or sexual violence against women. For example, in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in which I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What’s Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* in which men beat and rape their female partners, it was not discussed or suggested (whether this be in jest or otherwise) that women should look at their male partners in a different way, that they should be more wary or scared of them. Nor in Chapter 2, in which I analyse press texts that discussed the original and remade versions of *I Spit On Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left* (in which women are raped by men they do not know) was it ever implied, in jest or otherwise, that women should be more wary or scared of men they do not know.

Evident in the press texts discussed above is a fear of a very particular type of female evil – one which targets men. Notably, the representation in the film of Amy as a woman who primarily targets *men* is different to her representation in the book from which *Gone Girl* is adapted. For example, in the book, when Nick begins to look

further into his wife's history, he not only speaks to O'Hara (the ex-boyfriend who Amy accused of raping her) but also to Hilary - a school friend who Amy accused of stalking and physically assaulting her. This sub-plot is absent in the film adaptation, and, as such, the film represents Amy as someone who only targets men – Nick, O'Hara and Collings. Another slight, but significant difference between the book and the film is that in the book the charges against O'Hara are *dropped* with no further action taken (this information coming from police records), Nick's lawyer speculating that Amy not wanting to testify being the reason as to why the charges were dropped (see Flynn 2013: 239). However, in the film, charges *were* brought against O'Hara who tells Nick that he plead guilty to a lesser charge of sexual assault (which guaranteed that he would not have to serve any jail time) and that due to this Amy had effectively ruined his life. O'Hara informs Nick that he has been unemployed for the last eight years as he has to write 'sexual offender' on every job application, that he is on a neighbourhood watch list because he has to register as a predator, and how he has not had a date in almost a decade because if a girl searches him on google she will out that he is a convicted sex offender (this last statement made by O'Hara is cut off by Nick but it can easily be assumed that this is what he would have gone on to say). These small but significant changes have the effect of positioning Amy (in the film) as a woman who has gone through her life ruining one man's life after another by lying about them beating and raping her (as opposed to the book in which both men and women are represented as being victims of hers).

Notably, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* there were other texts that posed similar types of questions in a non-gender/sex-specific manner,

but this is also not something I have witnessed in my analysis of the press coverage that surrounded the release of any of the other films analysed for this thesis. For example, an article published in *The Sun* titled ‘Are you married to a psycho’, opened: ‘Before you step in the shower, ask yourself: Is your partner a psycho? Perhaps their charm is masking a cunning, manipulative, ruthless personality - a theme explored in the new Ben Affleck film *Gone Girl*’ (Anon. 2014c: 18). This article even went so far as to offer a test for readers to see if their partner has secret psychopathic tendencies. Similar to this, in an article published in *The Sunday Times* written by Francesca Hornack titled ‘Are you married to a sociopath’, asked the question: ‘As the psycho thriller *Gone Girl* opens, could your partner really be a master of manipulation?’ (2014: 34); and Allan Hunter proposed that after watching the film ‘you might never trust the person sitting opposite you again’ (2014: 37, 38). There was something about this film that repeatedly led to it being discussed in a manner beyond the context of the film itself, whether this be in relation to women, relationships and/or of people more generally. There was something about the fact that such a morally ambiguous, manipulative and evil character was *female* that really struck a chord with journalists, leading them to ponder and question the motives and intentions of people, though mostly women, in a real-life context. As such, myths about female behaviour were further propagated, which is particularly problematic when considered in relation to contemporary attitudes towards rape where women are frequently disbelieved.

Another significant difference between the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* and that of the other case studies that comprise this thesis, is

that Amy's behaviour was not sought to be excused, or reasons for her actions proposed. This is different to a number of the case studies included in this thesis in which the behaviour of men who rape women was frequently sought to be explained, both in relation to the men in the film and also in terms of male behaviour more generally. For example, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, a film which, similar to *Gone Girl*, revolves around a marital relationship between a man and a woman, it was often implied that the reason Ike beat and raped Tina was because he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol and/or that he was jealous of her success (see Chapter 5). In Chapter 2, in the press discourse that surrounded the so-called 'video nasties' debates, it was proposed that men were raping women because they had watched 'video nasties'; and in the first case study of this chapter in certain instances (see Gibbs 1971: 13 and Malcolm 1971: 10) it was proposed that one of the reasons that Venner and his friend raped Amy was because of the way the *she* behaved, as well as how her husband behaved. In such instances, there was some form of discussion (if only speculation) about *why* and *what* contributed to the behaviour of the male characters who perpetrated the sexual violence. Amy's behaviour was not described in such a way. This is somewhat surprising considering the relationship between Amy and Nick is represented in the film as being under pressure for reasons such as that they had each lost their jobs, they had moved to Nick's hometown after his mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and Nick was having an affair. One cannot help but suspect that had there been a role reversal in this film, and Nick had framed his wife who was having an affair that there would have been some kind of discussion that sought to explain his behaviour through this. My intention here is not to argue that there are reasons as to why Amy behaves the way she does in *Gone Girl*, or to excuse her

behaviour, but rather to highlight the difference between male behaviour which, as this thesis has demonstrated, is often sought to be explained and excused (blame frequently positioned anywhere other than on the man responsible for committing rape), whereas female behaviour is represented in the press coverage of *Gone Girl* as innate evil.

### Summary and Conclusion

In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl*, the rape myth represented in the film was rarely acknowledged. Of the texts that discussed *Gone Girl*, while a handful included at least a mention that Amy lies about being raped in the film (see Carpenter 2014: 36, 37, 39, 41; Jones 2014; Saner 2014: 10; Smith 2014: 30), in only one of these was this rape myth directly challenged (see Smith 2014: 30). This press text was also the only to discuss how this representation interconnected with cultural (mis)conceptions about rape and, in doing so, challenged the rape myth that women ‘enjoy being raped’.

This lack of engagement could be suggestive of a number of things, one of these being that there were other topics of discussion that were considered to be of more interest to readers and held more social currency. In the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl*, a number of subjects were discussed more frequently than the representation of rape myths. These included Ben Affleck’s nudity in the film (see Anon. 2014a: 3; Chavez 2014; Dodge 2014; Keegan 2014; Mail Online Reporter 2014; Slater 2014: 22) and relationships and marriage (see

Anon. 2014c: 22-23; Fitzherbert 2014: 48; Kelly 2014: 25; Phillips 2014: 30; Ross 2014: 2; Vine 2014; Viner 2014). The lack of engagement with rape myths could also suggest a lack of knowledge concerning rape myths and of rape more generally.

Rather than being directly challenged and/or countered, in the press texts analysed for this chapter, myths about rape and of female behaviour were just as likely, if not more likely, to be reinforced. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the idea that false allegations of rape are common has sometimes been amplified by popular culture, ‘where references to women “crying rape” have gained much credence in recent years’ (Rape Crisis Scotland 2010). Some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* reflected a distrust of women (both in terms of crying rape as well as of their behaviour more generally) contributing to a troubling trend in which female behaviour is perceived as being devious and manipulative.

## Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore how films that include representations of rape have been publicised and discussed in the popular press. In particular, it has sought to determine how the press discourses surrounding these films *interconnect* with media and cultural attitudes surrounding rape as well as exemplifying how the press texts *contribute* to discourses surrounding rape and other forms of male violence against women.

In order to do this, I sourced press texts from a number of electronic databases in which the selected films were discussed, and, in my analyses of these texts, paid particular attention to how the representations of rape were discussed/described, how the female characters who are raped were discussed/described and how the male characters who perpetrate rape were discussed/described.

One of the findings of this study is that the press coverage that has surrounded the release of these films has frequently engaged with, interconnected with, and contributed to, a range of discourses surrounding rape and other forms of male violence against women. In some of the press coverage of my selected case study films, rape myths and other misconceptions surrounding the subject of rape were reinforced and propagated. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, ‘*Straw Dogs* and Rape Myths’, some of the press texts reinforced the idea that women ‘ask’ to be raped and/or that female behaviour is at least partially to blame/responsible for a woman being raped (see Gibbs 1971: 13; Hinxman 1971: 18; Malcolm 1971: 10).

This was also evidenced in Chapter 2 in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remake of *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Steven R. Monroe, 2010) (see Anon. 2011a: 37) as well as in Chapter 3 in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) (see Amiel 1989; Tyrer 1989: 15).

Also evidenced in this thesis is how myths surrounding other forms of male violence against women are also reinforced and propagated in press texts in which films that include representations of rape are discussed. For example, in Chapter 5, some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993) propagated the idea that women stay in relationships with abusive men because they are sadomasochistic (see Brown 1993; Sarler 1993: 29), that violent male behaviour is triggered and/or caused by the consumption of alcohol, drugs or by the behaviour of women (see Curtis 1993; French 1993; Leith 1993; Malcolm 1993: 4), and that it is easy for women (especially women in Tina's 'privileged' position) to leave abusive men (see Morley 1993: 54; Sarler 1993: 29). Finally, evidenced in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Gone Girl* (Dir. David Fincher, 2014) was the propagation of myths about female behaviour that represent women as being deceitful, manipulative, liars and self-serving and, in doing this, further perpetuating the idea that men – who are represented as victims/potential victims of female behaviour – need protecting from this and should not have to live in fear of women (it implied that they do) (see Brown 2014; Jones 2014).



As first mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I contend that it is both important and necessary to interrogate the way in which rape (and other forms of male violence against women) is discussed in *all* contexts – whether this be in relation to real-life events or fictional representations, as these texts contribute to frameworks of thinking about these subjects and social issues. A number of academic studies have highlighted how press reports of real-life incidences of rape reinforce rape myths (see Benedict 1992; Franuik, R., Seefeldt, J. L., Cephress, S. L. and Vandello, J. A. 2008; O'Hara 2012), these contributing to and forming part of a culture in which rape is not taken seriously, women are blamed for being raped and the actions of men are exonerated. What I hope to have exemplified in this study is that some of the press coverage of films that contain representations of rape (and in certain instances other forms of violence against women) also contribute to and form part of a culture in which rape is not taken seriously, women are blamed for being raped and the actions of men are exonerated – highlighting the importance of analysing texts that discuss films that include representations of rape.

What has also been evidenced in this thesis is how press discussions about films that include representations of rape bear similarities to and also interconnect with wider media trends concerning representations of rape. For example, as mentioned a number of times throughout the course of this thesis, a number of academic studies highlight how real-life reports of rape included in newspapers have reinforced rape myths and described women who have been raped in a sexualised manner and this was evidenced in some of the press texts analysed in Chapter's 1, 2, and 3.

It has also been demonstrated in this thesis how discussions about films that include representations of rape reflect and interconnect with dominant cultural attitudes towards rape. For example, as Cheryl Brown Travis notes, ‘there is a cultural readiness to locate causes for human events in biology and a cultural receptivity for the idea that gender roles are the product of orderly laws’ (2003: 9) and in some of the press coverage analysed in Chapter’s 2 and 3, the ideas that male behaviour is uncontrollable, that men ‘can’t help it’, and that external factors (whether this be female behaviour or viewing certain videos) can trigger a reaction in men that they are unable to control (and making them rape women) were reinforced. For example, in the press discourse surrounding the so-called ‘video-nasties’ it was claimed that the films *I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978) and *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Wes Craven, 1971) triggered reactions in men that made them rape women. Relatives of these men – their wives, mothers and fathers – and their defence teams, also proposed that it was these films that had made them rape women (see Anon.1983b: 3; Daily Mail Reporter 1983: 13; Miles 1983b: 2). Similarly, in the press coverage of *The Accused*, a number of press texts described male rapists’ behaviour in a manner that linked it to the primordial and animalistic, thereby suggesting their behaviour is in some way innate and uncontrollable. A similar idea was propagated in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What’s Love Got to Do With It* (Chapter 5), where it was suggested that consuming drugs and alcohol transformed Ike (beyond his control) into the man who beat and raped Tina and that it was her behaviour (her success) that provoked him to beat and rape her. In such instances, male behaviour was sought to be explained – a reason put forward as to why they raped women which, notably, had little to do with them *choosing* to rape women. As such, in some of the press coverage of the films

selected for analysis for this research, the following ‘types’ of men were positioned as rapists and/or potential rapists: men who are simply unable to control their sexual urges (whether these be triggered by watching certain materials and/or by female behaviour) and men who perpetrate rape because they have consumed alcohol or taken drugs, all of which, to varying degrees, have the effect of alleviating men of the responsibility and blame for the rapes they commit.

This is very different to the manner in which the female character in *Gone Girl* was discussed in the press coverage that surrounded this film, where her behaviour was never sought to be explained and/or excused. In addition to this, what was also different in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of this film was how discussions about Amy’s behaviour transferred to the behaviour of women more generally. In certain instances, discussions about the character of Amy, particularly in terms of how ‘evil’ she is, developed in to discussions about women in society more generally. These discussions were unlike any that appeared in the popular press in relation to the other films analysed for this thesis in which male characters who perpetrated abuse against women were discussed. For example, in my analysis of the popular press discourse that surrounded the release of *What’s Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace*, in which men beat and rape their female partners, it was not discussed or suggested that women should look at their male partners in a different way, that they should be more wary or scared of them. Nor in my analyses of the torture porn films *I Spit On Your Grave* and *The Last House on the Left*, in which women are raped by men they do not know, did the popular press coverage discuss (again, in jest or otherwise) that women should be more wary or scared of men they do not know. As such, while myths about female behaviour were reinforced, in which

women are positioned as being innately evil and men being the primary target of their evil, the subject of male violence against women and the prevalence of this in society was denied/ignored.

Also evidenced across a number of Chapter's has been the ignoring of female voices in press texts that discuss these films. The representation of rape in *The Accused* functioned for journalists to confirm Tobias' account of what happened to her – it took seeing the representation of rape in the film as confirmation of what happened to Tobias – her word alone evidently not sufficient. This ignoring of Tobias' voice and her experience was not only evident in relation to her discussing the rape, but also in other aspects of the film. For example, in another article it was argued that she was treated well by the Criminal Justice System, which actually contrasts with how Tobias is represented as feeling about the way she was treated – dismayed, upset and angry. This ignoring of the female voice was also evident in the press coverage of the original version of *Straw Dogs* in which Amy was often labelled as a tease and as wanting to be desired despite expressing dissatisfaction at the way she is treated by the men harassing her (as well as on multiple occasions telling them, in one way or another, to leave her alone) throughout the film. This ignoring of the female voice was also evident in the case study films *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Lovelace* that are based on the real-life stories of Tina Turner and Linda Boreman. It was suggested by some reviewers that Tina actually enjoyed Ike beating her – that she was sadomasochistic – and it was denied that it was in anyway difficult for her to leave her abusive husband; and in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace*, not only was the film's representation questioned in light of the 'truth' but also Boreman herself – was she telling the truth when she

revealed that she had been forced into performing in *Deep Throat*? And did Traynor beat and rape her?

What has also been demonstrated in this thesis is the importance of film representation as it has an effect on how subjects are perceived and understood, both in relation to the context of the film, and beyond this immediate context. This was evidenced in a number of cases in this study. For example, in some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *What's Love Got to Do With It*, it was suggested that Ike beat and raped Tina *because* he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol, that the drugs and alcohol 'turned' him into the man that beat and raped Tina. I would argue that the manner in which this film represents the beatings and rape certainly contributes to such a reading, as before or during the scenes in which Ike is represented beating and raping Tina he is either shown taking drugs, drinking, or it is made apparent by other means (such as through the film dialogue) that he is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Similarly, in *Gone Girl*, Amy's evil behaviour is directed at men. Consequently, discussions about supposedly aberrant female behaviour toward men are fuelled. What is most interesting with *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *Gone Girl* is that they are adaptations of books in which these events are represented very differently. In *I, Tina*, Ike is represented as a wife-beater and rapist *prior* to any drink or drug 'problem'; and in *Gone Girl*, Amy's behaviour is not only targeted at men, as a sub-plot in the book also includes her mistreatment of a female friend. These small, but significant changes in the film adaptations have an impact on how these films represent myths surrounding domestic violence and of myths surrounding female behaviour, both of which were further reinforced and propagated in some of the press discussions about the films.

Importantly, however, what has also been exemplified throughout this thesis is how press texts that discuss films that include representations of rape contribute to discourses that challenge and reject rape myths and other misconceptions surrounding the subject of rape (see Tweedie 1972: 9; Smith 2014: 30; Bindel 2011; Bonner 1989: 13; Johnston 1989: 29; Lee-Potter 1989: 12; Wade 1989: 5). Other press texts also brought attention to issues relating to other forms of male violence against women including domestic violence (see Forna 1993: 12), sexual harassment and abuse in the military (see Lim 1997b: 27; Vulliamy 1997: T2) and the abuse of women in the pornography industry (see Glass 2013: 16-21; Goldhill 2013; Marriott 2013: 2). Although, over the course of this study, it is evident that the number of texts which did this was not particularly large, nor did they dominate discussions about the films in question, this doesn't negate the importance of these texts, and highlights how film releases and film subject matters can instigate further media discussion about those subject matters more generally, with discussions extending beyond the immediate context of the film and in relation to contemporary society.

Indeed, in much of the press coverage of my selected case study films, the subject/s of rape and/or male violence against women were far from being the most discussed aspects of the films in question. For example, in Chapter 1, it was the issue of representations of violence in popular entertainment that dominated the press coverage surrounding the release of *Straw Dogs* and in Chapter 5, in the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace* (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2013), the subject discussed most frequently beyond the immediate

context of the film was that of pornography and other frequent topics of discussion revolved around Seyfried's physical appearance in the film and the representations of oral sex that she had to act out - Seyfried's nudity and the fact that she was playing a porn star (promising scenes of nudity and sex in the film) positioned as one of the film's proprietary characteristic's. Indeed, also evidenced over the course of this study, from the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Straw Dogs* in 1971 up to and including the press coverage that surrounded the release of *Lovelace* has been a continuation of focus and discussion about female actresses appearance (both within the film itself and of their appearances on the film's publicity trail).

The extent to which the press coverage surrounding these films has engaged with the subject of rape and male violence against women *beyond* the immediate context of the film has also varied greatly from film to film. It could be that the social currency/topicality of these subjects contributed to whether they were discussed in the press coverage that surrounded the release of certain films. For example, the press coverage of *G.I. Jane* included discussions about female integration and equal opportunities for women in the military, reflecting both the film's content as well as engaging with wider discussions and debates about these subjects, as reviews on the policy of admission of females into particular roles in the military were taking place both in the U.K. and the U.S. around the time that *G.I. Jane* was released. Some of the press coverage that surrounded the release of *G.I. Jane* also included discussions about, and references to, the well-known incidents of the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals (where military service personnel had been sexually harassed and sexually abused by colleagues). Only a couple of years later, however, when *The General's Daughter* was released, it is notable that the Tailhook and Aberdeen scandals were

never referred to in the press coverage that surrounded this film, even though this film's narrative similarly revolves around women in the military and includes representations of male members of the military raping a female colleague. What this suggests is that the social currency/topicality of the subject of male violence against women (in relation to media discussions as opposed to social reality) plays a role in what is or is not discussed in the press. This was also demonstrated in the press coverage that surrounded the release of the remakes of the 'torture porn' films *The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Denis Iliadis, 2009) and *I Spit on Your Grave* where the subject of violence against women, played a dominant role in the initial furore and discourse surrounding 'torture porn' films, yet a couple of years later when these films were released, the subject of violence against women was rarely discussed (only one article from those selected for analysis for this case study doing this). While I would argue that such issues and subjects are always socially relevant, in that they almost undoubtedly occur, albeit at differing rates, in society, what this suggests is that the subject of male violence against women holds more social currency/topicality at particular moments in time and that this influences the degree to which this is discussed in the popular press.

In the initial stages of this project, when exploring the different avenues through which the research could be formed and structured, including the films selected for analysis as case studies, it had been my intention to include films that would not be considered popular/mainstream (in that they did not receive nationwide cinematic releases) as well as some foreign language films. For example, I had initially planned to include a chapter in which the press coverage surrounding the release of films that include representation of rape in narrative contexts concerned with and located



within war were analysed. The films I had selected for analysis were *Casualties of War* (Dir. Brian De Palma, 1989), in which the narrative revolves around a group of American soldiers stationed in Vietnam at the time of Vietnam War, who kidnap a Vietnamese woman and rape her; *As If I Am Not There* (Dir. Juanita Wilson, 2010), which represents the story of a young woman from Sarajevo who is rounded up with other women and taken to a remote warehouse in Bosnia where they are raped by soldiers; and *Johnny Mad Dog* (Dir. Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire, 2008), in which child soldiers fighting in Africa are represented raping a woman. Upon beginning to conduct this research, however, it became apparent that there would not have been significant source materials (press articles, features or reviews) to work with in order to produce a chapter length piece of writing for this thesis. Although *As If I Am Not There* and *Johnny Mad Dog*, which are both foreign language films, had been released in selected U.K. cinemas they received very little attention in the popular press, with only a handful of reviews published in the popular press, or on their websites, that discussed these films. It had also been my intention for Chapter 3 of this thesis (in which I analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Accused*) to include a second case study in which I would analyse the press coverage that surrounded the release of *The Lincoln Lawyer* (Dir. Brad Furman, 2011). Similar to *The Accused*, the narrative of *The Lincoln Lawyer* revolves around a court case. Louis Roulet (played by Ryan Phillippe) is the defendant who is accused of beating and attempting to rape a woman, and Mick Haller (played by Matthew McConaughey) works for the defence. Notably, unlike *The Accused*, *The Lincoln Lawyer* also includes a number of narrative sub-plots that distract somewhat from the rape court case, but the representation and treatment of the female survivors of assault are very similar in each of these films, in that it is implied by certain

characters that the victims of rape were partially responsible for the crimes committed against them due to their behaviour. In *The Accused*, because Sarah Tobias goes to a bar, consumes alcohol and dances with one of the men that later rapes her, she is seen to have been ‘asking’ to be raped; and in *The Lincoln Lawyer*, because Regina Campo gives her address to Roulet when she sees him in a bar, and because she is a prostitute, she is considered to be an unreliable witness. Similar to the foreign films *As If I Am Not There* and *Johnny Mad Dog*, *The Lincoln Lawyer* also received little attention in the popular press and in their online counterparts surrounding the time of release, with most of the texts being short reviews of the film. This is somewhat surprising considering that the film stars Matthew McConaughey and Ryan Phillippe who, while not Hollywood’s most popular stars, had both appeared in successful and popular films prior to the release of *The Lincoln Lawyer*. I provide such information here in order to emphasise that the argument being made in this thesis is not that *all* films that contain representations of rape instigate serious discussions surrounding the subjects of rape and male sexual/non-sexual violence against women and/or that in descriptions of these films’ rape myths and/or common misconceptions surrounding violence against women are always reinforced, challenged and or countered – as this is certainly not the case. However, what I would argue, and what this thesis exemplifies, is that where films do include representations of rape and where film narratives engage (in one way or another) with male sexual/non-sexual violence against women, these harbour the potential to instigate such discussion and, in certain instances, these discussions do contribute to discourses in which rape myths and/or common misconceptions surrounding rape and/or other forms of violence against women are reinforced, challenged and or countered.

This thesis has focused on a selected range of films that include representations of rape. These have included films belonging to different genres (horror films, action films, dramas and thrillers); films in which the narratives revolve around the subject of rape and or other forms of male violence against women (such as *The Accused* and *What's Love Got to Do With It*); and films in which the rape seems more or less incidental to the primary narrative (such as *Straw Dogs* and *G.I. Jane*). Most of the films included as case studies for this thesis include graphic representations of rape, some of which represent the entire act of rape, such as *Straw Dogs*, *The Accused* and both versions of *I Spit on Your Grave* and others that cut away from the act, such as in *Lovelace*. *G.I. Jane* includes a representation of attempted rape. *The Accused* and *What's Love Got to Do With It* are based on real life events, the latter telling the story of well-known public figures (these being Ike and Tina Turner). It could be argued that using such a broad range of films has inhibited my ability to draw strong conclusions from this research as the results I have found for each chapter can be considered to relate to the main theme of each chapter and to the small number of case studies contained within that chapter. For example, Chapter 5 of this study (in which I analyse the press coverage surrounding the release of films that include representations of rape in domestic violence narratives) revealed some very interesting factors concerning the discourse surrounding these films and the reinforcing of myths and misunderstandings about domestic violence – most notably that the solution for domestic violence lies with the behaviour of female survivors of abuse rather than the behaviour of the males who perpetrate such violence, and that drugs and alcohol make men rape women. I acknowledge that the conclusions reached in this chapter concerning how the subject of domestic violence has been

discussed and represented are somewhat cautious as the press coverage of only two films was analysed. To provide a more rigorous conclusion with regards to how the press coverage surrounding the release of these films interconnects with and contributes to discourses *specifically related to domestic violence* would require further investigation and research. However, it has not been my intention with this thesis to provide wholesale interrogations of the subjects of these chapters (such as those of women in the military, domestic violence, and the criminal justice system). Grouping the films selected for analysis in the manner in which I have, has enabled me to identify consistencies and recurring themes across a number of different contexts within which rape is committed. Indeed, each of the subject matters (whether this be women in the military, domestic violence, or the criminal justice system) harbour the potential for further research and development. I also believe that this methodological approach, whereby the press coverage of films is analysed, could be usefully applied to interrogate media and cultural attitudes surrounding other social issues.

I would like to think that this thesis contributes to an already well-established area of film scholarship that is concerned with the analysis of film paratexts and critical reception, but that it is innovative in its approach to the analysis of these texts, particularly concerning how these discussions interconnect with discourses surrounding social issues – in this case the subject of rape and of other forms of violence against women.

I hope that this research has exemplified how it is not only the *films* that include representations of rape that are worthy of analysis, discussion and debate (academic or otherwise) but that it is also important to analyse the texts that *surround* these films. I would argue that it is necessary to do this as these paratextual materials have the ability to reinforce, challenge and counter misconceptions about rape and other forms of male violence against women. Furthermore, that this thesis has evidenced how press texts (that discuss films that include representations of rape) published from the early 1970s up to 2014 have reinforced and further propagated rape myths, myths about female behaviour, and myths and misunderstandings about other forms of male violence against women, indicates how such ideas have and continue to permeate culture – exemplifying the continuing need to challenge these ideas.

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### Filmography

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*À Ma Soeur!* (Dir. Catherine Breillat, 2001)  
*The Accused* (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988)  
*As If I Am Not There* (Dir. Juanita Wilson, 2010)  
*Baise-moi* (Dir. Virginie Despentes and Coralie, 2000)  
*Cape Fear* (Dir. Martin Scorsese, 1991)  
*Casualties of War* (Dir. Brian De Palma, 1989)  
*Crash* (Dir. David Cronenberg, 1996)  
*Deep Throat* (Dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972)  
*The Driller Killer* (Dir. Abel Ferrara, 1979)  
*G.I. Jane* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1997)  
*The General's Daughter* (Dir. Simon West, 1999)  
*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Dir. David Fincher, 2011)  
*Gone Girl* (Dir. David Fincher, 2014)  
*Hannie Caulder* (Dir. Burt Kennedy, 1971)  
*Irreversible* (Dir. Gaspar Noé, 2002)  
*I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Meir Zarchi, 1978)  
*I Spit on Your Grave* (Dir. Steven R. Monroe, 2010)  
*Johnny Mad Dog* (Dir. Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire, 2008)  
*The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Wes Craven, 1972)  
*The Last House on the Left* (Dir. Dennis Iliadis, 2009)  
*Last Tango in Paris* (Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972)  
*The Lincoln Lawyer* (Dir. Brad Furman, 2011)  
*Lipstick* (Dir. Lamont Johnson, 1976)  
*Lovelace* (Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 2013)  
*Once Upon a Time in America* (Dir. Sergio Leone, 1984)  
*Slumdog Millionaire* (Dir. Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2008)  
*Straw Dogs* (Dir. Sam Peckinpah, 1971)  
*Straw Dogs* (Dir. Rod Lurie, 2011)  
*SS Experiment Camp* (Dir. Sergio Garrone, 1976)  
*Taxi Driver* (Dir. Martin Scorsese, 1976)

*Thelma and Louise* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1991)

*Trainspotting* (Dir. Danny Boyle, 1996)

*What's Love Got to Do with It* (Dir. Brian Gibson, 1993)