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Author(s): Alice Louisa Davies

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Reading Between the Blurred Lines

A discussion into the representation of rape and rape culture in contemporary fiction

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Abstract

In this dissertation, the focus will be on the representation of rape and rape culture within contemporary fiction; the aim of this is to discover how prevalent rape and rape culture is within this particular area. The thesis is split into three chapters, the first of which discusses the depictions of male rape and gender shifts in contemporary fiction, focusing on Lisbeth Salander as a rapist in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. The second chapter follows on from this, discussing the portrayal of victims of rape within contemporary fiction; and the last chapter debates whether or not a perpetuating rape culture means that women cannot be as sexually experimental as they wish to be. The aim of the dissertation is to focus on how authors depict rape, and whether or not this depiction is perpetuating rape culture, or simply addressing the issue within fiction.

The introduction is a larger part of the dissertation, setting up exactly what rape and rape culture is, and how rape myths prevail in modern western society. There are certain areas that the dissertation has not addressed, such as race, because they are such complex issues that merely by giving them a single chapter within the dissertation would not be enough. The dissertation's main purpose, and main area of focus, is to illustrate the perpetuating rape culture in western societies through gender inequality.

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I would like to thank Emma Rees for all her help and support throughout this dissertation. Without her guidance and knowledge, I doubt I would have what appears on these next few pages. I would also like to acknowledge the entire English department, as without their support and supervision throughout my undergraduate degree and postgraduate studies I would not be where I am today. And thanks for putting up with me even though I had ‘a bit of a potty mouth [...], told dirty jokes, and was a louder, more opinionated girl than some of my peers.’¹ I’m sure you enjoyed it as much as I did.

And mum and dad; cheers for letting me rant on all summer about feminism and rape. I’m not sure if you enjoyed it as much as I did.

Also, here is my dad’s contribution to my thesis:

A woman walks into a police station, goes up to the desk, and says to an officer, “Help, I’ve been graped!” The police officer says, “Don’t you mean ‘raped’?” The woman replies, “No, there was a bunch of them!”

¹ Jessica Valenti, *He’s a Stud, She’s a Slut and 49 Other Double Standards Every Woman Should Know* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), p. 10.

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Violence against women is *so* common that it's become a normal part of our everyday lives. And it's being committed by "normal" people. If you are raped, the guy's not likely to be some random dude jumping out of the bushes. He will be your friend, a guy you know from school, a friend's brother, someone at a party [...] It breeds a society where rape is expected and practically okayed. So long as men are being brought up to think that violence and sexual assault are okay, this isn't just women's problem.¹

Introduction

Rape Culture in Western Societies

What is meant by 'rape culture'? *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that it is 'a [...] culture [...] in which rape and other sexual violence against women and children are both prevalent and considered the norm. In a rape culture, rape and sexual violence are accepted as inevitable and are not challenged.'² There have been huge developments in preventing the act of rape and acknowledging rape as a 'real' issue, that it is not the 'victim's' fault when an attack occurs, and it is the perpetrator that should be punished, rather than the person who is the subject of the attack. However, still to this day there are examples of prevalent rape culture occurring throughout the world, and it is not just men that create this culture. Take, for example, the Steubenville High School, Ohio, case. A 16-year-old high school girl was assaulted, raped by foreign objects, taken advantage of, and eventually punished for the incident that occurred. She was the 'victim', completely and utterly, but still she was blamed; this is where her punishment comes into play. She must deal with this idea of rape culture; she was intoxicated and did not know what she was doing, so of course she was 'asking for it' and she 'knew what she was getting anyway'.³ Surprisingly, this backlash of abuse and comments on social network sites came mostly from female members of the population, who

¹ Jessica Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to why Feminism Matters* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2013), p. 65.

² Robin E. Field, 'Rape Culture' in Merril D. Smith (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Rape* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 174.

³ Tom Ley, 'How An Alleged Rape Involving Ohio High School Football Players Unfolded On Twitter, Instagram, And YouTube', <http://deadspin.com/how-an-alleged-rape-involving-ohio-high-school-football-5969103> [accessed 23 April 2013]

referred constantly to the young woman as a ‘sloppy slut’. However, this may not be as surprising as initially thought. In a recent report from the BBC, research has discovered that a third of women believe that there are varying degrees of rape.⁴ These ‘varying degrees’ range from believing that if a woman does not say ‘no’, it is not rape; if a woman does not fight back against her attacker, then rape has not occurred either; and some women even stated that if a woman was drunk, then it could not be labelled as rape.

It was the careers and futures of the young men involved that were more of an issue for news reporters, rather than the future of the 16-year-old. Does society really care about a young woman who decides to get drunk at a party when there are males present? Does society really care about a young woman who was too drunk to even give consent to the acts performed on her? Does society really want young men who act in this fashion to be allowed to enter said society and pass it off as ‘boys will be boys’?

Rape culture also perpetuates the myth that women lie. This then becomes an easy excuse and alibi for men who rape and sexually assault. Joanne Bourke suggests that this concept of the deceitful woman comes from the idea that women wished to keep their virginity intact; the very notion of chasteness is one which women used to (and some still do) strive for.⁵ Therefore, women could have sex, but cry rape in order to preserve their integrity and still remain in possession of their virginity, the only commodity that women could rely on. In today’s society, things have become a little different. Women are sometimes accused of lying about rape after they have seemingly consented to the act. Senator Doug Henry stated that ‘*“Rape, when I was learning these things, was the violation of a chaste woman, against her will, by some party not her spouse. Today it’s simply, ‘Let’s don’t go forward*

⁴ Amelia Butterly, ‘Third of women say there are varying degrees of rape’, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/23973673> [accessed 10 September 2013]

⁵ Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present* (London: Virago Press, 2007), p. 28.

with this act.’”⁶ Not only is the Senator implying that rape within the marital bed is acceptable, (where spousal rape was still legal in America until 1993, and England until 1991⁷) he is also stating that when a non-chaste woman is raped i.e. a prostitute, sex worker, divorcee, then the consequences of the rape are nowhere near as significant.

In modern western cultures, women are now far more sexually free and liberal than they used to be, but can still expect to experience the backlash of their so-called ‘promiscuity’ and ‘slutty’ actions. A woman who ‘gives it up’ on the first date will sometimes still be seen as ‘easy’ or ‘desperate’, and not seen as a woman who is giving in to her sexual needs and desires, as and when she pleases. It seems then, that sex is still a commodity, even in modern day society. Jessica Valenti states that ‘if you want to attach young women’s worth to their virginity, you can’t be surprised when they follow suit and attach all their worth to their sexuality.’⁸ With so much importance placed on virginity, it creates complications with how women should view themselves. Jill Filipovic states that ‘sex, in the conservative mindset, is essentially a bartering tool and a means to an end: A woman maintains her virginity until it can be exchanged for a wedding ring.’⁹ Even if a wedding or engagement ring is not on the horizon, women are still expected to, if not remain chaste, but keep their sexual antics to themselves and not proclaim to the world that ‘I am a woman and I have sex purely for pleasure and on my own terms’. As Valenti recalls, she was given a bad reputation at school, but only because she had ‘a bit of a potty mouth [...], told dirty jokes, and was a louder, more opinionated girl than some of [her] peers.’¹⁰ Here is a perfect example of the double standards that occur in rape culture and within society. Valenti did not submit to the conventional

⁶ Jill Filipovic, ‘Offensive Feminism: The Conservative Gender Norms That Perpetuate Rape Culture, and How Feminists Can Fight Back’ in Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti (eds.), *Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (California: Seal Press, 2008), p. 13.

⁷ Jan Jordan, ‘Silencing Rape, Silencing Women’, in Jennifer M. Brown, and Sandra L. Walklate, *Handbook on Sexual Violence* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 257.

⁸ Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, p. 27.

⁹ Jill Filipovic, ‘Offensive Feminism’ in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 17.

¹⁰ Jessica Valenti, *He’s a Stud, She’s a Slut and 49 Other Double Standards Every Woman Should Know* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), p. 10.

tropes that she was expected to and because of this she was regarded as a 'slut'. So, although she may not have been engaging in sexual activities of any kind at all, she is still shunned and insulted because it was difficult for people to deal with Valenti's behaviour; that behaviour being a woman with an opinion.

However, women must deal with this struggle against men wanting them to be sexual beings, but also against the idea of a woman still being chaste. It is an impossible notion to uphold, and one that women certainly should not have to. Heather Corinna states that 'we, as a culture, still tend to consider even a woman's yes to a man's sexual invitation revolutionary'¹¹ and until it becomes completely accepted that a woman is allowed to say yes and a woman is allowed to initiate sexual intercourse or activity, then there is still the ever depleting chance that women will never been seen as equal, sexually or not.

It could be questioned then that this description of rape culture is completely undermining the idea of male rape, and whether or not it occurs. *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* continues by stating that:

A rape culture, according to the editors of *Transforming a Rape Culture*, "is a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women." A rape culture believes that sexual aggression in men is biologically determined, rather than learned behavior [sic.]. In turn, it considers women to be sexually passive and meant to be dominated by men. Consequentially, a normal sexual encounter is represented as a heterosexual man forcing himself upon a woman.¹²

By claiming that men are biologically programmed to be sexually aggressive, *Transforming a Rape Culture* is implying that women become completely passive and submissive, and rape becomes an accepted act. There is no mention here however, of the reasons for why women become perpetrators of sexual violence and rape, or for the reasons why some men sexually abuse and coerce other men. This whole idea of rape culture brings into view the idea of rape myths and rape ideology. From this description above, it is men who are encouraged by rape

¹¹ Heather Corinna, 'An Immodest Proposal' in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 183.

¹² Robin E. Field, 'Rape Culture' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 174.

culture to become sexually aggressive, to allow those apparently ‘natural’ and ‘biological’ feelings to prevail; therefore it is women who must protect themselves from men. As Susan Brownmiller states, ‘Women are trained to be rape victims [...] To talk about rape [...] is to acknowledge a woman’s special victim status.’¹³ It could be suggested then, that women are programmed to be ‘victims’ (a term which will be discussed further on in this study), and as for women, there is no escape from the ever-present threat of rape and sexual assault.

Rape and rape culture is present everywhere, but it has only become more recently that people are allowing themselves to be more open about the subject and fight against the prejudices that prevail. It is clear however, that more work is needed to be done in this area to completely eradicate the very idea of rape culture. The main concentration of this dissertation will be on the representation of rape and rape culture within the area of contemporary fiction; literature which has been written and published within recent years, spanning from around the 1970s until the present day. The core pieces of fiction which I will focus on, will be *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (first published 2005) by Stieg Larsson; *The End of Alice* (first published 1996) by A. M. Homes; and *Deliverance* (first published 1970) by James Dickey. I hope to also include ideas permeating from the other two novels in Larsson’s Millennium trilogy, *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest*. I will also focus on *Lucky* by Alice Sebold, which is a memoir of her own rape. Although not fiction, I feel it is important to include an account of rape from a novelist’s point of view, especially a writer who has produced a piece of fiction that contains rape; *The Lovely Bones*. To develop and engage my arguments about the representation of rape and rape culture in contemporary fiction, I will continue to include ideas from Brownmiller and Deutsch, along with other feminists and theorists such as Valenti, Friedman, and Bourke.

¹³ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 309.

The Psychology of Deutsch

Helene Deutsch, one of Freud's students, makes an argument for men who rape, whether this was her intention or not, to defend their own sexual aggression. In her text, *The Psychology of Women* (first published 1944), Deutsch argued that women desire to be raped. She stated that:

The conscious masochistic rape fantasies, however, are indubitably erotic, since they are connected with masturbation. They are less genital in character than the symbolic dreams, and involve blows and humiliations; in fact, in rare cases the genitals themselves are the target of the act of violence. In other cases, they are less cruel, and the attack as well as the overpowering of the girl's will constitute the erotic element. Often the fantasy is divided into two acts: the first, the masochistic act, produces the sexual tension, and the second, the amorous act, supplies all the delights of being loved and desired [...] The masochistic tendency now betrays itself only in the painful longing and wish to suffer for the lover (often unknown).¹⁴

Here, it seems that Deutsch is implying that women wish to be humiliated, that they wish to suffer, and wish to be overpowered, sexually. Fiction today, such as *Fifty Shades of Grey*, allows these kinds of ideas to prevail. As men have it in them to be biologically programmed to rape, women have it in them to be biologically programmed to want to be raped.

Brownmiller asks some prominent questions: 'Do women want to be raped? Do we crave humiliation, degradation and violation of our bodily integrity? Do we psychologically need to be seized, taken, ravished and ravaged? Must a feminist deal with this preposterous question?' Of course, as Brownmiller goes on to state, the answer is yes, a feminist, and everyone else for that matter, must deal with the fact that when there are texts, such as Deutsch's, no matter how old they may be, that this kind of claim must be argued against.

Studies like Deutsch's *The Psychology of Women* and Freud's *The Psychology of Rape* allow male perpetrators of rape to have an excuse, to make their own claims about the psychology of women, to bring up, time and time again, that women have rape fantasies and masochistic tendencies, deep-rooted since they were little girls. Brownmiller confirms this by

¹⁴ Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1944), p. 255.

stating that Deutsch's thesis became 'the ultimate authority for sex-crime experts who wished to explain away the victims of rape'.¹⁵ Whether this is still in force today is questionable, but certainly the ideas that Deutsch produced and proclaimed allow for more difficult prosecutions when it comes to rape trials. It comes back to this idea of the woman lying. If Deutsch's claims were true, then it could be suggested that any woman who reports rape or sexual assault is simply lying. They were raped, but their feelings of trauma and upset are misguided because really, deep down, they 'wanted it'. Deutsch claimed that because 'menstruation and childbirth are also female experiences that [are] associated with pain and suffering. She concluded that normal womanhood requires the capacity to take pleasure in pain.'¹⁶ Therefore, because the female body handles immense amounts of pain through childbirth and constant pain from menstruation throughout a woman's life, then rape is also a natural and desired part of the female psyche because it also causes pain and suffering.

One of the many problems with Deutsch's theory is that with conscious masochistic rape fantasies, the lover, or perpetrator of the rape, is often unknown. It is well documented that in many cases of rape or sexual violation, the assailant is known to the 'victim'. At the beginning of this section, Valenti states that rape is committed by the people we see around us; the people that we know. A World Health Organization 'multi-country study found that between 15–71% of women aged 15- 49 years reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives.'¹⁷ Even by simply looking at the representation of rape in fiction, it is apparent that the authors are aware of this fact too: Harriet Vanger in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is raped and sexually assaulted by both her father and her brother; Lisbeth Salander in the Millennium trilogy is raped and sexually assaulted by her 'guardian' Nils Bjurman, threatened by rape from her father and half-brother, and

¹⁵ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 315.

¹⁶ Sara Murphy, 'Deutsch, Helene (1884–1982)' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 56.

¹⁷ 'Violence against women: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women', Fact sheet N°239, November 2012, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/index.html> [accessed 5 August 2013]

manipulated by her supposed psychiatrist, Peter Teleborian; Susie Salmon is raped and murdered by her neighbour, Mr Harvey in *The Lovely Bones*; and the 19-year-old woman in *The End of Alice* is coerced into giving the father of the boy, who is the object of her affections and who she teaches tennis to, a blow job.

Texts like Deutsch's allow for rape myths to prevail, even in modern day society. In fact, it could perhaps be said that it is probably studies like Deutsch's that created the rape myths initially. Brownmiller believed that Deutsch 'has caused real – and incalculable – damage to the female sex, as has, it goes without saying, Freud.'¹⁸ Not only have women had to deal with the effects of prejudice and untold violence against their sex, Deutsch and Freud then created a whole new level of subjugation; that women want to be submissive, that women enjoy being raped. There are a wide range of rape myths, many which have prevailed more recently. For example, if a woman decides to get drunk around a group of men, then she cannot be surprised if she is assaulted or raped, or if a woman chooses to act promiscuously then she deserves to get raped. Brownmiller outlined probably the four main rape myths: “ALL WOMEN WANT TO BE RAPED” “NO WOMAN CAN BE RAPED AGAINST HER WILL” “SHE WAS ASKING FOR IT” “IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE RAPED, YOU MIGHT AS WELL ENJOY IT”¹⁹.

It is the notion of 'she was asking for it' that seems more relevant to today's rape culture. Dianne Herman stated that there are certain types of 'mini-rapes' that a woman has to put up with, or is at least expected to put up with.²⁰ For a woman, and in some cases, men experience this too, just walking down the street can be an ordeal within itself. A honk of a horn from a passing car is probably the most common source of attention. Is this rape though? Or is this just part of rape culture? A woman wears a short skirt in the summertime

¹⁸ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 316.

¹⁹ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 311.

²⁰ Dianne F. Herman, 'The Rape Culture' in Jo Freeman (ed.), *Women: A Feminist Perspective* (Mountain View: Mayfield, 1984), p. 45.

and walks down the street. Should she not expect and accept the attention? The answer is most certainly, no. However, because of permeating rape culture, women have come to accept a honk of a horn, a passing comment and even a grope of an ass. Why? It could be said that they accept these kind of personal invasions and on some level, sexual assaults, because if this is the worst thing that they come across in their lifetime, then they should be thankful. This goes back to the rape myth of 'if you're going to be raped, you might as well enjoy it'. If a person honks or comments or gropes, then the subject of these honks and comments and gropes should be grateful, appreciative even. Of course, this is completely wrong and delusional. Once again, it is the 'victim' of the attacks who is expected to change how they view this behaviour, not the perpetrators of the behaviour in the first place.

Blurred Lines

What I hope to achieve from writing this dissertation, is to discover how prevalent rape culture is in contemporary fiction and how it is handled by the author. Does the presence of rape bring anything to the novel; are we learning anything new that we did not know before? This could be about rape, rape culture, or gender in general. When thinking about the rape of women, it is especially important to discuss whether or not the author is bringing anything innovative or original to the forefront. Can women not escape the threat of rape, even in a fictional novel? Could a character not assault a woman for dramatic effect, without the risk of rape and sexual assault hanging over her head? Do authors need to portray rape as such a harrowing act; does the act even need to be portrayed? To answer all these questions, there are many different things to discuss within the texts. For example, the language used; can language be gendered? Certain passages in novels can be perceived differently when the character's gender is switched, and it is interesting to question whether language can become masculine or feminine, and if it can become gendered, how does this affect the way we read a

text? Take, for example, the rape of Nils Bjurman in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which will be discussed in further detail in chapter four. Bjurman is spread-eagled on a bed, with his wrists in handcuffs and completely at the will of Lisbeth Salander. In the bluntest of terms, Bjurman has become the woman.

After choosing Salander as his ‘victim’, Bjurman himself is at the mercy of Salander. I will discuss the representation of characters who become ‘victims’ in contemporary fiction.²¹ I use the word ‘victim’ loosely, as I am yet to discover a better word to describe someone who has become the subject of violence. The term ‘victim’ is a label, and alike to Lisbeth Salander, I do not believe that labels are important; I also believe they perpetuate the idea that someone who becomes the subject of an attack is weaker than their attacker.

Following on from this, by focusing on the characters of Lisbeth Salander and the 19-year-old woman in *The End of Alice*, there needs to be some discussion on the representation of female sexual power in contemporary fiction, and how women are not always ‘victims’. Because of perpetuating rape culture, it could be stated that women find it difficult to engage with their own sexual fantasies, without fear of prejudice; can women ever be sexually free and experimental? Stacey May Fowles states that she stays closed-up about her sexual preferences because she is a ‘feminist who enjoys domination, bondage, and pain in the bedroom’,²² and somehow she believes that she should keep quiet about this.

²¹ Throughout this dissertation, the word ‘victim’ will be placed in quotation marks as an indication that I do not necessarily agree with the term as a means of describing someone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

²² Stacey May Fowles, ‘The Fantasy of Acceptable “Non-Consent”: Why the Female Sexual Submissive Scars Us (and Why She Shouldn’t)’ in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 117.

"There are certain things you just don't believe can happen to a man, you get me? But I know now that sexual violence against men is a huge problem. Everybody has heard the women's stories. But nobody has heard the men's."²³

Lisbeth Salander: Rapist?

Depictions of male rape and gender shifts in contemporary fiction

Is it so unbelievable to imagine that men are subject to rape too? If, as the rapecrisis website suggests, any woman can be raped, regardless of her age, appearance, ethnicity or other factor, then surely this stands for men too.²⁴ *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that 'male rape is an act of violence and a crime'²⁵ and, as with most rape cases, whether male or female, it is about power and control, rather than sexual gratification. Brownmiller has stated that 'men have always raped women',²⁶ but as Bourke reinforces, 'men have increasingly been allowed to make accusations of rape against other men or even against women.'²⁷ There has been a long history of rape of women by men. Brownmiller looks as far back as prehistoric times, stating that 'man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries [...]'.²⁸ Unless Brownmiller is lacing her argument here with elements of sarcasm, it is difficult to agree with the use of the word 'important' in relation to the penis being used as a weapon. It is perhaps important because of how it has created so many problems for women, but not as an 'important discovery'. *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that 'throughout American history, forced sex between men was characterized as sodomy but not rape.'²⁹ It could be suggested then, that rape has become something that happens to women, and only to women, which explains why the Mpower website focus on this idea of humiliation:

²³ Will Storr, 'The Rape of Men', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men> [accessed 27 April]

²⁴ <http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk> [accessed 1 May 2013]

²⁵ Heather Schmidt, 'Male Rape' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 121.

²⁶ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 315.

²⁷ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 9.

²⁸ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 14.

²⁹ Jennifer Manion, 'Homosexual Rape' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 100.

Within our society, men and boys can suffer appalling sexual assaults and humiliations, but rarely does a victim cry out for help. Such is his feeling of shame, he will often be as desperate to keep it a secret as his attacker is. Confusion, depression and a sense of inescapable isolation are common reactions. They can wreck a man's life. The effects of sexual abuse on men are in many ways similar to those on women, but the response of society is markedly different.³⁰

Although websites like this are there to help men through the trauma of rape, they may actually be causing more harm, not only to the male 'victims' of rape, but also to female 'victims'. By stating that 'the effects of sexual abuse on men are in many ways similar to those on women', but also implying that there are differences, the website is perhaps suggesting that the rape of women is more acceptable in society than the rape of men, whereas neither form should be accepted. It seems as if the Mpower website is suggesting that men feel more humiliated than women because rape is something that is used against women, rather than men. Therefore, men are made to feel as vulnerable as a woman does; they lose their 'masculinity' so to speak. *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that 'because of cultural ideas about male strength and sexuality, some people believe that "real" men do not get raped and that if a man is raped by another man, this will make him gay.'³¹ Valenti states that 'men are affected by sexism too, but it's not often talked about – especially among men themselves. That's where feminism should step in.'³² Whatever issues women face when dealing with rape, men face too. Implying that 'real' men do not get raped insinuates that 'real' women do not get raped either, but with no definitive definitions of what makes a 'real' man or a 'real' woman, there should be no definitive opinions on whether someone is more likely to get raped or not. The only opinion should be that people should not rape. Full stop.

Throughout this chapter, I will be focusing on Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, James Dickey's *Deliverance*, A. M. Homes' *The End of Alice* and Angela Carter's short story 'Reflections', concentrating on the portrayal of women who rape men,

³⁰ <http://www.male-rape.org.uk/> [accessed on May 19 2013]

³¹ Schmidt, 'Male Rape' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 121.

³² Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, p. 190.

and men who rape men in contemporary fiction. It is important however, to discover when male rape actually occurs because, unlike women who are raped, heterosexual men are not subjected to ‘rape culture’ and are less likely to fear walking alone at night; they are less likely to be judged for what clothes they are wearing or their appearance in general; they are never usually expected to say ‘yes’ to sex, as they initiate it; and, of course, we cannot forget that, according to Deutsch, men do not wish to be raped as women so blatantly do. *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that ‘research indicates that more male rape occurs within the prison system’ than anywhere else;³³ ironic that this is an exclusively male environment, where it is the weakest of the so-called ‘stronger sex’ who are subjected to the atrocity of rape. In *The End of Alice*, the narrator, up until a certain point, accepts the sexual advances of Clayton, a fellow inmate. At one stage, he even states that he continues ‘to prepare myself, again and again, never sure what would happen, that it was an inevitable element, a piece of my punishment’ (p. 56). The narrator allows the rape to happen; if he were to tell the prison guards, it is more than likely that he would be laughed at, insinuating that the sweeping opinion of the guards is that he deserves what he is getting. As Bourke states, ‘such victims were permanently labelled homosexual, by guards as well as other prisoners’.³⁴ Films such as *Shawshank Redemption* and *American History X* illustrate the typical situation in which male rape is portrayed to audiences.

Men, along with women, are also raped during war. Will Storr states that ‘sexual violence is one of the most horrific weapons of war, an instrument of terror used against women’, but it appears that more and more men are becoming ‘victims’ of this horrific act of violence.³⁵ Storr goes on to state that ‘both perpetrator and victim enter a conspiracy of silence and why male survivors often find [...] that they lose the support and comfort of those around them. In the patriarchal societies found in many developing countries, gender roles

³³ Schmidt, ‘Male Rape’ in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 121.

³⁴ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 329.

³⁵ Storr, ‘The Rape of Men’, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men>

are strictly defined.³⁶ This is suggesting, however, that rape is still seen as specifically an act related to women, and not to men.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines rape as ‘intentional penetration of vagina, anus or mouth with a penis without consent’.³⁷ This is implying that only men can be rapists, as it is the penis that does the penetrating. But as both Larsson and Carter illustrate in their fiction, it is not only the penis that can be the cause of sexual violence, and not only a man who can be a rapist. Dictionary definitions of rape also fall back onto the stereotype that men are the perpetrators of sexual violence and women are the ‘victims’. The *Collins Dictionary* states that rape is ‘the offence of forcing a person, esp a woman, to submit to sexual intercourse against that person’s will’³⁸ whereas the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as ‘(of a man) force (another person) to have sexual intercourse with him against their will.’³⁹ Both, however, are implying that it is the man who rapes and the woman who is raped. Bourke continues this argument by stating that ‘the Sexual Offences Act 2003 has failed to excuse the penis altogether from its definition of rape.’⁴⁰ This, therefore, suggests that women are excused from the definition of ‘rapist’, and are more likely to be labelled as someone who has sexually assaulted another.

This creates huge problems, not just for women, but for men too. Not only will women continue to live in fear of rape because men are the rapists, but men will continue to live under the umbrella that it is only they who can rape. The ramifications of this are that if a man is sexually assaulted or raped with a foreign object by a woman, he may remain silent about the incident because there is less legality in what has occurred. Men can also never escape the label of ‘rapist’ because they have a penis. Therefore, they will be feared by

³⁶ Storr, ‘The Rape of Men’, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men>.

³⁷ Jennifer M. Brown, ‘Psychological perspectives on sexual violence: generating a general theory’ in *Handbook on Sexual Violence*, p. 163.

³⁸ *Collins Dictionary*, (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), p. 1363.

³⁹ *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 1191.

⁴⁰ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 213.

women. Lisbeth Salander's revenge in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is not perceived as rape, not only because she is seeking revenge, but also because she is a woman.

Not only is rape used in war as a weapon against men, and women by men, women are now becoming more and more involved in the sexual assault and humiliation of prisoners of war. Bourke delves into this notion in the beginning of her chapter 'Female Perpetrators; Male Victims', where she focuses her attention on the idea that women can use their sexuality in war to cause trauma, embarrassment and degradation to the male captives. She states that 'these women were regarded as much worse than their male comrades-in-atrocity: they were not merely inhuman, but monstrous.'⁴¹ Women who torture, tease and trick are viewed as worse than men who do this because they are 'women'. Bourke states that 'when the perpetrators of misery are women, additional difficulties emerge. Women's customary identity as nurturers inhibits discussion of female belligerence.'⁴² Women are the mothers, sisters, and daughters of the communities in which we all live, and traditional gender roles such as homemaker or nurse or mother mean that women are expected to be nurturing and non-threatening. Once men are subjected to what women are usually subjected to, then it finally becomes a problem.

When does male rape occur in fiction? Do we only read about male prisoners, whether prisoners of war or not, who become 'victims' of a flawed system, where rape is overlooked as something that 'just happens'? However, the most important question to consider is why male rape is included, as opposed to female rape or alongside female rape. The rape of women is portrayed in fiction and film because it is seen as realistic, something which is more likely to occur because it is more likely to have been reported, whereas male rape is more likely to be shrouded in mystery, as many victims keep the incident to themselves. This reflects Storr's point that because of patriarchal mind-sets and fears of

⁴¹ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 210.

⁴² Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 215.

losing masculinity, silence becomes the protection. There is also the question of women who rape men.

Sophie Dougall states, in her 'The Rape of James Bond' blog, that 'rape as backstory, as plot point, as motivation – however badly handled, I can usually cope with it. I found I couldn't cope with rape as wallpaper.'⁴³ Rape and sexual assault of women, however graphic it may be, seems to be a recurring trope in contemporary film, television, and fiction. As Dougall implies, like wallpaper, it hangs in the back corners of novels, to add a little excitement, and a little colour, or it is draped on a cinema screen to liven up the plot, get the audience's adrenalin flowing, so when they leave the cinema, they have the sense that what they have seen really meant something; not only did it mean something, it was realistic too. Then Dougall goes on to make an even more significant point: what about the men who are raped? She states that 'people say, it would be unrealistic if *she* wasn't raped, but take it for granted that of course *he* wasn't.'⁴⁴ Sometimes it feels as if women are bombarded by constant rape scenes and sexual violence, and if not rape, then the presence of rape, in film, television and fiction; take *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Last House on the Left*, *Dead Man Walking*, and *Twilight* to name but a few.

What kind of situations do authors create for their male protagonists or antagonists to be raped? There is no question that Nils Bjurman is raped within *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, but the only way this is allowed to happen is after he himself becomes a rapist. This creates difficulty: how does the reader view Lisbeth Salander? If Bjurman is raped, and Salander is the perpetrator, then surely this makes her a rapist? As previously mentioned, however, the Sexual Offences Act 2003, states that rape is the intentional penetration with a penis, so in legal terms, Salander is not a rapist. *The Encyclopaedia of Rape* states that 'a small percentage of men are raped by women, usually an acquaintance. In most cases, women

⁴³ Sophie Dougall, 'The Rape of James Bond', <http://sophiamcdougall.com/2013/03/13/the-rape-of-james-bond/> [accessed 23 April]

⁴⁴ Dougall, 'The Rape of James Bond', <http://sophiamcdougall.com/2013/03/13/the-rape-of-james-bond/>

use coercion and manipulation instead of physical force',⁴⁵ which also reflects Bourke's point that 'women who sexually molest men or other women are likely to be charged with lewd or obscene conduct rather than indecent assault'.⁴⁶ As stated previously, rape is an act of violence and control, rather than sexual gratification, but from these descriptions above, it appears as if women who sexually assault and rape are portrayed as doing these actions out of spite or are seen as promiscuous. In *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Salander rapes Bjurman by use of force, coercion and manipulation. Take this rape scene out of context, and it is difficult to see Salander as anything but a rapist:

Bjurman was in pain. His muscles were no use to him. His body seemed to be paralysed. He could not remember if he had lost consciousness, but he was disorientated. When he slowly regained control over his body he discovered that he was lying naked on his bed, his wrists in handcuffs and his legs spread painfully apart. He had stinging burn marks where electrodes had touched his body.

Salander had pulled the cane chair over and was patiently waiting, her boots resting on the bed as she smoked a cigarette. When Bjurman began to speak to her he found that his mouth was sealed.⁴⁷

When looking at this excerpt, it is particularly important to note the use of language. If one were to change the gender of Bjurman, replacing 'his' for 'her' and 'he' for 'she', the scene would still be convincing and the reader would believe that whatever was happening, was happening to a woman. Is this the use of language, however, or the position to which Bjurman is reduced? If, in this instance, Salander were a man, would her position on the cane chair, with the cigarette and boots, be more threatening? The language used here is not language specific to gender; the language becomes gendered because of how society perceives women and men alongside rape and sexual assault. Bjurman becomes more defenceless and more vulnerable because he has been put in the 'usual' position of a woman. This returns to Bourke's notion of men not perceived as the 'usual' 'victims'. A similar idea

⁴⁵ Schmidt, 'Male Rape' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 121.

⁴⁶ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 212.

⁴⁷ Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (London: MacLehose Press, 2008), pp. 230-31. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

occurs in *The End of Alice*. The narrator describes how he is treated by Clayton, the inmate who consistently has sex with him:

He takes a tube of (bartered) jelly from his pocket and spreads my legs; his hands on the insides of my thighs, prying, pulling until my legs unlock – this is something still difficult to do voluntarily, without help, encouragement. He squirts jelly onto his fingers, rubs it for a moment to warm it, then slides one or two digits into my ass [...] (p. 58)

Taken out of context, and not knowing the narrator is a man, this excerpt could be the narration of a woman. What it appears that both Larsson and Homes are trying to do is to imply that rape is something that happens to a woman, and when this act happens to a man, he is put in the position of a woman. However, it could be said that perhaps this is simply how rape occurs, that is not a feminine or masculine act. Rape appears as something that happens to women because it has always been documented as happening to women, but perhaps rape is an act of which society views as having natural feminine characteristics, when really, these are just the characteristics of rape.

One question to ask is whether or not the reader feels the threat of sexual violence to the character of Bjrman. Dougall reflects on how a friend reacted to a film which did not acknowledge the presence or threat of sexual violence to a female character:

my friend found it jarringly unrealistic that there was no hint of a threat of sexual violence in the depicted torture, to the extent that it left the whole piece feeling superficial and slight to her, too afraid of its own subject matter to engage with it honestly.⁴⁸

There seems to be some kind of expectation of sexual violence against women. ‘Normal’ violence, as in torture, beatings, fights, is not enough, and female characters must always have something hanging over their heads; and that something is sexual threat. If Salander had her legs spread apart, wrists tied together, the automatic assumption of most readers would be that she either had been raped or was about to. Is this because of how rape is usually portrayed in film and fiction? Take *Dead Man Walking* for example. Two male adults take

⁴⁸ Dougall, ‘The Rape of James Bond’, <http://sophiamcdougall.com/2013/03/13/the-rape-of-james-bond/>

two teenagers, one female and one male, into the woods. They rape the girl and then kill both of them. When found, the girl is described as being ‘spread-eagled’ on the ground, insinuating that she was raped. In *The Last House on the Left*, the female character who is raped is pushed to the ground on her face and her legs are forced apart. Even in *The End of Alice*, Clayton rapes the male narrator, his ‘legs kicked apart, the pants down.’⁴⁹ It is inescapable.

Without knowing that Bjurman has raped Salander previous to this attack, the reader can perceive Salander as a dominating, cruel protagonist, and perceive Bjurman as the ‘victim’. It may be controversial to label Salander as a rapist, but with the acts she inflicts and the methods she applies, it is difficult to see her as anything else, especially when this section is taken out of context. Emma Rees states that ‘context is everything when deciding what is “right” and what is “wrong” in the novel.’⁵⁰ When put back into context, Salander rapes Bjurman in order to assert her revenge. However, even when put back into context, there is still some discrepancy as to whether Salander’s actions conducted through revenge are necessarily right. Even with her dramatic and drastic revenge, Bjurman still looks at porn websites, and still wishes his revenge on Salander. Her revenge should have made him feel guilty of his actions, but if anything, it appears to have made him more intent on killing her.

In Angela Carter’s short story ‘Reflections’ the portrayal of the male protagonist’s rape is rather different. Accosted by two beings, one named Anna, and a ‘crippled being’, who Anna refers to as ‘auntie’, (from this, and the fact that the crippled being is wearing a ‘female garment, a loose negligee’, the narrator labels the being as a woman) the male character is teased and taunted, until eventually it appears that Anna rapes him by sexual intercourse. He states that ‘she unbuckled her uncouth leather belt and stepped out of her

⁴⁹ A. M. Homes, *The End of Alice* (London: Granta Publications, 2006), p. 147. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁵⁰ Emma Rees, “” in Eric Bronson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and Philosophy* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012), p. 182.

jeans [...] She raped me [...] under the piston thrust of her slender loins [...].⁵¹ The ‘piston thrust’ notion indicates that Anna herself was the piston, moving up and down on the narrator’s penis. Further on, the narrator states that ‘she pumped away indefatigably at my sex’ (p. 125), which reinforces the fact that she was raping him with her vagina. However, as much as this seems that both Anna and Salander have the power over their male ‘victims’, there are other factors which need to be taken into account.

The Encyclopaedia of Rape states that in most cases of women raping men, ‘women use coercion and manipulation instead of physical force.’⁵² One of the age old rape myths is that if a woman does not fight back to her attacker, then this must mean that she ‘wants it’. Men are less likely to manipulate their ‘victims’ because they have strength over substance, and can overpower a woman by physical ability alone, and sometimes with just the threat of physical force. Anna and Salander are both portrayed with weapons; not only weapons, but weapons with phallic meaning and imagery. Anna can only control the narrator because of the fear he has for her rifle, not the fear that the narrator has for Anna. The male protagonist states that ‘she raped me; perhaps her gun, in this system, gave her the power to do so’ (p. 125). Angela Carter seems to be implying that only in an alternative world can a man be raped by a woman, with her own sexual organs. Bell, Finelli, and Wynne-Davies state that ‘for Carter, place and social circumstance are fundamental to understanding sexualised violence.’⁵³ By stating that ‘in this system’, the protagonist may feel that he could have fought back if he were in his own world. The strength of Anna is perhaps something he would not come up against in the ‘normal’ realm, but even if Anna had a weapon in normality, he seems to be implying that he could fight against her.

⁵¹ Angela Carter, ‘Reflections’ in *Fireworks* (London: Virago, 2009), p. 125. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁵² Schmidt, ‘Male Rape’ in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 121.

⁵³ Liam Murray Bell, Amanda Finelli, and Marion Wynne-Davies, ‘Sexual Violence in Literature: a cultural heritage?’ in *Handbook on Sexual Violence*, p. 58.

Deutsch offers little or no explanation into why men are raped, stating only that ‘the desire to be raped that asserts itself in dreams and fears, are characteristic attributes of feminine sexuality.’⁵⁴ If the reason for women being raped is because of the desire to be raped and her recurrent fantasies, does this not mean that men who are raped also have these fantasies and wish to be raped as well, whether by a man or a woman? The answer is no. Bourke confirms this by stating that:

Women molest other women. They rape men. Confronted with evidence of female perpetrators, theories premised on the assumption that it was exclusively the male of our species who were ‘rapists, rape fantasists, or beneficiaries of a rape culture’ became (at best) wishful thinking.⁵⁵

Not only does this quash Deutsch’s theory, it also illustrates that rape is not biologically determined to only men. As Bourke earlier states, ‘man appears primed to rape. He is not.’⁵⁶ And neither is woman.

What about men who rape other men? Sabine Sielke states that ‘male-on-male rape is labeled [sic.] the “last taboo” (Mullen) because sexual violation seems to reaffirm a woman’s femininity yet emasculates the male victim, enforcing a shift in gender position.’⁵⁷ It is difficult to agree with the opinion that ‘sexual violation seems to reaffirm a woman’s femininity’, unless you agree with Deutsch’s theory, whereas it would be easier to agree with the notion that sexual violation and rape emasculates both men and women. Sielke continues her argument by stating that ‘the distinct status of sexual violence perpetrated by and against men is evidenced by the fact that, in legal terms, male rape for a long time did not exist.’⁵⁸ What it appears that Sielke is trying to make a point of is that women have always been raped in *legal* terms, whereas men have not. As previously mentioned in this chapter, forced sex

⁵⁴ Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women*, p. 148.

⁵⁵ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 221.

⁵⁶ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Sabine Sielke, *Reading Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in American Literature and Culture, 1790-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 171.

⁵⁸ Sielke, *Reading Rape*, p. 171.

between men was considered as sodomy rather than rape,⁵⁹ which therefore created a huge difference between what happens to a woman and what happens to a man. This still does not add to the argument that being sexually violated seems to be less of a taboo for women, because it confirms that she is feminine, but it does confirm that, in legal terms, rape is something that has only ever happened to women. Even according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is a male who performs the act, thus it cannot be a woman who rapes because women do not have the appropriate appendage.

Deliverance, as a novel, certainly seems to offer evidence of male rape being the last taboo. Four male friends decide to embark on a canoeing trip, camping out in the woods, making fire, and cooking their own food. The whole trip is built around the men's masculinity and strength; the ability to be able to row down a treacherous river, and shoot an animal with a bow and arrow. However, the entire trip becomes a fight for survival, as the group are advanced upon by two local men, whose intentions are dark and horrific. Bobby, a member of the group, is anally raped by one of the local men, and Ed, the narrator of the story, is almost forced to perform oral sex on the other local man. In the next chapter, I go into great detail into the reasons why Bobby is chosen to be raped, why he is chosen as a 'victim'. Here, my focus is on the reaction of the men to the rape, and how this causes the men to become murderers in order to cover-up what has happened to Bobby.

As discussed before was an excerpt from the Mpower website, which indicated that men are less likely to report a rape than a woman. The Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics report that 'among males, less than 0.1 per cent (around 12,000) report being a victim of the same types of offences in the previous 12 months', which qualifies this statement.⁶⁰ So, although it is a fact that women are more likely to be 'victims' of rape than men, there is still some discrepancy over how many men are actually raped.

⁵⁹ Manion, 'Homosexual Rape' in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 100.

⁶⁰ 'An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales: Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics: Statistics bulletin', 10 January 2013, p. 6.

Dickey indicates in *Deliverance* that all of the men are humiliated and disgusted by the rape of Bobby; but because of this humiliation, they would all much rather keep it between them. Ed appears to have a certain amount of concern for Bobby, but this concern is overcome by the mortification of actually examining him:

I had watched everything that had happened to Bobby, had heard him scream and squall, and wanted to reassure him that we could set all that aside; that it would be forgotten as soon as we left the woods, or as soon as we got back in the canoes. But there was no way to say this, or to ask him how his lower intestine felt or whether he thought he was bleeding internally. Any examination of him would be unthinkably ridiculous and humiliating.⁶¹

The question is, who would it be more ridiculous and humiliating for? Here, Dickey could be indicating that the humiliation is greater for Ed; he has had to witness his friend being raped, but he cannot bring himself to help in anyway. By being raped, Bobby has forever changed in Ed's eyes. In this sense, Bobby is less humiliated by the act itself, but more humiliated by the fact that he has been made to look weak and vulnerable in front of his friends. The problem here is, that Ed states himself that they 'could set all that aside', but the only way it seems to do that is to completely ignore the fact that it has happened in the first place.

It is what happens following the rape that is particularly important. In a matter of self-defence, Lewis has killed the man who attempts to perform oral sex on Ed. The men now have to decide what the best route of action to take is. Do they head back to the nearest town and report what has happened, which means discussing the entire events, to make killing a man seem plausible; or do they try and conceal the murder, head back, and pretend as if nothing has happened? In the end, the decision seems to come down to Bobby: "I say get rid of the son of a bitch," Bobby said, his voice thick and strangled. "Do you think I want this to get around?" (p. 112). Bobby feels that being raped is far too much of a humiliation, and would rather be involved in covering up a murder than simply reporting what has happened.

⁶¹ James Dickey, *Deliverance* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005), p. 102. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

By doing this, as Drew suggests, there is the possibility that they could all be arrested and put in prison, therefore Bobby would rather run the risk of being caught and thrown in prison, than have anyone discover his rape. This speaks incredible volumes on the opinion towards male rape, in both developed countries and developing countries. Storr's article reflects on the epidemic of male rape in Uganda, where men will not report their violation through fear of humiliation and shame, which reflects Bobby's opinion towards his rape in *Deliverance*:

“In Africa no man is allowed to be vulnerable,” [...]“You have to be masculine, strong. You should never break down or cry. A man must be a leader and provide for the whole family. When he fails to reach that set standard, society perceives that there is something wrong.”⁶²

But it is not just Africa where these standards are set. Bobby, Lewis, Ed, and Drew are four men in western society who also crave to keep their masculinity in check; it is the reason why they have gone on the canoeing trip in the first place. It is also the reason why Bobby agrees to getting rid of the body, and why he kicks it so ferociously: ‘Then, in an explosion so sudden that it was like something bursting through from another world, he kicked the body in the face, and again’ (p. 107). Here, Bobby is refusing to ‘break down and cry’, and is trying to come across to the other men as ‘masculine, strong’. Dickey is perhaps exposing the attitudes of men towards rape. However, because of when the novel was first published, it seems more likely that Dickey was reflecting on what would have perhaps been a more prominent opinion on male rape at the time; the opinion that it does not occur, so when it does, the man feels incredible amounts of guilt and shame for ‘allowing’ it to happen.

From this evidence, it seems that men do have some kind of ‘rape culture’ to content against. It is not the same as *The Encyclopedia of Rape*'s definition, which states that rape culture is ‘a [...] culture [...] in which rape and other sexual violence against women and children are both prevalent and considered the norm’,⁶³ but men do have their own issues

⁶² Storr, ‘The Rape of Men’, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men>.

⁶³ Field, ‘Rape Culture’ in *The Encyclopedia of Rape*, p. 174.

when it comes to the subject of rape. Within contemporary fiction, it is clear to see that the authors' intentions when including male rape are to illustrate that men feel immense amounts of humiliation because they are put in the position of a woman. This creates problems, not only for men, but for women too. When a man is raped, he feels as if his masculinity and 'manhood' have been destroyed because he has been forced into an act which has always been connected with a woman. This therefore reinforces the idea that sexual violence against women is the 'norm', perpetuating rape culture. If both male and female 'victims' of rape were treated with the same amount of respect and dignity, then the unnecessary differences would probably disappear. However, if both male and female perpetrators were punished equally, then this would also help alleviate rape culture; the idea that only men can be rapists. Fusco states that 'we don't really have a language for comprehending female sexual aggression as rape, and that diminishes our ability to perceive rape as such.'⁶⁴ Perhaps if both male and female perpetrators were labelled as 'rapists', this would allow society to see that rape is not just a purely male offence. Thus, women would not always be seen as the 'victims', and rape culture could become obsolete. It may therefore be said that because rape is an act associated with women, men are less likely to think of it as a male issue, and perhaps less likely to address it. If society addresses the fact that women can be rapists too, perhaps this is a different method for eliminating rape culture.

⁶⁴ Coco Fusco, 'Invasion of Space by a Female' in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 138.

By virtue of being female, the woman is already 'victim', the wounded, suffering, gendered subject. She is defined in relation to 'it', the penis.⁶⁵

Victimisation

**How are the 'victims' of rape and sexual violation portrayed in contemporary fiction?
Do the characters manage to escape the label of 'victim'?**

Not all men are rapists. Not all women are victims. Do people become victims through the acts inflicted upon them, or do they become victims because that is what people are told they are? Throughout this thesis, I constantly refer to the notion of the 'victim' within quotation marks, as I am unsure and unaware of a better term to describe someone who has been the subject of sexual assault. Continuing from my introduction, I state that I also believe that labels, such as 'victim', perpetuate the idea that someone who becomes the subject of an attack is weaker than their attacker. If a woman does not fight back when she is being sexually assaulted, does this make her a victim of an attack, or has she chosen to be a victim by not attacking back? Bourke states that 'unfortunately, some studies on the effectiveness of female resistance [to rape] have been used as part of misogynistic arguments against women who fail to ward off attack, implying that they were somehow complicit in their own victimization.'⁶⁶ How difficult is it to defend yourself against an assailant? The answer to this is extremely difficult, and all depends on the circumstances in which you are attacked. At some stage in our lives, we may all feel some kind of fear that strikes us immobile, unable to think coherently and act logically. Labelling people as 'victims' or stating that some people play a part in their own victimization because they were unable to defend themselves or attack back, is completely insensitive and obtuse.

⁶⁵ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 421.

⁶⁶ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 425.

Friedman believes that ‘the most practical way to reduce the risk of rape for all women is to create a culture in which the rapist has to worry that he’ll get hurt.’⁶⁷ In some ways, this is a sensible suggestion. Once more and more women overpower and attack back if they find they are at risk of becoming sexually assaulted, society may no longer portray or view women as the weaker and more vulnerable sex. My belief is that once this idea is eradicated, then the notion of rape culture and sexism will slowly disintegrate.

However, it is not just through Friedman’s idea that if women fight back, then men will be less likely to rape and sexually assault. It should also be through the notion that women are not ‘natural’ victims, and have been the subject of an unjust attack rather than the idea that they are vulnerable and weak, which is why they are attacked initially. At some point in our lives, we may all become the victim of an incident, but we do not become victims. The attack is something which is unjust and horrific, but it is not something that makes us weak and it is certainly not something that has happened because we are weak.

Brownmiller states that ‘women are trained to be rape victims. [...] To talk about rape, even with nervous laughter, is to acknowledge a woman’s special victim status.’⁶⁸ Women are programmed to be victims from an early age. It is pushed upon women to know that they should not be wandering the streets at night, and they should be wary of being alone with a man in a room, or car, or lift. Valenti makes an important point about the idea of the difference between men and women from a young age:

You see, it was understandable for me to want to be a tomboy and do “boy” things – because men are better, after all. But for a guy to want to be feminine? Unthinkable. Now, while this double standard affects men negatively, it’s mired in misogyny – the idea of course, is that there’s nothing worse than being a girl. [...] It’s demeaning to be female, and boys learn that from an early age.⁶⁹

And why is it demeaning to be female? Because women have always been portrayed as the weaker, more vulnerable sex; the ones that need protecting, and as women, that protection

⁶⁷ Friedman, ‘In Defense of Going Wild’ in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 319.

⁶⁸ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 309.

⁶⁹ Valenti, *He’s a Stud, She’s a Slut*, p. 62.

can only come from a man, of course. Therefore, once a man starts behaving like a woman, he becomes vulnerable, weaker, a victim. Once a woman starts behaving like a man, she becomes resilient, stronger, a protector. Betty White makes a particularly controversial statement: 'Why do some people say "grow some balls"? Balls are weak and sensitive. If you wanna be tough, grow a vagina. Those things can take a pounding.'⁷⁰ This also applies to the statement 'man up'. Although biologically it has been proven that men are physically stronger than women, this is not to say that women are weaker mentally and emotionally.

How are the 'victims' of sexual attacks portrayed in contemporary fiction then? Does the author try to depict the character as weak and defeated, or strong and undeterred by the attack? For this particular chapter, I will focus on the characters of Ed and Bobby in *Deliverance*; and Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *The Girl who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*. I will focus on the idea of revenge, and the idea of the 'victim' who will not allow rape or sexual assault to label them as this. In both *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *Deliverance*, the revenge is violent and fatal.

The character that stands out primarily as a 'victim' is Bobby in *Deliverance*. Dickey seems to have portrayed him as weak and vulnerable from the start of the novel, which could perhaps imply that he was raped because of these characteristics. Bobby is teamed up with Lewis, the strongest and most experienced of the men, when they set out in the canoes: 'I supposed that he was letting Bobby get the feel of the water, and find out which side he would rather paddle on' (p. 64). Lewis already knows that he is in control, so can allow Bobby to feel more comfortable in the water, as if humouring him. Further on, Ed observes that 'Bobby was totally confused [...] though he was trying to help. [...] Bobby quit trying to paddle, and Lewis, by the sheer desire to do it, managed to swing the canoe broadside again [...]' (pp. 64-65). Bobby, if anything, is being depicted as a nuisance, and a fool. He seems

⁷⁰ Michael Cragg, 'Betty White: TV's golden girl on 63 years in showbusiness', <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2012/nov/10/betty-white-golden-girl> [accessed 20 August 2013]

completely incapable of being able to do anything physical successfully. Ed also describes Bobby's appearance in a manner he clearly feels is insulting: 'The upcast [sic.] light gave Bobby's face a greased, Mongoloid cast [...]' (p. 72). This description compares Bobby to that of a Down's Syndrome person; through Ed's description, Dickey is perhaps implying here then that Bobby is more vulnerable than the rest of them, so much so that he is compared to a person with a disability.

There are also certain moments in the novel where Dickey seems to be effeminising Bobby. For example, before the group sets off on their excursion, Bobby comments on one of the local men and his headwear: 'Man, I like the way you wear that hat [...]' (p. 49) and further on, when the group are camping, it is Bobby who pours 'everybody a stiff drink of bourbon' (p. 73), whilst Lewis is the one who makes the fire. It could be said that by allowing Bobby to portray these stereotypical feminine qualities i.e. commenting on something fashion-related and being allowed to pour the drinks, but not make the fire, Dickey is setting him up automatically for a fall. Bobby, at one stage, also becomes what some may describe as irrational. Valenti states that 'when men get angry, they're taken seriously [...] whenever women have the gall to express anything other than effusive chippiness [sic.], we're accused of having PMS or being nuts. Or we're laughed at or mocked [...].'⁷¹ Ed does not take Bobby's concerns and anger seriously, and instead states that because of Bobby's complaints and whinging he 'was sure that Lewis was disgusted with Bobby, and just as sure that I would be, also, before much longer' (p. 85). It could be said then, that Bobby is being treated like a woman; his anger is not being taken seriously and he is made to feel alienated, different to the other men. Whilst they are all enjoying the coolness of the water and a refreshing swim, Bobby is 'sat with his knees drawn up, self-protective in the sun against the water-chill he could see us on' (p. 88). This could be foreboding Bobby's rape later on in the novel; he

⁷¹ Valenti, *He's a Stud, She's a Slut*, p. 67.

already feels the need to be self-protective, whereas the other men do not have the same concerns as Bobby. This reflects the idea about how women have the fear of rape programmed into them from a young age; it is the female of the species that fears being raped, walking alone at night, not the heterosexual male. Because of Bobby's behaviour, he seems weaker than the other men, and more fearful, which makes him appear more effeminate. Valenti lists a number of insults that are used against women and men in *Full Frontal Feminism*, all of which are strongly based on calling someone a girl. She states that 'the worst thing you can call a girl is a girl. The worst thing you can call a guy is a girl. Being a woman is the ultimate insult.'⁷² Bobby knows that what has happened to him is more likely to happen to a woman, so he feels even more ashamed of the attack because he is a man, and feels insulted after being attacked like a woman.

Previously, I discussed the use of weapons by women who rape men. Similarly, in *Deliverance*, both Bobby and Ed are threatened by a shotgun and knife before they are sexually violated by their male assailants: '[He] leveled [sic.] the shotgun straight into my chest [...] The lean man put the point of the knife under my chin and lifted it' (pp. 95-96). It appears that without the use of weapons, the characters may not have been as easily overpowered. However, as Ed narrates his feelings about the weapon, it is easier to understand why, whether there were weapons or not, it would be just as effective to overpower them: 'It was not the steel or the edge of the steel that was frightening; the man's fingernail, used in any gesture of his, would have been just as brutal; the knife only magnified his unconcern' (p. 96). Therefore, it is not a weapon that makes someone a victim; it is not brute force or aggressiveness either. It is the idea that someone is capable of overpowering you, having complete control and making sure you are the weakest in the situation. This illustrates then, that is not because a person is weak that they are victimised or chosen to

⁷² Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, p. 6.

become someone's victim; it could be because the assailant is cruel and manipulative and capable of making someone a victim. Does the reader find it easier to accept Lisbeth Salander, Harriet Vanger and Alice Sebold as victims because they are women, portrayed as weak and feeble, rather than the masculine men in *Deliverance*?

In some ways, Dickey does not allow the reader to even question this. Ed does not become a victim of sexual violation because before he is forced to perform a sex act upon the men, one of them is killed by Lewis' arrow, leaving the other open to attack. Because of Dickey's previous depictions of Bobby, implying that he possesses feminine qualities, and that he seems weaker than the other men, it seems that it is easier to accept the fact that Bobby is raped over a log. Even the description of his attack is laced with the markings of a female victim:

'Them panties too,' the man with the belly said.

Bobby took off his shorts like a boy undressing for the first time at the gym, and stood there plump and pink, his hairless thighs shaking, his legs close together [...] Bobby's body was still and pink in an obscene posture that no one could help. (pp. 97-98)

The man describes Bobby's underwear as 'panties'; a dictionary definition of the noun describes them as 'a pair of women's or children's underpants'.⁷³ Dickey could have used this particular word for numerous reasons. One, he could again be implying that Bobby is effeminate, again reinforcing the fact that he is an easy victim because he possesses the qualities of a woman. However, it is more likely that he has used 'panties' in association with the rapist. Perhaps Dickey is implying that for the man to rape Bobby, the rapist must give Bobby his own feminine attributes. Bobby is also described as being 'plump and pink' with 'hairless thighs'. The men choose Bobby to rape because, out of Ed and himself, he is the most feminine looking. Ed is only fit for oral sex because, as the one assailant states, there 'ain't no hair in his mouth' (p. 99). The fact that Ed is so hairy makes him appear more

⁷³ *Collins Dictionary*, p. 1194.

masculine and this is perhaps the reason why the men choose not to anally rape him. This also illustrates the 'double standard when it comes to men, women, and hair removal.'⁷⁴ The rapists in *Deliverance* have clearly chosen Bobby to penetrate because he is the one who most closely resembles a woman, and the one who appears to be the weaker out of the two.

Similarly, in *The End of Alice*, the male narrator identifies himself as the woman. When he is raped by his male inmate, Clayton, he becomes enraged and states that 'I'll not be the pussy anymore. A man, a man again, reclaimed. I have the power' (p. 148). This implies then that only when the narrator rapes back does he finally become a man again; after being raped, or being the 'receiver' of Clayton's penetration, the narrator perceives himself as a woman. What is Homes trying to do here? Holmes could perhaps be illustrating how men who are raped view themselves; this is something that should happen to a woman, not a man. The narrator becomes powerless; a victim. Only when he rapes back does he feel like a man again. This is because he has regained power; perhaps Homes is suggesting that only when a person feels like a man, do they truly feel like they are in control and powerful. Homes' use of the word 'reclaimed' is particularly interesting. The narrator is describing himself as perhaps going back to nature; he has reclaimed his original manliness. By raping, he has become a man.

It appears, within the fiction that I am focusing on, the female characters, who are the so-called 'victims' of rape and sexual assault, fight back. Within 'An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales: Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics: Statistics bulletin' it states that:

Females who had reported being victims of the most serious sexual offences in the last year were asked, regarding the most recent incident, whether or not they had reported the incident to the police. Only 15 per cent of victims of such offences said that they had done so. Frequently cited reasons for not reporting the crime were that it was 'embarrassing', they 'didn't think the police could do much to help', that the

⁷⁴ Valenti, *He's a Stud, She's a Slut*, p. 74.

incident was ‘too trivial or not worth reporting’, or that they saw it as a ‘private/family matter and not police business’.⁷⁵

Perhaps, if the Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics did not keep referring to females who have been subject to sexual abuse and violation as ‘victims’, then many more may have come forward. Lisbeth Salander, in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, does not like labels, and here, a recognised government institution is labelling people who have been the subject of sexual assault as ‘victims’. After Salander has been raped by Nils Bjurman, she researches what could be behind his brutal attack and his apparent sadistic behaviour, and also why she was chosen. She discovers that:

[...] the sadist’s best victim was the one who voluntarily went to him because she did not think she had any choice. The sadist specialised in people who were in a position of dependence.

Advokat Bjurman had chosen her as a victim.

That told her something about the way she was viewed by other people. (p. 227)

Salander is so desperate not to be labelled as a ‘victim’ that she unleashes a violent revenge on Bjurman. Of course, this is not the only reason why she does this, but it could be implied that her anger towards being seen as a victim was an important factor in her rape-revenge cycle. From her research, Salander discovers that victims are described as dependent and helpless; hence, Bjurman must view her as this, and not only Bjurman, but society too.

Salander is so angered by this, that she takes her revenge on Bjurman in an extremely violent, hostile, and controlling manner, completely reversing the roles. She is so damaged by the thought of being labelled as a victim, that she completely goes in the opposite direction, to become a perpetrator of violence. This reflects the reaction of Bobby in *Deliverance*, mentioned in the male rape chapter. Rather than report the incident through the authorities, Bobby makes the decision to hide the murdered body, kicking it a few times in the head for good measure.

⁷⁵ ‘An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales’, p. 6.

It is interesting then that Bobby ‘stands out’ as a victim because he is a man who is defined by his womanly characteristics. Would Bobby have been seen more as a victim, or less of a victim, if he had been portrayed with the same characteristics as Lewis? Mullen describes male rape as the last taboo; it seems strange that Dickey would not have chosen a more masculine character to be the subject of rape. Would this not have been more of a ‘shock factor’ for the reader? Of course, it should not be more of a shock; women are not the only victims of rape, and neither are men who are viewed as less masculine. However, even within ‘An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales’, it states that ‘in some tables there are insufficient data to draw reliable conclusions about male victims, where this is the case only offences committed against females are presented.’⁷⁶ It seems then, because of the lack of data that illustrates men are raped and sexually assaulted, it can be accepted that it is perhaps more shocking, or perhaps, less accepted, that a masculine male is raped. It could be said that Dickey is illustrating that anyone can be the victim of rape, but by doing this, he has to imply that Bobby is weaker than the rest of the men, and is given stereotypical feminine characteristics, which implies why he is raped. Even in modern Western society, it is perhaps still difficult to accept that a heterosexual man can be the victim of sexual assault and rape.

In contemporary fiction, it appears that authors do not wish for their characters to become ‘victims’. Instead, both Larsson and Dickey allow both Salander and Bobby to seek their revenge through particularly violent means. However, although it appears that the authors allow their ‘victims’ some kind of resolution, they are still raped initially. What the authors could be trying to do here is state that ‘victims’ are not weak and defenceless as previously thought to be. Instead, they are people who are at the mercy of another. The fact that both Salander and Bobby are able to seek some kind of revenge illustrates that they are

⁷⁶‘An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales’, p. 11.

not weak. On the other hand, however, it could be said that the stronger person is the person who does not need to seek revenge.

And it will give every woman a fighting chance at a world where she can go out and get a little crazy sometimes is she wants to. Where she can dance and drink and flirt and fool around because it feels good. A world where her pleasure is actually important. That's the world I'm living in. Care to join me?⁷⁷

Representations of Female Sexual Power in Contemporary Fiction

Does a perpetuating rape culture mean that women can never be sexually free and experimental?

Shockingly, we still live in a culture where 'simply being a female is a risk factor for rape.'⁷⁸

We also live in a culture where 'simply' being a woman who goes out and gets drunk, or who goes out and has sex with a stranger, or who simply, in the words of Jessie J, 'does it like a dude' can face the backlash of her actions, and the horrendous names that come with it. With perpetuating rape culture, can women ever be sexually free, liberated and experimental, without the fear of judgment or persecution from others? Can a woman ever go out and 'dance and drink and flirt and fool around' without the presence of rape and rape culture hanging like a noose above her head? Does contemporary fiction still play on this idea; that it is the woman who encourages the act of rape through her sexual promiscuity, and do the authors appear to agree with this idea, or are they trying to expose the shortcomings of society and the myths that rape entails?

The notion that women lie, previously outlined in the introduction, goes hand in hand with the idea that women cannot behave in 'certain ways'. Comments from *Cosmopolitan's* website reinforce this idea: 'I see some girls act in the sluttiest way in my uni [sic.] town on nights out and if I heard any of them cry rape the next day I'd be pretty ****ing sceptical.'⁷⁹

This also reinforces another rape myth; that she was asking for it. What this comment implies

⁷⁷ Jaclyn Friedman, 'In Defense [sic.] of Going Wild or: How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Pleasure (and How You Can, Too)' in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 319.

⁷⁸ Friedman, 'In Defense of Going Wild' in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 314.

⁷⁹ Gethin Rees, and Deborah White, 'Vindictive but vulnerable: Paradoxical representations of women as demonstrated in the internet discourse surrounding anti-rape technology', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 35, 6, 2012, p. 428.

is that women cannot ‘act in the sluttiest way’, and then not expect to get raped or sexually assaulted. Surely a woman *must* be asking for it if she wears a short skirt and dances in a provocative manner. She *must* only be doing it for the benefit of those watching around her, not because she is enjoying herself. This is what western society has led us to believe, of course, and is certainly not the truth.

After mentioning the Steubenville High School case in the introduction, I feel I am able to use this as evidence for the backlash of abuse and mistreatment that women are open to throughout western society. Some of the names that the girl was described as and abused with are as follows: ‘sloppy drunk girl’, ‘sloppy drunk bitch’, ‘drunk/slutty’, ‘asked for it’ and ‘wanted it’, ‘loose drunk slut’, ‘it’s the girls fault’, ‘fuck that whore’, ‘she’s a whore’.⁸⁰ Of course, it is important to note that all of these comments and ‘opinions’ (if that is even the word for them) are taken from social media sites. However, it was not only the public who responded to the incident. The news coverage of the assault was particularly disturbing; not in terms of abusive language or personal attacks on the young girl involved, but the fact that it was the perpetrators of the sexual assaults that were empathised with.

This incident alone illustrates how women are blamed for sexual assault and rape. According to rape culture, it was the girl who should not have gotten drunk and put herself in ‘that’ position, rather than the perpetrators who should not have gotten drunk and put themselves in ‘that’ position. Friedman makes an excellent point that if it became acceptable for women to behave in a sexually free and liberated manner, then ‘society would have to rethink its indulgence of “boys will be boys” behaviour, if “girls could be girls,” too.’⁸¹ She continues in her argument by stating that ‘homophobia would lose some of its grip, because it would no longer be a scary, vulnerable thing to be “like a girl.”’⁸² And if it is no longer scary

⁸⁰ Ley, ‘How An Alleged Rape Involving Ohio High School Football Players Unfolded On Twitter, Instagram, And YouTube’, <http://deadspin.com/how-an-alleged-rape-involving-ohio-high-school-football-5969103>

⁸¹ Friedman, ‘In Defense of Going Wild’ in *Yes Means Yes*, p.315.

⁸² Friedman, ‘In Defense of Going Wild’ in *Yes Means Yes*, p.315.

or vulnerable to be “like a girl”, this would then mean that it would no longer be scary and vulnerable to BE a girl.

Do authors allow their female characters to become sexually liberated and gain sexual power? Or are we still exposed to a bombardment of sexual assault and rape? This chapter will focus on the nineteen-year-old female character in *The End of Alice*; Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *The Girl who Played with Fire*; and, in a non-fictional situation, Alice Sebold in *Lucky*. These texts have been chosen because they offer different scenarios in which women can be sexually liberated and free. However, in each novel, each woman is sexually assaulted and/or raped, which is why it will also be interesting to focus on the character of Erika Berger in Larsson’s novels, to compare and contrast the way in which she is portrayed; a woman in a position of power, not just at work, but in her sexual life. Not only does she have a husband of which she has a sexual relationship with, she also has a lover, in the form of Blomkvist, of which her husband knows about, to satiate her needs.

The End of Alice is a difficult and unusual novel to analyse. Narrated by a paedophile and murderer, now in jail, telling the story of another paedophile, a nineteen-year-old woman, the novel brings forth delicate and disturbing issues about sexual deviance. The novel is also unusual because it is narrated from the point of view of the *male* paedophile and murderer, interpreting the point of view of the nineteen-year-old woman. Although I will not be focusing on child molestation in this chapter, I believe it is important to note that I am certainly not ignoring this issue, but simply that my focus in this chapter is on the sexual power of women. Here are the facts:

In the early 1980s the American Humane Association and the National Center [sic.] for Child Abuse and Neglect estimated that between 14 and 24 per cent of boys [...] who had been molested were assaulted by females [...] The US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth, and Families discovered that

of the children who had been sexually abused in 1998, the perpetrator was female in 12 per cent of cases.⁸³

These are not small numbers, but they are less than those where the perpetrator is male. There are differing reasons for why this may be. For example, according to the Mpower website, 'many boys do not report acts of sexual violence because they see this as a sign of weakness',⁸⁴ and to be seen as weak is more of a punishment than the actual act of violence itself. However, another reason why fewer boys report sexual molestation by female perpetrators is because they do not see the sexual acts as violence or as molestation. This prevails in *The End of Alice*.

From her letter it is clear that she has been looking for years, searching out the places where all variety and versions of her chosen kind are on display, where one can browse, where it is easy to shop unnoticed. (p. 17)

The nineteen-year-old woman is not somebody to fear, not somebody to be aware of. She is able to watch the young boys playing baseball or soccer without fear that she will be accosted and marched away. There are probably few people in the world who will look at a nineteen-year-old woman and believe that she is having sexual thoughts about the young boys she is watching. This contrasts with Mr. Phillips in *Mr Phillips* (2000). In a similar incident, Mr. Phillips is watching 'two girls in their late teens'⁸⁵ playing tennis. At one stage he is joined by another man, who stands and watches the girls play. Mr Phillips acknowledges that 'she looks up at them for a moment, a glance from under her eyelashes in the manner copyrighted by Princess Diana, and Mr Phillips feels his penis twitch.'⁸⁶ It appears then, that Mr Phillips believes that the young tennis player is doing this action for his benefit; she is tantalizing them, teasing them. In other words, she is well aware that Mr Phillips is staring at her.

⁸³ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 214.

⁸⁴ <http://www.male-rape.org.uk/> [accessed on May 19 2013]

⁸⁵ John Lanchester, *Mr Phillips* (Kent: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 62.

⁸⁶ Lanchester, *Mr Phillips*, p. 63.

In *The End of Alice* it feels very much as if the nineteen-year old woman manages to get what she desires, but at what cost? It appears as if she is sexually assaulted and violated by both Matt's father, and Matt's friend, Aaron. However, these incidences are narrated by the main protagonist, and the reader can never be sure whether or not they actually happened, or if it simply the narrator creating events for his own amusement. Therefore, perhaps Homes is disallowing the nineteen-year-old woman to be sexually free and experimental by including incidences of sexual violence against her. Homes may be implying that a woman is never really ever sexually free because others may take advantage of this. For example, Matt's friend, Aaron, believes that he "could have fucked [her]. Matt would have let me." (p. 161). Not only is this illustrating that young men grow up with the opinion that they are capable of doing what they wish to a woman, it also illustrates that because a woman said yes to something sexual at one point, does not automatically mean that she will say yes again. As the male narrator is raped by his inmate Clayton as 'a piece of [his] punishment' (p. 56) for his own sexual deviances, it could be said that the nineteen-year-old woman is being punished by Aaron, and Matt's father, because Homes is suggesting that this is the kind of behaviour a woman is subjected to when she chooses her own sexual desires and fulfils her own sexual needs.

It could perhaps be said that there is a certain amount of fear surrounding women who allow themselves to be sexually free and powerful. Filipovic states that:

Unlike other forms of assault or even murder, rape is both a crime and a tool of social control. The stranger-rape narrative is crucial in using the threat of sexual assault to keep women afraid, and to punish women who step outside of the traditionally female private sphere and into the traditionally male-dominated public one. Portraying rape as something that happens outside of a woman's home enforces the idea that women are safe in the domestic realm and at risk if they go out. (p. 22)

The nineteen-year-old woman in *The End of Alice* certainly fits with this description; she has chosen her own sexual desires, and therefore no longer fits within this traditional female world. However, once she has been sexually accosted and sexually assaulted by Aaron, and

Matt's father, she states that '*despite my best efforts, I am always the one who gets fucked. It won't ever be any different, some things don't change – I suppose I have to learn to enjoy it*' (p. 167). This completely encompasses rape culture. The nineteen-year-old cannot be as sexually free as she wants to be; instead, men believe that she 'wants it', and she now feels as if she has to 'enjoy it'. This relates back to one of Brownmiller's rape myths; that if it is going to happen anyway, you might as well enjoy it. It seems as if Homes is reinforcing the idea that sexual violence against women is accepted, by both men and women. Valenti supports this by stating that 'violence against women is *so* common that it's become a normal part of our everyday lives.'⁸⁷ Again, this reinforces rape culture; that sexual violence against women is the 'norm'.

Salander, in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, steps outside the 'traditionally female private sphere'; she is covered in tattoos, she has piercings in her face, she likes to have sexual relations with other women, she rides a motorcycle, and she chooses to work as and when she pleases. Kim Surkan confirms this by stating that 'Noomi Rapace, the actress who played Salander in the Swedish film adaptations [...] says that to prepare for the role she [...] lost weight [...] learned kickboxing, cut her hair, pierced herself, and got a motorcycle license.'⁸⁸ Rapace herself had to step out of her own traditional female style in order to become what appears to her to be a more 'masculine' version of herself. What Filipovic is suggesting is that because of Salander's behaviour, society believes that whatever reactions result from from this, she ultimately deserves. The irony of this is that the majority of people who are sexually assaulted or raped know their assailant; for example, Salander's so-called 'guardian', Nils Bjurman. Salander is not raped or sexually assaulted by a stranger because she has left the house alone late at night, or decided to walk through a park on her own; she is

⁸⁷ Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, p. 65.

⁸⁸ Kim Surkan, 'The Girl who Turned the Tables: A Queer Reading of Lisbeth Salander', in Eric Bronson (ed.), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and Philosophy* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012), p. 37.

raped and assaulted because Bjurman has complete control over her finances and life, and makes horrendous judgments about her based on her appearance and unreliable case notes.

A title of an essay in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and Philosophy: Everything is Fire* makes a particularly relevant point to female sexual power: 'Why Are So Many Women F***ing Kalle Blomkvist?: Larsson's Philosophy of Female Attraction'. Why are *so* many women having sexual relations with Blomkvist, and what does this say about how Larsson views the sexual lives of women? Erika Berger states that the reason she, and so many women chose to have sex with Blomkvist, was because:

[...] he radiated self-confidence and security at the same time, that he had an ability to make women feel at ease. Going to bed with him was not threatening or complicated, but it might be erotically enjoyable. And that, according to Blomkvist, was as it should be. (p. 36)

However, Berger's choice of the word 'might' in front of 'erotically enjoyable' sounds alarm bells, along with Blomkvist's own opinion that 'that [...] was as it should be.' Is Larsson trying to imply that women should, and do, only seek sex that makes them feel safe and comforted? It feels slightly as if Larsson has made a connection between stating that women only want innocuous sex and completely ignored the fact that they may wish to have sex with Blomkvist out of pure, unadulterated sexual desire. Heather Corinna states that 'good sex, great sex, enriching sexuality is not just about the absence of physical or emotional pain or only about emotional intimacy. It is also about desire and the full expression of that desire.'⁸⁹ Larsson seems to imply through his characters, the opposite of this. Not even Salander can have sex with Blomkvist purely just for her sexual needs. Unexpectedly, the seemingly emotionless woman, who can only appear to find delight in electronics; 'it was love at first sight' (p. 194) in regards to a newly acquired laptop, falls for Blomkvist.

Erika Berger certainly fits Corinna's position on sex and what sex should be, rather than agreeing with Larsson's implications that women wish to go to bed with men who are

⁸⁹ Corinna, 'An Immodest Proposal' in *Yes Means Yes*, p. 191.

safe and familiar. She is a particularly interesting character in the novel because she does not allow western society to determine what she finds enjoyable sexually. However, her situation in many ways is extremely complicated. It also feels slightly as if Larsson has included a character like Berger to illustrate that he is sympathetic towards women; he understands that they have wants and needs, just as Blomkvist, Bjurman, and Martin Vanger do. Is Larsson trying to be a feminist? It is problematic to decide whether this is his intention or not; is he trying to empower women through his female characters, such as Salander, Berger, and Harriet Vanger, or is he merely subjecting more female characters to violence and sexual assault, purely for the entertainment of his readers?

Berger states that ‘the only person who understood [her] passion for sex with Blomkvist was her husband, and he understood it because she dares discuss her needs with him. It was not a matter of infidelity, but of desire.’⁹⁰ Berger is capable of gaining what she wishes from her sexual appetite because she allows herself to be open about her sexuality and sensuality. It could be said that Larsson has done this to illustrate that more women should be open about their sexual desires, whether with their partners or just on their own, because then more women may be able to discover what they enjoy. Larsson’s use of the phrase ‘she dares discuss her needs’ is slightly troublesome however. He could be being sarcastic here, using polemic in his writing to illustrate that women should be able to be as open as men with their sexual preferences and fantasies. However, it seems more likely that Larsson has used this particular phrase because it seems such a shock to, not only him, but his readers too, that a woman would ‘dare’ talk to her husband or partner about something so intimate, and some may say, controversial.

Brownmiller states that:

⁹⁰ Stieg Larsson, *The Girl who Played with Fire* (London: MacLehose Press, 2009), p. 116. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

Rarely have [women] been allowed to explore, discover and present what might be some workable sexual daydreams, if only we could give them free rein. Rather, our female sexual fantasies have been handed to us on a brass platter by those very same men who have labored [sic.] so lovingly to promote their own fantasies.⁹¹

In western society, for a woman to fantasise over a teenage boy it would seem strange, absurd even. Valenti reinforces this by stating that it has nothing to do with getting married, or having children, or the money aspect, but it is to do with power dynamics.⁹² Even in today's modern world, seeing an older woman with a younger man is an odd concept because some members of society still possess the patriarchal view that it should be the man in control; he is the one that will earn the money, and have the better job. Referring back to Brownmiller's point above about men creating sexual fantasies for women, about telling women what they desire, is still relevant as a concept today.

Take Robin Thicke's song 'Blurred Lines'. Not only do *I* seem to have a huge problem with this music release, as do many others. In her article "Blurred Lines," Robin Thicke's Summer Anthem, Is Kind of Rapey', Tricia Romano states that 'the song is about how a girl really wants crazy wild sex but doesn't say it—positioning that age-old problem where men think no means yes into a catchy, hummable song.'⁹³ Here lies the problem: a woman wishes to have amazing, animalistic, wild, and erotic sex, but because she has been silenced into saying anything about her desires, Thicke murmurs into her ear that he knows 'she wants it', when really, he does not know for sure that she 'wants it', and is only playing off his own urges and fantasies.⁹⁴ The title of the song is also problematic. It seems to imply the 'blurred lines' between a 'good girl' wanting to behave, but really wanting to have a passionate night of wild sex. However, 'blurred lines' also spells out the sometimes difficult definition between consent and non-consent; the fact that in the explicit version of the video

⁹¹ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p. 323.

⁹² Valenti, *He's a Stud, She's a Slut*, p. 123.

⁹³ Blurred Lines article – find reference.

⁹⁴ Robin Thicke, 'Blurred Lines' <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/robinthicke/blurredlines.html> [accessed 10 August 2013].

the female models are naked, bar a nude-coloured thong, and the male singers/rappers are fully clothed, does not really help matters either.

However, it could be said that the women in the video are empowered. Although they are naked and apparently 'wanting it', Thicke and his comrades do not touch the women in anyway throughout the video, bar a few hair pulls and miming arse slaps. And of course, it is not just Thicke's song that claims to be empowering women; other artists, such as Jessie J and Beyoncé, seem to write songs that illustrate women as sexually free and liberated. However, Jessie J is encouraging women to 'do it like a dude', whereas she should really be encouraging women to just do it like a person. Women should be liberated without having to do something like a man. Women are not doing something 'like a dude'; they are simply doing something that they wish to do. Likewise, Beyoncé's song 'If I Were a Boy' sends a similar message: women cannot act a certain way because they are not 'boys'. The song basically implies that if Beyoncé were a man, she could treat her partner poorly; cheat on him, not reply to text messages, and not spend any time with her partner. Feminism is about equality, not about women hating men. Beyoncé is implying with her song that men lie, cheat, and generally treat women wrongly. Of course, this is true in some cases, but this kind of message implies that women should expect to be victims, and not be sexually liberated, or liberated in any sense. Beyoncé has other songs that seem, on the surface, to be empowering women, but are really relaying quite a disturbing message. Her song 'Single Ladies' implies that if a man liked a woman and wanted to 'keep her' then he should have 'put a ring on it'. Not only is this implying that a woman needs a ring to signify that a man likes her, and that the only way he can 'keep her' is to ask her to marry him, it also outrageously portrays a woman as an object.

Rape culture has been created to keep women in fear of rape, to make them feel guilty of anything that they choose to do which is seen as away from the traditional female 'norm'.

Bourke states that ‘a recent UK poll revealed that nearly one-third of women claimed to be personally afraid of being raped’, and this fear has not just stemmed out of thin air.⁹⁵

However, what happens once a woman has been raped? Does being raped suddenly mean women are unable to explore their sexual desires? In *Lucky*, Alice Sebold dwells on the idea that ‘*no nice boy will ever want me. I was all those horrible words used for rape; I was changed, bloodied, damaged goods, ruined.*’⁹⁶ This idea also stems from rape culture; Sebold’s virginity, her ‘commodity’ and what made her a ‘nice girl’, has been taken. Valenti states that ‘women’s sexuality is often treated like a commodity, a joke, or a sin’; in other words, women have extreme difficulty in making their own decisions about sex.⁹⁷ It seems as if these decisions have already been made for women, which is why rape, rapists, and rape culture still need to be fought against.

⁹⁵ Bourke, *Rape: A History*, p. 422.

⁹⁶ Alice Sebold, *Lucky* (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2002), p. 77.

⁹⁷ Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, pp. 20-21.

'Rape would not follow me.'⁹⁸

Conclusion

Crossing the blurred line

Have the authors crossed the 'blurred' line? Was it necessary to include scenes of rape, sexual violence and harassment in their fiction? There is no clear answer to this question. James Dickey may have written his novel to illustrate that male rape does occur, but with this, he could have been implying that men who are raped are better off becoming silent. In the end of *Deliverance*, there seem to be no repercussions for the actions of the men; the fact that they have murdered someone and covered up the death of their own friend seems to have barely altered their lives in anyway. It appears then, that throughout the fiction discussed in this thesis, many of the characters who are raped are allowed to reap their own revenge. This could be implying that the authors believe rape 'victims' should seek to punish those who have wronged them. However, on the other hand, some may say that the authors have included portrayals of revenge against rape because this is something which can happen only in fiction, but which is unrealistic to imagine that it also happens in reality.

By including scenes of rape and sexual violence, whether male or female, sometimes it is difficult to decide whether or not the authors are perpetuating rape culture, or if they are exposing the problems that rape culture causes for both men and women. Considering the time in which *Deliverance* was published (1970), it is problematic to decide whether or not Dickey purposely portrayed Bobby as the weakest male, and with stereotypical feminine qualities, to insinuate that this was the reason he was raped, or if Dickey was trying to expose small-minded views of male and female attitudes, which may have been more apparent at the time; that male rape is something that only happens to men who are effeminate or homosexual.

⁹⁸ Sebold, *Lucky*, p. 240.

There are so many issues connected with rape which I appear to have completely overlooked throughout this dissertation. However, the issues which I have seemingly ignored are not any less important than the issues I have addressed throughout the thesis. In my further research, I will look into the sociological links between race and rape, which are particularly prevalent within contemporary fiction; for example, texts such as *The Color Purple*, *I Know why the Caged Bird Sings* and *Disgrace*. I felt as if I could have written an entire doctorate on the relationship between race and rape within contemporary fiction, which is the reason why I excluded it from this particular discussion. My focus was to look at contemporary fiction in which rape culture was present in western society through gender inequality. Similarly, in further research, I would like to look in more detail at women who rape women, and at rape and sexual violence in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) communities, with contemporary fiction.

Although a delicate and often uncomfortable issue to address, I would also like to discuss how child rape, and sexual violence and molestation, is portrayed in contemporary fiction. For this, I would continue my research into *The End of Alice*, focusing more on the narrator and his relationship to Alice, and looking more deeply into the nineteen-year-old woman's relationship with Matt.

As with most controversial and contemporary issues in today's modern western society, social media plays a huge role in gaging opinions. I briefly touched upon the backlash of abuse that the high school girl was subject to in the Steubenville case, but other recent cases, such as the abuse received by Caroline Criado-Perez, who was threatened by rape and death after campaigning to get a non-royal, female figure on British banknotes. I feel doing larger research on social media prevalence may allow me to gain a better view on how much rape culture still prevails in western society today. Just by looking at the Steubenville case, I was able to see how archaic and small-minded some people's views are;

not just men, but women too. In relation to social media, I wish to delve further into how rape and rape culture is reported in the news; for example, how the victims are presented, who gains the most sympathy, depending on the context. I would relate this back to contemporary fiction, by illustrating how, and if, authors have been influenced by the influx of social media; whether social media has allowed rape ‘victims’ to gain a voice, or if it has just allowed a certain few horrendous individuals to further harm these people.

As the main focus in this dissertation was the representation of rape in western, developed societies, I believe it would be fascinating to compare how rape is portrayed within contemporary fiction set in underdeveloped countries. I briefly touched upon Angela Carter’s short story ‘Reflections’, and she alone would be interesting to discuss when reflecting on the representation of rape and rape culture, and the ‘other’.⁹⁹ Of course, this ties in with race and LGBT issues. It could be said that there was some focus on the ‘other’ in this dissertation; throughout, the description of rape has been seen as an act inflicted upon women, thus making men the ‘other’, both when it comes to being the attacker, and especially when men become the attacked.

Can any solid conclusions be made from this study? It could be said that women are the focus of sexual violence, with many authors including scenes of this nature in their work. This certainly cannot be ignored, with claims that we, as readers and viewers, are immune to it. Not only does this mean that there is, on some level, an acceptance of the sexual violence, but to some extent, readers *expect* this. Although authors could be flagging up the issues that modern western society faces, the idea that sexual violence against women within fiction has become normalised permeates the very idea of rape culture.

⁹⁹ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle (eds.), *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2009), p. 136.

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