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**The Cathartic Function of Reliving / Retelling of Rape:
Cody McFadyen's Smoky Barrett and Winnie M Li's Vivian Tan**

I

The undeniable fact is that rape – perceived as one of the most common shapes of brutality in the cultural history of humankind – has been, as it is asserted by Georges Vigarello, the social phenomenon whose proper assessment in history changes depending on the dominant paradigm of power and on norms thereto related. Historically, the Spanish conquistadors were motivated to beget children by indigenous women; Edward the Longshanks is famous for reinstating *jus prima noctis* in Scotland so as to warrant an unvarying admixture of English genes to the Scottish bloodlines; slave owners were permitted to legally breed slaves by raping women they possessed. Moreover, throughout history, war rapes have been perceived to be a standard rather than an abnormality. Today, sex slavery, forced prostitution and human trafficking are despondently common world-wide. Beyond doubt, rape – either a criminalized or institutionalized phenomenon – has invariably been a part of human culture, emerging as a hideous act disintegrating and stigmatizing those unable to shield their bodily integrity. However, despite its wide-reaching presence and the enormous developments in psychology, sociology, legal studies or women's studies, rape continues to be an exceptionally intricate notion to discuss and analyse. It is thus of significance to endeavor at shedding more light as this multifaceted phenomenon by analysing texts of fiction

whose plots gyrate around the concept of rape, defending a thesis that the domain of literature is capable of illustrating the multifaceted complexity and viciousness of a repulsive act of rape offering at the same time partial enlightenment as to possible stimulants for such inhumane deeds. Importantly, as it will be indicated in the ensuing analysis, the American fiction can be expected to function as one of the tools used while struggling to get to the core of complexity of rape, confirming on one side that novels – treated here as quasi-biographical narratives of healing – are indeed purposeful while investigating the “language of rape” perceived as the unique aesthetics of rape discourse developed in both novels to address the ineffable, bodily experience and, on the other, that American fiction can be indispensable while trying to portray the ubiquitousness of sex in the States.

Cody McFadyen’s book *Shadow Man* provides readers with an exceptional form of correspondence between the FBI special agent, Smokey Barrett and the mysterious criminal called Jack the Ripper Jr. In one of his letters to Smokey, the murderer voices a genuine observation upon the universality and commonness of sex with all its pathologies in the milieu of the Internet. He asks her: “Do you know what the most searched-for word on the internet is? ‘Sex.’ Keeping that in mind, do you know what one of the other words most sought after is? ‘Rape’” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 249). He later adds that “[W]ith the millions who access the web, with all that exists upon it, two of the things most looked for, most desired, are sex and rape” (249) and concludes with an assertion that “with the demographics of the ‘net,’ [...] it means there are a million men, sitting in their homes right now, thinking about the subject of rape” (249). While willing to treat and reject this observation as only a piece of fiction, one is inclined to accept Jack’s remark as a very possible one since the statistics appear to prove it.¹

¹ Kassia Wosick, assistant professor of sociology at New Mexico State University asserts that “globally, porn is a \$97 billion industry [...]. At present, between \$10 and \$12 billion of that comes from the United States” (Wosick, “Things are Looking up”). What is more, the subsequent source points to the fact that “in 2018 alone, more than 5,517,000,000 hours of porn were consumed on the world’s largest porn site” (Olsen, “Can You

In order to support even more Jack Jr.'s observation it is advisable to draw on Mike Abrams who, in his *Sexuality and its Disorders: Development, Cases and Treatment*, in the chapter entitled "Sexuality and the Internet" asserts that "its wide use and availability have changed the way people act and think sexually. Exposure to the vast variety of sexual expressions has invariably altered people's sexual perceptions and norms" (Abrams 378). Abrams continues his train of thought with the assertion that "the Internet has made those who once felt alone or ashamed because of an unusual sexual desire feel more accepted among peers with similar interests. And it has liberated some people, while entrapping others who are prone to sexual compulsion" (378). He likewise claims that the "popularity of Internet pornography is described in terms of the 'Three A Engine: access, affordability, and anonymity'" (385) producing a staggering amount of money worldwide, especially in the USA (\$2.84 billion in 2013, in line with Abrams). To support this assertion even further, one can add Julie McIntyre's remark in her *Sex and the Intelligence of the Heart: Nature, Intimacy, and Sexual Energy*. While relying upon statistics, she claims that "In the United States alone, a pornographic video is produced every thirty-nine minutes: 11.000 adult movies are released per year-more than twenty times mainstream movie releases [...] in the United States, revenues for pornography are larger than the revenues of Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix, and EarthLink combined [...] The United States produces more Internet porn than anybody else on the planet" (McIntyre 259). While being confronted with those statistics one is therefore forced to ask what factors trigger such an explosion of interest in sex and its derivatives and, more significantly, could this enthrallment be perceived as

Guess"): Pornhub, a Canadian pornographic video sharing Internet site. The same source likewise indicates that "there were more than 33,500,000,000 site visits to Pornhub last year—more than 4 visits to the site per person on Earth—which is more than 5 billion visits more than last year. That's 13.7 million more visits per day in 2018 than in 2017, a considerable uptick" (Olsen, "Can you Guess). Alexa Internet, Inc., an American web traffic analysis company based in San Francisco offers the statistics according to which among 50 the most popular websites worldwide there are 6 websites that are pornographic in content: Pornhub, Porn555, LiveJasmine, XVideos, xHmaster, XNXX. Among those Pornhub (as of 17th January, 2019) emerges as the most search-for pornographic website being ranked the 25th place according to Alexa Internet, Inc. and the 8th place in line with SimilarWeb offering web analytics services for businesses (Wikipedia Contributors, "List of Most Popular Websites").

responsible for the outburst of pathologies within the generally accepted spectrum of sexual decorum.

II

An American journalist Susan Brownmiller (b.1935) in her seminal book upon the notion of rape (*Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*) asserts that a sexual assault upon a woman ought to be perceived as a conscious practice of terror by means of which men strive to keep women in a state of constant trepidation and dominance. While pointing to the historical implications of rape she analyses a sexual assault upon a woman from two clashing perspectives: from a man and a woman's points of view. While undermining the vision of preceding groups of psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts and scientists focusing upon pathologies of sexuality, univocally marginalizing the significance of rape as if being committed by morons endowed with hyper-inflated sexuality, Brownmiller asserts that rape has its own history and as such it has been present in the history of mankind since time immemorial.

While contrasting the biological mechanism of animals (seemingly incapable of committing rape) with that of human beings, the scholar claims that "we have evolved a complex system of psychological signs and urges, and a complex structure of pleasure. Our call to sex occurs in the head, and the act is not necessarily linked, as it is with animals, to Mother Nature's pattern of procreation. [...] What it boils down to is that the human male can rape," (Brownmiller 13) as can the human female. Continuing her train of thought, Brownmiller adds that "in terms of human anatomy the possibility of forcible intercourse incontrovertibly exists. This single factor may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of a male ideology of rape. When men discovered that they could rape, they

proceeded to do it” (14). She likewise comments that, from a historical point of view, rape has always been perceived as a “man’s basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear. His forcible entry into her body, despite her physical protestations and struggle, became the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood” (14).² Brownmiller even declares that a man’s “discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times” (14 – 15). To cut it short, rape upon a woman from a male perspective has invariably equaled dominance, subjugation and tyranny.

On the other side of the spectrum, Brownmiller tries to define what sorts of implications rape has for a woman, a rape victim. Undeniably, it stands for utterly reverse notions than for a man. The scholar affirms that it has to be regarded as a “sexual invasion of the body by force, an incursion into the private, personal inner space without consent – in short, an internal assault from one of several avenues and by one of several methods – constitutes a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity and is a hostile, degrading act of violence that deserves the name of rape” (Brownmiller 376). It is thus a forceful coercion aiming at imbedding a woman into a discourse of her weakness and innate inferiority to a man as well as shattering her dignity, self-esteem, and physical / spiritual integrity. For a woman, a rape victim, this invasion into her private internal space is consistently stigmatized with fear, ensuing depression and possible suicidal thoughts. Hence, in this matrix of power a woman is always labeled as the sufferer, the oppressed, the weaker one, the victim. Whereas, a man dominates the scene as the conqueror, the master, the stronger one.

A more meticulous book upon a multifaceted notion of rape is the 1979 book written by A. Nicholas Groth in collaboration with H. Jean Birnbaum entitled *Men Who Rape: The*

² Actually, historically – it was the ability to murder one’s rivals or fight against your nation’s / tribe’s / clan’s enemies, not rape. Rape or forcible sex was an afterthought to most primitive tribes. Rape was rare among the Aztecs, human sacrifice, however, was very common.

Psychology of the Offender. In their in-depth study, far from offering an immediate judgment of a rapist as “an oversexed male seeking a sexual outlet,” (Groth viii) “a lusty male [...] seen as a frustrated man reacting under the pressure of his pent-up needs” (2) and “a demented sex-fiend harboring insatiable and perverted desires,”(2) they are endeavoring to present the offender “as a person, a complex and troubled human being” (vii) who, generally, belongs to the group of people who “grew up under circumstances which depraved them of the civilizing influences and the rewards that mold the lives of nonrapists” (viii). Therefore, for Groth, rape – far from being solely an aggressive means of achieving one’s sexual gratification (in his study a majority of offenders do actually have wives or girlfriends and, therefore, are provided with a lot of possibilities for a consenting sexual activity) – has to be perceived as “a reaction to a psychological crisis and thus, in a dynamic sense, a symptom equivalent” (xii). Besides, it is to be understood as “a cultural, social, political, legal, and economic issue” (xiv). More importantly, however, rape emerges as “the sexual expression of power and anger” being in truth triggered more by “retaliatory and compensatory motives than by sexual ones” (2). It is thus in its essence “a pseudosexual act, complex and multidetermined, but addressing issues of hostility (anger) and control (power) more than passion (sexuality)” (2).³

Groth’s significance, as far as a thorough comprehension of sexual assault is concerned, lies in the fact of his tripartite division of rape, with each part triggered by a different stimulant (stimuli) and serving diverse objectives on the part of an offender. While analysing the psychodynamics of a sexual assault, he clearly asserts that there are three basic patterns of rape: the anger rape “in which sexuality becomes a hostile act,” (Groth 13) the

³ Apart from the abovementioned definitions of rape, Groth provides the reader with the additional notions defining a sexual assault: rape encompasses “all nonconsenting sexual encounters, whether the victim is pressured or forced,” (4) it is also “viewed as the outcome of situational forces” (4); it is invariably “a symptom of some psychological dysfunction, either temporary and transient or chronic and repetitive. It is usually a desperate act which results from an emotionally weak and insecure individual’s inability to handle the stresses and demands of his life” (5). Thanks to rape the offender “expresses and discharges a mood state of intense anger, frustration, resentment, and rage,” (12) it is likewise perceived as “reaffirmation of his manhood” (28) and heterosexuality.

power rape “in which sexuality becomes an expression of conquest” (13) and the sadistic rape “in which anger and power become eroticized” (13).

In line with Groth’s analysis of mental and situational factors prompting one to respond to life events with sexual brutality, the anger rape is associated with physical violence marked with a conscious manifestation of fury which an offender expresses both physically and verbally. The scholar emphasises that this type of delinquent wishes to “hurt and debase his victim, and he expresses his contempt for her through abusive and profane language” (Groth 14). Perceived from this perspective, sex “becomes his weapon, and rape constitutes the ultimate expression of his anger” (14) which, in the main, tends to be rather short, and of an impetuous or spontaneous character. The truth is that on account of spontaneity, “the anger rapist typically finds little or no sexual gratification in the rape” and, significantly, fulfillment “and relief result from the discharge of anger rather than from sexual gratification” (15). Being associated with revulsion and disgust rather than with sexual bliss, this form of sexual assault many a time finishes with an offender’s inability to ejaculate and achieve orgasm. Therefore, the anger rapist can be identified as the one who, by means of a sexual assault, “revenge himself for what he perceives to be wrongs done him by others, especially women” (16).

The subsequent pattern – the power rape – is visibly marked with control and authority allowing an offender to possess his victim sexually rather than debase and harm her. Since, according to Groth, for this sort of delinquent, sexuality “serves to express issues of mastery, strength, control, authority, identity, and capability” (Groth 25) a delinquent is inclined to strike a conversation with his victim so as not only to voice his sexual orders or commands but also ask her to assess his sexual skills. Groth then asserts that physical “aggression is used to overpower and subdue the victim, and its use is directed towards achieving sexual submission” (26). More significantly, however, this form of sexual assault is conducted with a

clear intention of conquest and subjugation and, so as to achieve it, an offender goes to any lengths available for him to shatter his victim's resistance and plunge her into an overpowering sense of vulnerability. "Since," as Groth puts it, "it constitutes a test of his competency, the rape experience for this type of offender is a mixture of excitement, anxiety, anticipated pleasure, and fear" (26) but, most often an expected sexual delight does not really come because the actual assault does not live up to an offender's hypersexual fantasies. Reality emerges thus as a distorted and, unavoidably, worse vision than fantasy and his criminal activity functions only a pursuit for control over an unsettled existential predicament.

The last pattern of rape is the sadistic rape in which "both sexuality and aggression become fused into a single psychological experience known as *sadism*" (Groth 44). On account of the fact that viciousness, resentment and power become entirely eroticized here, this type of reprobate "finds the intentional maltreatment of his victim intensely gratifying and takes pleasure in her torment, anguish, distress, helplessness, and suffering"(44). Hence, this sort of sexual assault is often associated with torture, murder, and sexual disfigurement of the victim's body at times assuming a ritualistic overtone. Groth affirms that as an offender is plunged into a form of an expanding agitation while assaulting and tormenting his victim, the thrill itself "is associated with the inflicting of pain" (45) enhanced by abhorrence and yearning for his victim's castigation and annihilation. In sharp contrast to two preceding forms of rape, the sadistic sexual assault is marked with a cunning premeditation. This type of offender does not simply explode in fury showing his power over his victim; he calculates everything and intentionally commits a horrid deed in the name of his sinister ideology. His victims are often perceived by him as a representation of something he wants to destroy. So, in view of those facts, it is not impossible to observe that he is capable of going to any lengths so as not to be caught. In truth, being erroneously associated with psychosis and insanity, this sort of criminal discloses an exceptionally well developed ability to mask his iniquitous

impulses; his seeming ordinariness and amiability make him be an outstandingly difficult target for the police.

III

American author Cody McFadyen (b. 1968) introduces his female protagonist, Smoky Barrett, in his 2006 novel *Shadow Man*. Barrett is an FBI profiler who (like Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander in the *Millennium* series) is physically small but unusually gifted and intelligent. She is likewise physically and emotionally scarred by the trauma of her rape. A Taiwanese-American Winnie M Li, on the other hand, penned her first (2017) novel *Dark Chapter* inspired by her own horrific experience of rape. Through the character of Vivian Tan, Winnie M Li skillfully recreates her own experience, attempting thus to comprehend the mind and conduct of her attacker.

The truth is that despite being devastated by the traumatic experience of sexual assault both Smokey and Vivian are described, prior to their rape, as exceptionally strong, determined, conscientious, intelligent, decisive, and successful women – the glamorous paragons of success and contentment. Smokey is exceptionally fast promoted in the hierarchy of FBI, “being considered to be the first female Acting Director ever” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 18) and “one of the best female agents in the Bureau's history” (21) responsible for hunting the worst of the worst criminals. Famous because of her marksmanship, she is “ranked within the top twentieth percentile, worldwide, with a handgun,” (18) being in fact, as is voiced by her psychologist Dr Peter Hillstead, “one of the strongest people” (18) he has ever met in his medical career. She even describes herself as “a female Samson”(30) capable of unearthing an enormous potential of strength and determination thanks to which she will be able to recover after the attack and eventually splinter from her miasmatic depression.

Vivian Tan, in a similar manner to Smokey Barrett, is characterized by her hard work and resolve. At the age of twenty-nine, she is presented as having “an endless torrent of work. All interesting projects – ongoing television productions, new ideas to pitch and develop, evenings spent at screenings or in post-production houses or at industry drinks events” (Li 82). Believing in the power of work – treated by her as a symbol of success and usability – her routine comprises of “that usual pre-trip crunch: emails to send, budgets to update, pitches to finalize” (83). Moreover, prior to her work in the film industry, Tan is referred to as an outstandingly clever and knowledgeable person studying for her MA in Irish Literature on “a prestigious scholarship” (70) in Cork. Furthermore, she, like Smokey Barrett, is perceived as a sexually attractive woman, as is hinted at during her trips as a writer for an American travel guidebook. At the beginning she does not seem to be aware of her attractiveness: “it is interesting, perhaps eye-opening, how men react to her: a young, obviously foreign woman travelling on her own, with long dark hair and dark eyes” (53). In short, Smokey and Vivian’s existence appear to be immaculate due to their hard work, intelligence, charisma and gorgeousness but the truth is that their lives are to be horrified and stigmatised by men by means of rape, violence and tyranny.

Smokey’s idyllic existence has been marred by Joseph Sands who, in turn, was spurred to commit not only the rape upon the agent, but also the murder of members of her family (her husband and daughter) by a mysterious persona called Jack the Ripper Jr. whose cruelty is deeply inscribed in his belief of being “a legacy,” coming from “a bloodline, from the FIRST” and “a direct descendant of Jack the Ripper” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 75) whose mission is to get rid of “whores” perceived by him as “a cancer on the face of this world” (76). He is brutality incarnate and a paragon of a sadistic rapist whom Smokey describes as “the source of [evil] in [her]” and “[her] rape” (433). The first reference to Joseph Sands and his hideous deeds is just at the beginning of the novel where the reader can observe one of the

therapeutic sessions focusing upon Smokey's gradual recovery from depression. While accentuating her seemingly herculean strength, Dr Hillstead praises Smokey: "Through an effort that could only be called superhuman you turned the tables on him, taking his life" (21).⁴

Vivian Tan's attacker, on the other hand, is a youngster, the 15-year-old Johnny Sweeney living a neglected existence on the margins of society, belonging to a community of the Irish Travellers. Despite his young age, the boy is addicted to pornography, violence and theft. He spends his time fooling around with his friends with whom he eagerly watches pornographic films and views pornographic magazines. The references to his inordinate fixation are many a time marked with vulgarity, indicating his proclivity for being a potential anger rapist. One of those descriptions appears at the beginning of the story: "He'd seen this one before, where she bends over to blow your man and you can see everything, *everything*. That gaping pink hole between her legs, so alien and bizarre. Like some extra-terrestrial mouth out of a sci-fi film, only this one comes with tits, giant ones, enough to make you hard just thinking of them" (Li 23). His obsession with pornography – perceived as a form of escapism – is undeniably enhanced by the fact that his existence has been stigmatized with the constant violence experienced by his family from his father's hands and chronic neglect – "Punch her in the head, good and hard so she listens. All Da's punches, the famous Mick Sweeney, like he did to Mam, like he does to you. Now do it to her. Teach her that lesson. Get her to fucking listen" (105). What is more, Johnny is constantly voicing his contempt directed at women, whom he generally treats as mere sexual objects: "I come here all the time. Have

⁴ Smokey's rape was so detrimental an experience for her that she is subliminally triggered to come back to the intricacies of the sexual assault while catching the criminals. In *The Darker Side*, the third book written by Cody McFadyen, the reader is informed about the rape in the following manner: "Three years ago, my team and I were hunting a serial killer, a true psycho by the name of Joseph Sands. We were very close to catching him when he broke into my home one night. He tied me to a bed and raped me again and again. He used a hunting knife on the left side of my face, carving himself into me, stealing my beauty and leaving me with a permanent relief map of pain" (McFadyen, *The Darker Side* 10). The similar message is delivered by one of the journalists later in the narrative, indicating both a common knowledge about Smokey's sexual assault and, more significantly, the ubiquitousness of those horrid deeds in the USA.

girls here all the time [...] I've raped girls three or four times in these woods before. I've raped prostitutes in Dublin" (111). His disrespect and vicious tendencies are mostly expressed prior to and during the rape of Vivian. During the confrontation he uses such insulting expressions as "Stay right there, bitch!" (103), "Fucking bitch, shut up" (104) or "Hold that fucking bitch down" (104).

There is no denying that the sexual assaults experienced by both Smokey and Vivian are indeed devastating experiences. They are even more stigmatised with the ferocity of the men's intimidation and rape since they both are forced to undergo the painful process many times. As far as Smokey is concerned she first endures her own physical rape, then she relives it while being forced to constantly voice her experience to Dr Hillstead and the third time she undergoes the process while watching a video of her friend Annie's torture and agony recorded especially for her by Jack the Ripper Jr. Analogously, Vivian suffers her own physical rape in Colin Glen Forest Park in Belfast, then she relives it while being forced to relentlessly voice her experience to Dr Greene and the third time she emotionally revives it during the trial.

Since the majority of attention in Cody McFadyen's book is channeled towards Annie King's and other women's rape conducted by Jack the Ripper Jr., Smokey's physical rape is referred to in flashbacks. They are offered to the reader not only by Smokey herself: "Sands had raped me, cut on me. Matt [her husband] was dead. I was coasting on waves of pain, surfing in and out of consciousness" (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 159). The assault is likewise hinted at by other people: "you're the agent that was attacked by that man six months ago? The one who lost her family?" (213), Dr Hillstead and Jack the Ripper Jr. who contacts Smokey by means of letters. While accentuating her seemingly herculean strength, Dr Hillstead speaks to her about the attack: "Six months ago a man you were hunting, Joseph

Sands, came after you and your family, killed your husband in front of you, raped and tortured you, and killed your daughter” (21).

The opening reference to Annie’s torture and rape is delivered in the first letter that is sent to Smokey. Here, Jack the Ripper Jr. states that she “did not die quickly. She was in much pain. She begged for her life. I found this both amusing and arousing” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 75). So as to support the authenticity of his words he left a CD-ROM with the recorded torment and sexual assault. This video and the subsequent ones do unmistakably testify to Jack the Ripper Jr. being an unadulterated sadistic rapist whose activity is permeated with cunning, cold calculation and premeditation rather than impulsiveness as it is the case with an anger offender. Smokey and her team of agents nauseatingly watch as the criminal, acting like a madman, is dancing and exulting at his deed. The torture appears to be his powerful aphrodisiac. The film is in fact a montage:

Flashes of Annie’s torture, rape, horror. The knife is what the killer uses on her, and he takes his time with it. He likes to cut slowly, and he likes to cut long. He touches her everywhere with its blade. I physically jolt as each new image flashes. Full-body spasms that make me feel like I’m being shocked by a car battery. Flash, shock, jolt, Annie getting tortured. Flash, shock, jolt, Annie getting raped. Flash, shock, jolt, he cuts, he cuts, he cuts, dear God, he won’t stop cutting. Her eyes fill with agony, her eyes fill with terror, and eventually they empty, and fill with endless gaze at nothing. Still alive, but no longer there. The killer is joyous, exultant. He is doing a rain dance, and the rain is blood. I watch as my friend dies. It is slow and awful and without dignity. By the time he is done, she is long since gone, a gutted fish (118 – 119)

The vividness of this atrocity is so overwhelming for Smokey that it is the first moment the reader observes a gradual change in the agent’s gloominess after her own rape: “Play it again, because there is a dragon inside me, and she is awakening. I need her to wake up angry” (119). It is likewise the moment the agent discloses her exceptional capability of envisioning the plausible activity conducted by the criminal at the crime scene. While analysing the probable mental disposition of Jack the Ripper Jr. she asserts that his horrid deeds, which are

permeated with sexual power and violation create “an almost unbearable, near orgasmic symphony of delicious extremes for him. [...] He isn’t just being bad. He is raping good. Fucking it to death. [...] The world is shaking, and he is its epicenter. He is climbing toward the pinnacle [...] and he throws his head back as his body shakes with an orgasm more powerful than he can stand” (134).

The similar procedure of torture and rape upon other women – treated by Jack the Ripper Jr. as despicable prostitutes whom he is sanctioned to exterminate (his trick involves coming to their homes disguised as a rat exterminator) – is being replicated in the subsequent instances of his brutality recorded in the following videos testifying to his being an indisputable sadistic rapist. Although the atrocities are conducted with regularity, Jack attempts to incorporate some differences. As far as the second video is concerned, it is entitled “This death sponsored by <http://www.darkhairedslut.com>” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 281) and his tool of torture is a bat rather than a knife. Smokey and her team observe as the murderer “begins to dance and caper, waving the bat, putting his evil to the rhythm of the song [...] And now, like it did in the video of Annie, the montage begins. All of it is done with an unhesitating brutality. [...] He puts the bat down, and climbs astride her. The rape begins. It’s brutal, designed for maximum motion. He wants to grind those broken bones, wants him fucking her to be the worst pain she’s ever felt. The rape finishes, and out comes the scalpel” (282). The following instances of Jack’s torture and rape are likewise permeated with brutality and wickedness.

Although the sexual assault endured by Vivian Tan is also brimful with violence and humiliation, what is different though is the lack of cruel calculating indoctrination and horrid ideology. Johnny is essentially bored, addicted to perversity, cunning, and constant daydreaming: “Nice legs, though. Nice and smooth. What’ll it be like to stroke them legs, push them apart, reach inside... [...] those legs, that pussy [...] No one ever comes up this

way, not this far up the glen, so she's all yours" (Li 98 – 99). In consequence, prior to the rape the reader observes the gradual process of the shooting-up of the boy's imagination and sexual eagerness climaxing in the sexual assault. While finally confronting Vivian in the park Johnny reveals his genuine objective: "*Do you like to have sex outdoors?*" (103) and his true colors: "he's suddenly feral, menacing, an angry fire alight in his pale blue eyes, and he holds out a threatening arm towards her" (103). What follows is a longish description of Vivian's struggle and Johnny's slander, brutality, intimidation, and bravado of sexual perversity. After suffocating her, Vivian is eventually pushed to the ground and the rape commences. The depiction assuming the form of two participants' inner monologues or streams of consciousness mingled together with a dialogue is worth being cited at length:

Oxygen rushing back into your lungs... but what happens now and what do you do to get out of this alive... you have no idea what this kid is or what he can do – oh, bitch, now you're mine... now's the best part, blood racing and dick pumping, getting ready for the plunge – if he gets my underwear down... no... bargain with him, offer something else think...think... "Let me give you a blow job"... start with that see if you can get him off – happy days, bitch is getting the idea now, get your lips round that, start sucking – this is disgusting... wish I could get him off with just a few licks but I'm not that good – get your tongue, lick my cock... nice... that's it, yeah, now – but don't stop there – "I wanna lick you pussy. I wanna lick you pussy – if he gets my underwear down you know what'll happen... just no, don't – "BITCH!" – fuck, he fucking punched me again... get him away, get him away from that, get him to think you're cool with this... oh gross, he's actually licking me, what the fuck is going on, we're in the middle of the woods – yeah, yeah, so this is what Chinky box tastes like, get her wet so she wants it, she wants you to slam it into her... you can't wait any longer... "Yeah, I'm gonna fuck you now , I'm gonna fuck you now" – I can't believe this is happening... this is disgusting... underwear down, all the way down, pinned down onto the mud, he's actually inside of me, that disgusting, kid's prick is inside of me but I can hardly feel it, just do whatever the fuck he wants and you can get this over with – yeah, now that's the business, slide into the bitch, "Nice tight Asian pussy" – did he just fucking sat that... this isn't actually happening – pump, pump away and get your fill of that nice, tight Asian pussy, yeah now that's it – lying on the ground, pebbles in my back and looking up at the trees... he's not paying attention anymore, maybe you can grab a rock and smash his head in... but what would that do, he's already inside you, it's too late and he'll just get violent again... just let him finish, just get it over with – now another position, bitch, "I want you to go on top" – okay I'm on top, look him in the eye, you're not scared, you're not scared, you're not going to fight him again, you just want him to fucking finish – see, see she's a horny bitch and she wants me, knew it, knew, and I'm fucking her hard and fucking grab her

titties – did he just rip my bra... fuck you my favorite bra... but just get him to come and it'll be done... talk dirty to him, talk dirty and he'll think you want this and then it'll be over... "I bet you can go all night"... did I just fucking say that...I can't believe I did it – oh yeah, see, told you she wants it, bitch was dirty all along... "I want to fuck you doggy-style. I want to fuck you doggy-style" – what kind of a twisted fuck is he... on my hands and knees now, pebbles cutting into my skin – and slam hard... harder into her from behind... shite you fell out, get it back in... "I want you to get on you back"... shite position, can't get inside her proper... what is wrong with this bitch... what else what else what else do you see in the pornos... cock getting hard just thinking about it... "I want to fuck you up the ass! I want to fuck you up the ass! no no no no not anal, I've never done anal and this is going to fucking hurt – yeah yeah, now where's the fucking hole, where is it, just ram it in, kid keeps falling out, can't even get it inside me – there it is and slam! slam! slam it home... no, it fell out again – when is this ever going to be over – back on the top and yeah this is kind of boring now, isn't it... why aren't I coming... why aren't I coming – is this kid almost finished... he's looking bored, not even dangerous anymore... just be done, just be done, just – "Do you want to go home now?" (106 – 08)

Undeniably, the description of Vivian's rape does indeed disclose a few similarities between the two perpetrators, Johnny and Jack. The most significant being the ecstatic sensation of humiliation, violence, and contempt of women aiming at shattering their dignity and confidence, plunging them into a deep chasm of oblivion and depression.

As far as Smokey's hurling into miasmatic despair is concerned, it is of significance to assert that it was triggered not only by the sexual assault and deliberate scaring of her body, but also by the loss of her beloved husband and daughter. The reader observes how she is "pierced with a pain so sudden and blinding" that she fervently prays "for death and end to pain" (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 4) treated by her as "a crucifixion of [her] heart" (5). Moreover, so as to alleviate her suffering, Smokey ponders on committing suicide, as it is justly concluded by Dr Hillstead: "I think you're trying to choose between whether to go back to work or kill yourself" (21) or even by herself: "I can't live like this, I can't live like this, no Matt, no Alexa, no love, no life, all gone, all gone and—" (24). She is constantly apprehensive: "God, I *am* afraid. All the time. I wake up afraid, I walk around afraid, I go to sleep afraid. I am a victim. I hate it. I cannot escape it" (35). She is indeed depression incarnate.

Furthermore, her despair emerges not only in a purely mental form; it is so overwhelming for her that her entire existence and even her own body is a medium through which her anguish is constantly visible: “My entire body is shaking, and my vision has started to get dark around the edges. I’m having trouble breathing, and I can feel panic building in me, a claustrophobic, hemmed-in, suffocating feeling” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 23). What’s more, her hopelessness is not limited to her home, the place of her suffering. At the beginning of the story the reader observes her mental and physical anguish while trying to return six months after the attack, to the place of her work in order to visit her friends, the team of agents. The move seems to be unbearable for her: “I clench my teeth [...] and push through the doors. They close in slow silence behind me, and I’m trapped [...] I feel exposed [...] I leave the elevator perhaps a little faster than normal. My heart is pounding. ‘Get a grip on yourself, Barrett,’ I growl. ‘What do you expect, looking like the hunchback of Notre Dame? [...] Fear rises again, replacing the nonchalance I had mustered [...] Will they accept me? Or are they going to see a broken piece in a monster mask [...] I feel panicked. [...] Run and run and run and run and run” (33). Hopefully for Smokey she overcomes her fear, comes into her office, meets her friends, is accepted, and in consequence the process of recovery rapidly accelerates.

Analogously to Smokey, Vivian is hurled into a pit of hopelessness after the sexual attack, despite the fact that the reader observes her leaving the crime scene as if nothing happened. However, the first attack of depression comes while she is examined at the Rape Crisis Centre on Ladakh Street in Belfast: “she looks straight ahead, eyes full and blank, staring at the wall and nothing more. Perhaps she should be holding up a sign with a long number in front of her. Like a Holocaust victim. Like an arrested criminal. Awaiting whatever lies ahead” (Li 132). The subsequent phase of despondency assumes the shape of a physical weakness: “She’s a shell of whom she once was, hollowed out and thinned out and devoid of

any sense [...] She feels vulnerable, skinned, and exposed, a collection of nerves and muscle and bone that can barely function together” (146). The final phase seems to be her plunging into a mental state of depression: “everything ahead is just opaque, a dark forest with no obvious path” (167) mingled with suicidal thoughts: she wants “to drift into oblivion and keep on drifting away and not have to come back to the reality of her life now” (168). Vivian is, in truth, in such an appalling disposition that that she is ironically prone to feel “shame and disgust at herself” (168) rather than at her attacker.

However, despite a seemingly excruciating hopelessness, those two women are powerful enough to return to an ordinary existence. Smokey’s process of recovery starts, as has just been hinted, with her obedience to Dr Hillstead’s behest ordering her to visit her friends at work. After the gathering she happily asserts: “I get into the car, and I realize that I had been right last night. Today had been the day. I wasn’t going to go home and blow my brains out” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 49). And this is just what she does. She starts working and is found once again in the middle of the inferno capable of either breaking her for good or facilitating the process of her recovery. Thankfully, it is the second option for the agent Smokey Barrett. This experience is connected, as previously stated, with watching the film showing her friend’s rape and agony. It is the cathartic moment during which her symbolic dragon is being gradually awoken: “I also feel something beginning to stir inside. A dragon. Something I was afraid was dead and gone, amputated from me by Joseph Sands. It’s not awake, not yet. But I feel it again, for the first time in months” (100). The dragon, symbolizing her growing resolve and determination to catch the criminal, is even more visible while Smokey interacts with Bonnie, a small girl, Annie’s daughter who has just undergone an appalling and unspeakable experience – she was brutally tied to the corpse to her dead mother for three days. While shattering her depression, Smokey affirms that “the dragon thrashes inside [her], smelling blood” (343) and it “is thrashing, roaring and gnashing her

teeth” (353). The fact is that it has not only salvaged her from the oblivion of despondency, the growing anger allows her to catch Jack the Ripper Jr. and eventually execute him.

Vivian is likewise blessed with the cathartic opportunity of splintering her depression, as it is symbolically indicated by the title of the novel per se: *Dark Chapter* proves to be indeed a menacing period of time (dark) for her but in truth it is only a finite period of time (a chapter) with an apparent beginning (rape) and finish (recovery). This opportunity, however, assumes a different shape than for Smokey. Nevertheless, it seems to be comparably painful. Vivian’s process of recovery is achieved thanks to her deliberate reliving of her sexual assault during the psychological sessions when she voices her experience to Dr Greene and finally, during a longish trial during which she is forced to vocalize her traumatic experience many times. Although she dubs herself a rape victim and a nobody, she struggles with all her resolve to shatter this anguish. Her fight could be visible in her immediate reaction so as to call for help and her stubbornness to attend the premiere of the film she has been working on. The truth is that she constantly feels anxiety and revulsion, but she is there in London with her friend. The next weeks and months are crucial for Vivian. Although the reader observes her as a constantly crying woman who perceives herself as a “Chinese girl who became a statistic [...] Devoid of identity, of individuality. An empty vessel on which they can project their preconceived notions of ‘rape victim’” (Li 194) one is enchanted with the power and purposefulness Vivian discloses during the trial. It is indeed the moment when her symbolic dragon, her anger and her rage are perceptible. As is hinted by her, thanks to her overwhelming emotions, she “is not totally dead to the world” (222). The trial and the finding of her attacker guilty of rape allows her to feel that this “is her future. And her present. Her past is no longer hers. It belonged to a different Vivian” (245). She is blessed with a final catharsis and restoration and the possibility to express her final thought after the trial: “But now it’s telling him something different. *See that? She’s saying. I just fucked you over*” (346).

IV

Summing up, it is important to accentuate that both Smokey and Vivian, despite their intelligence, cleverness and resolve, are presented as women who are subject to men's discourse of dominance, tyranny and hypersexuality. Within the intricacies of this discourse they are deemed an exceptionally unproblematic targets on account of their accessibility and seeming defenselessness. Sexual assaults, despite being conducted by men who disclose dissimilar objectives in their horrid conduct towards women, do indeed prove the theory postulated by Susan Brownmiller claiming that rape appears to be a mindful practice of terror by means of which men have attempted to keep women in a state of constant trepidation and supremacy. The psychodynamics of those two rapes do likewise follow the patterns of sexual assaults proposed by Groth who convincingly asserts that rape, by means of sexuality and brutality, is invariably indicative of psychological / social deficiencies that an offender wishes to prevail over with domination, hatred and contempt.

It seems that due to their innate position as weaker vessels both Smokey and Vivian, as well as other rape victims are at a disadvantage, being a lost cause. However, hopefully for them, the narrative voice provides them with significant possibilities to fight so as to return to health and their previous ordinary existence, shattering away the overpowering depression and despondency. Significantly, those two women's conduct does reveal much more than just a defense against their aggressors. At times, they are presented as actively attacking their rapists and by doing so, they can be inscribed into the concept of the Lucifer's Effect advocated by Philip Zimbardo, the professor emeritus of psychology at Stanford University. According to his novel concept expressed in his 2007 book entitled *The Lucifer's Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, ordinary people who do not disclose any

proclivity towards evil and criminality are capable of committing horrid atrocities if found in extreme situations, and under the influence of powerful situational forces, they can undergo a situated character transformation. Obviously, it does not mean that both Smokey and Vivian are now capable of committing appalling iniquity. It means that the sexual assaults they endured and their aftermath are so devastating for them that the women do behave differently from their hitherto demeanor.

The most striking example of such a transformation is noticeable when Smokey, believing her daughter dead, hears her screaming: “And now I was the animal, no hesitation, raising my gun, aiming for his head ... Me, shooting Sands, over and over and over, determined to shoot him till I was out of ammo [...] I think I pulled the trigger because, at the moment, I wanted the whole world to die” (McFadyen, *Shadow Man* 161 – 62, 164). She undergoes the same experience of transformation after having watched the video of Annie’s rape and torture: she “was filled with angry thoughts, sadness, and me gripping the steering wheel, imagining it was Jack Jr’s neck” (234).⁵ Analogously to Smokey, Vivian’s alteration is triggered by a devastating situational force that emerges in the shape of rage. The otherwise well-behaved and well-mannered woman is capable of articulating: “That little fucker, I’m going to snap his neck in two [...] She sees his face before her, the ice-blue eyes, the cheeky expressions. She wants to throw a solid square punch right into that freckled smirk. Split his face open. She’s never punched anyone before, never felt the urge. But now she feels it. Something vital and relentless, implacable” (Li 127 – 28). While analyzing both Smokey and Vivian’s conduct one cannot escape the creeping impression that this form of transformation emerges, as is voiced by Zimbardo “in particular situations at particular times when

⁵ Significantly, the subsequent novel written by Cody McFadyen showing Smokey’s endeavors likewise presents her as experiencing the Lucifer’s Effect. In the 2008 novel *The Darker Side*, in a flashback, her daughter’s death is shown: “I got to kill the man who killed my child. It changed nothing. My Alexa was still dead. But ... when I think of him, dying at my hand, a lioness purrs inside me, satisfied and terrible. That blood on her whiskers always tastes divine,” (McFadyen, *The Darker Side* 177) “I love that I got to kill the man who took my Matt and my Alexa from me. It pleases me forever,” (318) “I’ve done terrible things to men who probably deserved it, and I have probably enjoyed doing these things far too much at times. [...] There’s a little bit of monster in me now” (342).

situational forces play a compelling role in moving particular individuals across a decisional line from inaction to action,” (485) from depression to ordinariness, from evil to good, from death to life.

The significance of these two narratives showing two diverse women and their two dissimilar offenders lies in the fact that it proves the postulation about the universality and commonness of sexual pathologies about which too little have thus far been written as far as scientific publications are concerned. Importantly, while taking recourse to the specific and inevitably revolting “language of rape” permeating some sectors of the American literary milieu portraying sexual pathologies so widespread in the American society, those two novels offer an opportunity of analysing psychological, somatic and social aspects of this type of language through the lens of literary aesthetic, contributing significantly to the understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon of rape. Hence, those two books stand a chance of being like canaries in a coalmine indicating, due to the escalating number of sexual assaults, their growing severity (stimulated not only by the Internet and the accessibility / anonymity offered by it but also by an increasing number of psychological / social deficiencies experienced by more and more frustrated people) especially in the United States which, as is voiced by Groth, “has a far higher incidence of rape than many other civilized countries” (viii). The importance of those two books belonging to a crime fiction genre (*Shadow Man*) and an autobiographical / memoir fiction genre (*Dark Chapter*), and with both gaining enormous popularity could also rest upon the fact of their functioning like a stimulant for social action aimed at disclosing the facts about sexual pathologies. On account of their popularity and attractiveness for readers they could trigger other social endeavors or campaigns similar to the #Me Too Movement (October 2017) which has been attempting to reveal the widespread occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace or the global trend called the Weinstein effect (starting from

October 2017),⁶ according to which ordinary people are perceived as more and more courageous to accuse influential and prominent people of sexual assault.

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⁶ Harvey Weinstein (b. 1952) is an American former film producer who co-founded with his brother the entertainment company Miramax. In October 2017, after having been accused of sexual abuse, he was expelled from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. So far about 80 women have made allegations against this disgraced movie producer. Among his sexual victims there is Asia Argento (b. 1975), an Italian actress and director, and the leader of The Me Too Movement. One of the scenes in Argento's film *the Scarlet Diva* (2000) was based upon her traumatic experience of sexual assault conducted by Weinstein in 1997. On 25th May 2018 he was charged with rape.

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