

1. Thoughts on Rape

I am trying to understand rape. Being gang raped at knifepoint on Friday 18 October 1963 changed my life and my personality totally. I am also trying to understand why I am writing this. When I was undergoing therapy some years ago I found things hard to talk about. I was booked in for six sessions but I was in a bad way and ended up with over forty! Only then was I considered back on an even keel, or as even as I ever could be, anyway. But to break the barrier it was suggested that I write what had happened and my feelings at the time and since. So I did, and once I started, it was like a dam bursting. Through talking with the counsellor I delved deeper into my past to try to understand the effect that this event had had on my life since and my subsequent actions which had near catastrophic consequences. Over time this grew into a hefty book, my life laid bare, warts and all. This was eventually published as my memoir, "The Clouds Still Hang", of which more later.

At one time, when women were seen as the property of men, when a rape occurred, it was not the woman who was the victim but the male to whom she belonged, such as her husband or father. The rapist had stolen the property of the man. As the wife was seen as the property of her husband, he could not be charged with the rape of his wife, however much she refused consent. In fact the idea that consent had to be given would have seemed very strange back then. The view was that when she married him, she gave consent at that point for him to do as he wished for the duration of their marriage, that is until the first one died. Today that would seem as extreme misogyny but unfortunately such medieval ideas persist as we shall see later. Marital rape is discussed in more detail later.

Inevitably my view of rape is seen mainly through the lens of my own experience of it. Much later in life I started researching sexual offending, up to and including rape. Much of my reading done then is reflected in this book. This is not intended as an academic work although students of this field might find it useful. I am male, born so. What is called these days a cis male. Most people understandably associate rape with the violation of females and for many years the rape of a male was not recognized in UK law but was treated as a sexual assault or indecency. Only as late as 1994 was rape of a male recognized as such. Only in 2003, with updates to the law, was rape defined in gender neutral terms. Basically it defines rape as penetration of the body without consent. This can be of the vagina, the anus or of the mouth. Females can also be anally raped. In law, penetration doesn't have to be by a penis. Any non-consensual penetration is rape, even if by a finger or an object, such as a bottle or a dildo, with sexual intent, is classed as rape.

In the UK, the law now makes a distinction between penile penetration defined as rape, and assault by penetration where an object is used. In this book the term rape is used more generally. Females too can be guilty of rape, either by the use of an object or even by using coercion to force a male to have sexual intercourse.

Consent is the key. The person being penetrated must be capable of giving legally valid consent. The age of consent in the UK is now 16 for both males and females. Under that age, however willing the recipient might be, consent is not legally valid so the penetration is classed as rape in law. Consent can also be withdrawn at any time and if the sexual intercourse is continued after consent is

withdrawn it becomes rape. A common example might be where a man is using a condom as a condition of penetration but then has difficulty achieving orgasm and so decides to remove the condom and continue against the wishes of the recipient. This is then rape. Another example is when intercourse takes place when the recipient is unaware that the penetrating male is HIV positive and would not have given consent had they known.

Age is not the only factor in consent. A person who is asleep cannot give consent. A person who is drunk or drugged cannot give consent because their mental capacity is impaired, so even if they say yes, it would still be rape because the consent given is not legally valid. A person who lacks mental capacity for other reasons, such as mental health, learning difficulty, dementia etc. cannot give legal consent. A person who is coerced by whatever means cannot give valid consent. This could be emotional domination or the intended recipient is blackmailed in some way and so feel they have to comply. That is rape.

Most people will associate rape with coercion by physical force or the threat of imminent physical force. Rape is sadly all too common across the world, sometimes deliberately encouraged in conflict zones as a weapon to intimidate and control a subject population. Mainly it is females who are the victims here but the rape of men and boys is not unknown. Sometimes now these attacks are videoed and placed online to further humiliate and control the victim. There was one of a male civilian being anally raped by a Russian soldier in Ukraine with constant instruction to look at the camera so the victim's shame and humiliation was total. Of course the shame was really on the Russian rapist but victims usually don't see it that way. Perhaps later, but at the time the trauma is so great that the victim's shame is overwhelming, at times perhaps more so for male victims because the whole concept of their masculinity is shattered. Many men set great store by their feelings of masculinity and define themselves in that way. One can argue that such men have issues of self-esteem such that they need to bolster themselves in this way but that is not the issue here as far as the victim is concerned. For the rapist of course that's another matter. Rape in this context is discussed more later.

In my own case, aged 17, it was a combination of force and the threat of force. I was threatened with a knife and a sharpened bicycle chain. Less common these days, it is a brutal weapon. The edges are sharpened, presumably with a grinding wheel, and it is then used as a whip against the victim causing horrendous injury. Simply showing me this weapon was enough to terrify me and even when it was lightly and slowly dragged across my now exposed thighs it cut the skin. What happened that night was not then legally a rape although now it would be.

In my memoir I describe the rape and its aftermath. The context is that a couple of years earlier I had confronted these three who dominated the school bus. The three were the leader Bruce and his sidekick Neville, both in the same school year as me. Bruce's younger brother, David, always tagged along and was almost as bad. They were attacking a younger boy who had annoyed them and when the leader was about to jump on the prone boy's head I lost it and hit the leader hard. His sidekick tried to stab me with a knife, putting a slit in my school blazer and just piercing the skin. At this final straw, the driver stopped the bus and threw them off, banning them from further travel. As they left, Bruce threatened me with retribution. After a while I gave it no further thought. But a

couple of years later, after leaving the cinema in the city centre and seeing my then girlfriend on to her bus, they saw me.

The next two sections are an excerpt from my memoir. I changed a lot of names and in this I am Simon Scott. I was going out with a girl I had met on a holiday whom I here call Ruth. We were in the same school year but at different schools and were both studying English Literature for A level. One of the set books was William Golding's "Lord of the Flies".

There are references to Daniel. He was a boy two years older than me with whom I had formed a deep and loving relationship from primary school onwards, and we later became lovers. We were parted when my parents split up and with my mother, I moved away. He was on my mind a lot (still is more than six decades later) and I was missing him. Diane was a former girlfriend. My mother was then in a relationship with Ken.

The rape is described in some detail. It was a hard chapter to write but I found, as with much of the memoir, that the more I wrote, the more the details, even conversations, surfaced from the deep recesses of my memory. In the end it was quite cathartic, getting it off my chest, out into the world.

If you, the reader, find section 2 hard going, feel free to skip to the next two sections.