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Denying rape culture: A response to Luke Gittos

Johanna Stiebert

Abstract

The concept of rape culture has been firmly established in feminist discourse since the 1970s. This paper examines and challenges the arguments of rape culture deniers, with particular emphasis on one prominent UK representative, Luke Gittos, author of *Why rape culture is a dangerous myth: From Steubenville to Ched Evans* (2015). This article argues that Gittos's case affirms rather than denies the toxicity and ubiquity of rape culture.

Key words

Rape culture; Luke Gittos; rape myths; victim blame; moral panic

Earlier this year, I was searching online for publications about rape culture. One particular title caught my eye: Luke Gittos's book, *Why rape culture is a dangerous myth: From Steubenville to Ched Evans* (2015). The book cover blurb describes Gittos as a solicitor with 'extensive experience in defending allegations of rape and sexual violence'. He is also the legal editor for *Sp!ked*, a UK internet magazine with a libertarian ethos, where he writes regular features about the (dangerous) legal and social implications of rape culture discourse (e.g. Gittos, 2018a, 2018b). Rape culture is commonly defined as a culture where rape and other expressions of sexualised violence occur with some frequency, and where societal attitudes about gender and sexuality normalise or trivialise this violence. The title of Gittos's book therefore made me deeply uncomfortable, and before I even read it, I knew I was unlikely to agree with his core thesis: namely, that rape culture is not real, or, if it does exist, that it is a considerably exaggerated and sensationalised phenomenon designed to propel a toxic ideology.

Gittos and I are not aligned in our views – but why only read literature with which we agree? In my profession, teaching at a University, I always emphasise to students that texts and topics can be interpreted in multiple ways and that we must be open to changing our own opinions when confronted with a convincing counter-argument. I expect my students to read widely, debate openly, and learn to argue their case after listening to alternative viewpoints. I tell them it matters less whether or not I agree with them than that they can articulate and justify a coherent case. Before reading Gittos’s book, I looked at its (mostly positive) reviews on Amazon.co.uk, which praised it for bringing a ‘cool head and the light of reason... [to] a heated topic’, for being ‘clear and well argued’, ‘courageous and vital’, ‘calm, level-headed and sympathetic’ and for confronting ‘fashionable orthodoxies’ and ‘the tyranny of political correctness’. Personally, the topic of rape makes me feel anything but calm and level-headed, but I was curious to read a book whose author offered to challenge my own politics and values.

After reading *Why rape culture is a dangerous myth*, I still disagree with Gittos’s central thesis. I do not find his argumentation ‘clear and well argued’ or consistently ‘level-headed’, not least because his own definition of rape culture is so problematic. The term ‘rape culture’ typically serves as shorthand for a network of complex ideas, which require careful delineation and qualification – something lacking in Gittos’s discussion. What follows here, then, is a response to the book informed by my own examination of rape culture discourse, and its relationship to wider feminist debate.

Rape culture scepticism and denial: Situating Gittos in wider context

Although I am focusing in this article on Gittos’s book, I should note that his is not a lone voice in the rape culture debate. There are other prominent figures (claiming to speak from both feminist and non-feminist perspectives) who remain sceptical about the social reality of rape culture, dismissing it as ‘hysteria’ (McElroy, 2016), ‘ridiculous’ (Paglia, 2015), and a

troubling source of moral panic (Hoff Sommers, 2014). While these writers insist that sexual violence is a horrific crime warranting a serious response, their emphasis on individualism and libertarianism leaves them deeply sceptical about the phenomenon of rape culture – both its existence and the function that it serves in contemporary feminist discourse. According to Wendy McElroy, ‘rape culture is a wildly successful fiction created by PC feminists’ that ‘engender[s] a climate of fear’ (2016, p. 2). This echoes Christine Hoff Sommers, who warns readers of ‘conspiracy feminists’, whose rape culture rhetoric breeds only chaos and mob justice: ‘They claim innocent victims, undermine social trust, and teach us to doubt the evidence of our own experience’ (2014).

Situated in this wider context, Gittos’s argument sounds familiar; he too suggests that the phenomenon of rape culture derives from ‘the hysterical climate that has arisen around rape’ (2015, p. 3), which is fed by ‘panicked news stories’ (p. 2). Such a climate, he argues, has fostered the belief that sexually aggressive behaviour has become normalised and therefore more likely to occur. This belief, however, is ‘nonsense’ (p. 9), according to Gittos, ‘[either] demonstrably false or based on extremely questionable evidence’ (p. 7). Instead he claims that rape is neither endemic nor terribly common, and when it does occur, it is treated seriously enough (or perhaps a little too seriously) by the judicial system. Rape culture, he argues, has nothing to do with rape per se, but is designed to facilitate the ‘fervent intervention by the state in our private and intimate lives’ (p. 9). Because of such intervention, more incidents that are not actually rape are called rape, with the result that intimacy becomes increasingly patrolled, and anxieties about sexual violence are perpetuated, thereby sustaining the myth of rape culture that created these anxieties in the first place.

Gittos also claims that rape culture proponents ‘rely heavily on personal accounts of those involved in rape cases’ (2015, p. 12) and so makes the decision (‘boldly’) to present only ‘the facts’ and ‘objective substance’, rather than reciting ‘endless details about people’s

experiences' (pp. 13, 14). Gittos's decision not to treat the testimonies of rape survivors, or those who work with them, as suitable sources is worth noting here; contrasting these testimonies to 'objective' and factual information (which in his case, is often his own anecdotes of conversations with friends and fellow-lawyers), he reinforces the pervasively articulated misperception that rape survivors cannot be trusted to tell the truth, or are likely to make false or exaggerated accusations. This misperception is a common trope in rape culture discourse, which serves to undermine and silence survivors' testimonies and experiences. Moreover, Gittos is selective in his choice of 'facts'. He either ignores or is dismissive of recent major UK police investigations into various widespread sexual abuse cases involving celebrities, children's home care workers, and clergy, as well as the numerous and long-ignored cases of on-street grooming and child sexual abuse that have been reported over the past decade in a number of English cities, including Derby, Rochdale, Rotherham, and Oxford. Instead, the stories that he does choose to include appear to be carefully curated to suit his central argument. He insists that his interest lies less in rape or rape victims per se, than in 'rape culture' (which he places in inverted commas to suggest the spuriousness of the term). Rape culture, he claims, 'bears little resemblance to the reality of rape' (p. 16); yet he has little to say about this 'reality'. And that is the most serious weakness of this book.

Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics

Gittos's treatment of rape statistics comes near the start of his book, and is worth noting, as it demonstrates once again his complicity with rape culture discourses, which construct non-consensual sexual behaviour as acceptable or normative. Citing the 2013 Crime Survey, which states an estimated 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped every year (Ministry of Justice, Home Office, & Office for National Statistics, 2013; cited by Rape Crisis England & Wales, 2018), he suggests that this larger figure is grossly inflated (2015, p. 23) and a 'fixation' for rape culture advocates (pp. 27, 36).¹ Scrutinising the Crime Survey which

produced these statistics, he argues that some of the behaviours and scenarios included in the survey questions do not necessarily constitute an act of rape (as it is defined under the law), and thus ‘the figure of 85,000 potentially includes as victims people who shouldn’t be’ (p. 23). He then gives a number of examples of these non-rape scenarios, including various forms of ‘perfectly ordinary relationship behaviour’ where things might get ‘a bit frisky’ (pp. 23-24). Yet this raises the question: who gets to determine what constitutes ‘frisky’ behaviour versus sexual assault? If women and men identify one or more of their own sexual experiences as non-consensual, if they feel that they have been assaulted, who is Gittos to redefine these experiences as ‘perfectly ordinary’? And what does it say about the culture in which Gittos lives if non-consensual sexual encounters are identified as ‘ordinary’ or acceptable forms of sexual behaviour? Surely such a culture is definitive of a rape culture; Gittos’s definition of acceptable sexual relationships therefore does nothing to deny the validity of rape culture, but rather affirms it. He dismisses the relevance of rape victims’ experiences and the experiences of those professionals (e.g. health care workers, social services staff, and police officers) who often act as first responders to cases of sexual assault.

What is more, Gittos fails to engage with the common assertion made by people working in these support services that rape statistics are more likely to be much higher than those collected through official surveys. Granted, reliable rape statistics are difficult to obtain, not least because rape is emotionally fraught terrain.² Yet Rape Crisis England & Wales reported that they responded to over 179,000 calls to their helpline during a 12-month period spanning 2017-18; they also offered specialist services to over 78,000 individuals and provided in excess of 650,000 sessions of specialist support, including advocacy and counselling (Rape Crisis England & Wales, 2018). These statistics, when compared to the figures cited in the Crime Survey, strongly suggest that rape is under-reported, not over-reported as Gittos claims. Moreover, the same report that Gittos is referring to admits that a

‘high proportion’ of sexual offences are not reported to the police; police-recorded crime statistics can therefore only provide ‘a partial picture of the extent of sexual offences’ (Ministry of Justice et al., 2013, p. 22). Rape Crisis England & Wales estimates that only 15% of those who experience sexual violence report it to the police, while only 5.7% of reported rape cases end in a conviction (Rape Crisis England & Wales, 2018). Gittos, of course, roundly dismisses such statistics. While he insists that there needs to be ‘an objective and impartial judgement on the evidence’ offered by rape statistics (2015, p. 31), he appears reluctant to engage with evidence that casts doubt on his own assertions.

Rape culture and the law

Gittos is not a rape apologist: he is careful to point out that rape constitutes a ‘hideous criminal offence’ (2015, p. 15). At the same time, though, he locates the ‘dangerous myth’ of rape culture in the state of our society: namely, a society of people ‘whose members have become fundamentally anxious about relying on their own judgments about intimate life’ (p. 60). Gittos complains that ‘the law has expanded significantly around rape’ to the extent that its ‘regulation of sexual etiquette’ increasingly interferes in personal relationships (p. 14; cf. p. 19). He laments that laws addressing domestic violence and violence against women and girls targets ‘what once would have been considered perfectly ordinary intimate behaviour’ (p. 43). Again, his repeated use of words such as ‘sexual etiquette’ and ‘intimate’ serves to frame potentially abusive and non-consensual behaviours as a normative, or even desirable part of human relationships.

Gittos also sees great potential for harm in Clare’s Law (also known as the Domestic Violence Closure Scheme 2014), which allows members of the public to apply to the police for information about a person’s previous convictions for violence (2015, pp. 43-44). He likewise finds it disturbing that both stalking and ‘controlling or coercive behaviour’ in an ‘intimate’ relationship are now criminalised (pp. 44-45). Clare’s Law, as Gittos explains, is

named after Clare Wood, who was murdered by her ex-partner, George Appleton, in 2009. Gittos does acknowledge that Appleton had a prior history of violence against women; the aim of the law was therefore to protect persons from violence, intimidation, and harassment by giving them greater access to relevant information. Yet despite acknowledging the rationale and history of Clare's Law, Gittos still suggests that:

Anyone who claims that they have never controlled or coerced their partners, even in a way which has a 'serious' effect on them, is likely to be lying. It would be hard to coordinate meal times or balance family budgets if you didn't have some degree of control over your partner's behaviour ... Anyone who has been in love is likely to have gone at least some way to behaving in a manner which could be defined as stalking ... But the law as drafted is drawn so widely that many perfectly normal aspects of intimate behaviour could be caught (pp. 45-46).

Here, Gittos seems once more to be downplaying the potential for violence within intimate relationships, not to mention normalising coercive and controlling behaviour as a natural part of family life, or being 'in love'. Yet in England and Wales, there are around two million reports of domestic abuse each year, while on average, two women are killed every week by a current or former partner (Office of National Statistics, 2016). And, while Gittos admits that domestic violence is a 'serious problem', he continues to complain about the 'significant state involvement in the most intimate areas of our lives' (2015, p. 47). Again, the language of intimacy and violence are intertwined in his discussion, as though the latter were simply part and parcel of the former. While he acknowledges that rape is a heinous crime, he nonetheless chips away at what constitutes rape, suggesting that even unwanted and non-consensual sex might not actually qualify. Such an assertion lies at the heart of rape culture.

Rape culture and the judicial system

In the third chapter of his book, Gittos pursues further the topic of rape and the law, noting that ‘many more situations can be classed as rape today than could be thirty years ago’ (2015, p. 63). He argues that any increase in conviction rates for crimes of sexual violence are not a cause for celebration, but rather laments the propensity of feminists to equate convictions with ‘victories’ and acquittals with ‘defeats’. This, he suggests, constitutes an abandonment of the ‘objective and impartial administration of justice’ (pp. 62-63). For Gittos, the odds are stacked in favour of rape complainants and against rape defendants. He also suggests that ‘those who claim that we live in a “rape culture” argue that the justice system ignores rape’ (p. 63; cf. p. 86). This is an overstatement at best; few would argue that the justice system ‘ignores’ rape entirely, but it has to be acknowledged that rape is still underreported, that there are high attrition rates as rape cases are investigated, and that when rape cases go to court, a very low number result in a conviction.³ This low conviction rate is in large part due to the nature of the crime. Most often in rape cases there are no independent witnesses or (unlike other types of assault) CCTV data, which can make it difficult for juries to navigate two different statements concerning a sexual encounter. Yet studies also suggest that juries are influenced in their decision-making by commonly-held misperceptions about rape, including the belief that rape victims are ‘asking for it’, that women frequently make up false rape allegations, and that if the complainant did not fight back, the encounter must have been consensual. Jurors who hold these stereotypical attitudes towards rape are more likely to judge defendants as ‘not guilty’ (Dinos, Burrowes, Hammond, & Cunliffe, 2015; Pierson, 2006; Ellison & Munro, 2009; Temkin & Krahé, 2008). Gittos, however, fails to engage with this issue.

Another topic to come under Gittos’s scrutiny is the thorny issue of consent. He appears squeamish about the idea of ‘consent classes’ for young people, considering them to be a sinister incursion on privacy and intimacy. Consent, he argues, is ‘an organic and deeply

human process, the obtaining of agreement from another human being', not something that needs to be taught (2015, p. 57). He then goes on to discuss the complexity of ascertaining 'reasonable' sexual consent, arguing again that laws such as the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (which attempts to define consent) are intrusive, constituting 'a thorough legislative assault' by the state on people's private and family lives (p. 64).

Gittos uses a number of case studies to make his point, including that of Benjamin Bree, who was convicted in 2006 of raping a heavily intoxicated woman. His conviction was overturned the following year by the UK Court of Appeal, after three judges determined that the woman was still capable of consent (as Bree had claimed) despite her intoxication. Gittos characterises this case as a 'drunken, regrettable incident between two young people ... the sort of encounter which must happen regularly at campuses up and down the country' (2015, p. 72). The regularity of sexual assault on campus is certainly not in doubt, and few of these 'encounters' typically end up in court. But this is surely not a reason to dismiss such behaviour as merely 'regrettable'. Gittos also voices his disquiet about those cases (such as the one involving Bree) where the defendant's responsibility to ensure they obtain consent is taken into consideration by the court. The fact that the case even came to court, he argues, 'shows the impact of the expansion of the remit of rape' (p. 73). Yet surely consent must remain central to our understanding of what does and does not constitute sexual assault. It is, admittedly, a hugely complex topic, but Bree's case, and the Court of Appeal decision to overturn his conviction, emphasise the need to ask urgent questions about how consent is being defined, both by individuals and the law. Gittos's seeming discomfort with judicial considerations of consent only affirms rape culture discourse, which undermines the importance of consent, or regards non-consensual sex as little more than a 'regrettable' encounter. This is affirmed by his claim that cases like Bree's come to court only 'because of the panic around rape and rape culture', which criminalises 'youthful experimentation' (p.

75). Again, Gittos conflates non-consensual sex (or at least sex where participants' consent remains uncertain) with natural and acceptable sexual behaviour, thereby dismissing the centrality of consent within healthy relationships, and treating concerns about campus rape as little more than the panicked reactions of hysterical feminists to a mythical rape culture. He also fails to consider the many cases of unequivocal sexual violence reported with depressing regularity, which cannot and ought not be smoothed over with recourse to sexual 'experimentation', be it youthful or otherwise.

Rape culture and moral panic

In the fourth chapter of his book, Gittos discusses what he labels once more as 'the absurd moral panic around rape and rape culture' (2015, p. 78). Again, he suggests that those who subscribe to rape culture are 'hysterical, unthinking', 'deeply censorious' (p. 78), and prone to 'violent and unthinking responses to individual cases' (p. 91). What is more, they are 'navel-gazing' narcissists, who have had a 'complete loss of moral perspective' (p. 93), and are therefore intolerant of 'any attitude that is seen to offend or even challenge the contemporary consensus around rape' (p. 78). Quite what this 'consensus' entails remains unclear.

Until now, Gittos has not attended to racialised dimensions in rape discourse, only mentioning it in passing with reference to a 2010 Ministry of Justice report that claims there is 'no evidence for racial bias against black [rape] defendants, even in all-white juries' (Gittos, 2015, p. 35). Counter-evidence, of which plenty exists (e.g. Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, & Meissner, 2005), is not referred to, let alone discussed. Gittos then suggests that racist discourse underpins 'the logic of the contemporary rape culture argument' (2015, p. 80); he draws connections between 'the racist fear-mongers of the past and the feminist fear-mongers of today' (p. 83). Now certainly, as a number of feminist writers have noted, some consent

discourses have and continue to be informed by racialised assumptions surrounding sexual violence. As Rhiannon Graybill argues:

In the contemporary USA, as well as Canada and Europe, the victim of sexual assault is imagined as a white woman; rape is figured as a threat not just to women, but to whiteness ... Furthermore, the imagined whiteness of the ideal rape victim is bound up with the implied blackness or brownness of the imagined rapist. Protecting (white) women from rape means protecting them from (black) men (Graybill, 2018).

Without doubt, feminist discussions of rape and rape culture ought to be located in an intersectional framework, which considers the ways that race, sexuality, and other vectors of identity (including class and ability) shape consent and rape culture discourse. At the same time, however, Gittos's claim that all rape culture narratives are based on a 'racist dynamic' is unfounded, and fails to consider the work of feminist scholars whose interrogation of rape culture is firmly rooted in an intersectional approach (e.g. Crenshaw 1994; McClintock, 1995; McGuire, 2011; Vidal and Hawthorne, 2017).

Gittos's analysis of rape culture 'hysteria' is further grounded in his claim that the concept of rape culture is simply a mirage – an imagined phenomenon with no basis in reality. He admits that feminists in the 1970s and 1980s did have cause to complain about the treatment of rape victims, as 'there were real forces to battle against which prevented the effective prosecution of rape' (2015, p. 85). Campaigners were therefore able 'to identify objective political realities' (p. 86) and act upon them. Today's feminists, however, are confronted by 'the absence of those realities', and in order to justify the existence of rape culture, they 'have to create their own realities' (p. 86). By making this claim, Gittos shuts down any debate about rape as a serious contemporary issue that demands social, political, and legal attention. Statistics and testimonies published by Rape Crisis England & Wales, which confirm the ubiquity of rape and sexual assault in the United Kingdom, are dismissed

by Gittos as ‘a deeply personal, subjective conception of what constitutes “culture”’ (p. 87). Once again, Gittos reiterates those discourses that serve to sustain the reality of rape culture, where rape victims’ testimonies are dismissed as irrelevant or false, and their experiences of sexual violence are erased.

Rape culture and media hysteria

In the final chapter of his book, Gittos takes on social and other online media for spreading rape culture hysteria by disseminating information about rape allegations. Such ‘online tribunals’ (2015, p. 107), he points out, provide neither justice nor the truth. At best they are ‘a very weak form of therapy’ (p. 108) or ‘hashtag justice’ (p. 111).

It is not difficult to think of valid examples that would substantiate Gittos’s claim here. Social and other online media come with the potential to spread images and stories rapidly and widely, regardless of their veracity. And certainly, what gets widely disseminated is not always balanced or factual. For Gittos, however, such tendencies have led to ‘blindly acknowledging the status of [rape] complainants as victims’ even before the defendant has been properly tried and found guilty in a court of law (2015, p. 110). He argues that ‘for many of those who believe that we live in a rape culture, allegations are automatically assumed to be true’ (p. 122). Moreover, ‘When you believe in a rape culture you don’t believe in innocence, you merely believe in those rapists who have been caught and those who have “gotten away with it” because of the endemic influence of toxic cultural misogyny’ (p. 122). Gittos’s claim here is unfounded, inflammatory, and sweeping – rather like the online media wildfires to which he objects.

The principle of innocent until proven guilty is, nevertheless, an important one. As I mentioned earlier, in rape cases, proof can be difficult to obtain, because it can come down to two disparate accounts of one incident that is rarely witnessed by a third (impartial) party. But it is unclear why Gittos appears more reluctant to trust the allegation of a rape claimant

than the protestation of innocence of an alleged perpetrator. Moreover, his claim that those who ‘believe in’ rape culture will never believe in a defendant’s potential innocence is too much of a straw man argument to be taken seriously. People who insist on the reality of rape culture simply want assurance that the criminal justice system does handle each rape complaint fairly, so that rapists are convicted for their crimes and rape victims do get the justice they deserve. Current statistics (e.g. from the United Kingdom, United States, and Aotearoa New Zealand) which indicate very low levels of rape convictions do nothing to reassure us that this is currently the case (see n.3 below). There is therefore genuine concern that judicial systems and legal processes do not take sexual violence seriously, but instead, like Gittos, rely on rape myths to reframe rape as an accepted form of sexual behaviour, and to cast doubt on the testimonies of those who have experienced rape.

Concluding Comments

It is easier to dismiss rape culture if you have white skin, a voice people will listen to, and financial security, plus the sense of privilege and entitlement that often come with these. It is no accident that on-street groomers and sex-traffickers target people who are vulnerable on account of their gender, age, class, (dis)ability, and race, and who are deprived of a voice, social status, or economic autonomy and power. Their stories and their vulnerability are not in Gittos’s field of vision. While he acknowledges that rape is a terrible crime, and doubtless has empathy for rape victims, he gives neither a platform to their voices nor credence to their stories. Indeed, his efforts to dismiss the reality of rape culture only serve to undermine the testimony of those who speak out about their rape. Drawing on a number of myths and misperceptions about sexual violence (which lie at the heart of rape culture discourse), he dismisses statistics and personal testimonies which affirm the ubiquity of rape, while reframing certain acts of non-consensual sex as harmless and ‘frisky’ forms of sexual experimentation, which ought not to be regulated by law.

Gittos asserts that his book ‘is not about rape ... This book is about the contemporary panic around “rape culture” that ... often bears little resemblance to the reality of rape’ (2015, pp. 15-16). But is it even possible to talk about rape culture without also talking about the ‘reality of rape’? Rape does not occur in a vacuum – it takes place within cultural contexts that allow it to happen in the first place, contexts that invalidate the centrality of consent within healthy sexual relationships, or cast doubt on victims’ testimonies, or treat non-consensual sex as normative. The ways that rape is understood, characterised, depicted, responded to, and addressed in law and the public domain all help to shape the cultural context in which rape occurs; in turn, cultural contexts give meaning to the phenomenon of rape, influencing how it is perceived, portrayed, and received. If people are deeply concerned about cultures that foster the ‘hideous criminal offence’ of rape (p. 15) – cultures that downplay the importance of sexual consent and undermine the reality and severity of rape – that is surely understandable. It is not, as Gittos claims, the result of feminist hysteria or unfounded moral panic. Rape law reform is not a symptom of unnecessary state interference in people’s personal lives, but rather an attempt by the state and judiciary to ensure the crime of rape is treated with the seriousness it deserves.

Of course, any discussion of rape culture must acknowledge that its meaning will vary depending on the cultural location in which it occurs. Rape flourishes in vastly different contexts, and carries multiple meanings that are rooted within these contexts. How we understand the rape culture of a war zone (where rape is used as a strategy of targeted terrorisation and intimidation) will be different from our conceptualisation of rape culture in non-conflict localities. Similarly, societies that are rooted in a legacy of colonialism (such as Aotearoa New Zealand) will give rise to a rape culture that is inherently shaped by that legacy, with the result that indigenous women become statistically more likely to be victims of sexual violence.⁴ Feminist understandings of rape culture therefore recognise that

discourses of rape are always contextualised, and that rape is always given meaning through the locality in which it occurs. Writers such as Gittos – and others, including McElroy, Hoff Sommers, and Camille Paglia – attempt to refute this claim; yet in a sense, Gittos’s arguments only affirm what he seeks to deny. Rape cultures are cultures where rape victims are denied a voice, where their testimonies are dismissed as inconsequential, and where non-consensual sex is normalised. This is the culture which Gittos speaks out of, and this is the culture that he evokes in his debate. He may deny the existence of rape culture, but his book betrays the fact that he is there, right in its midst.

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Notes

- 1 Gittos pays little attention to male rape throughout the book.
- 2 Statistics for child abuse (sexual and otherwise) and for domestic violence are also difficult to obtain. I discuss elsewhere the disparate statistics pertaining to incest, focusing most closely on father-daughter incest. In the course of this I examine the disturbing potential of Hacking’s (1999) argument that incidence of child sexual abuse and incest are grossly exaggerated. There is affinity in terms of incest denial and rape culture denial (Stiebert, 2016, pp.35–43).
- 3 Conviction rates for rape tend to be far lower than other crimes. For an in-depth discussion of the causes of chronically low conviction rates in Aotearoa New Zealand, see Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2009) and Triggs, Mossman, Jordan, & Kingi (2009).
- 4 Māori girls and women are nearly twice as likely to experience sexual violence as the general population in Aotearoa New Zealand (Mayhew & Reilly, 2009). Pasifika and migrant women are also at a statistically greater risk of being victims of sexual violence (NZ Ministry of Justice, 2009).

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