

Coverage of the Rape of a "Celebrity Victim"

By the Israeli Daily Press

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Abstract

In addition to the media's ability to increase public awareness towards social affairs, the media constructs images and meanings to a certain topic. Its control over the public discourse allows it to supervise relevant issues and, while doing so, silence other perspectives and alternative definitions of the matter. This article examined the journalistic coverage of the rape of the Israeli Miss World, Linor Abargil, and the presentation techniques used to tell the story of what the literature refers to as a "celebrity victim". In order to examine the manner in which the media covered this event, a total of 28 news articles were analyzed. The excessive coverage of the rape incident of the "celebrity victim", in both secular and religious newspapers, is a prominent example to the denial and exclusion of regular women from the media. Resorting to anecdotal and individualistic attention to a celebrity victim of rape, the media fail to consider the systemic sexual violence that characterizes patriarchal relations and the domination of men over women.

Keywords: Rape, celebrity victim, mass media, Israel.

1. Introduction

Mass media has taken a main role in the construction of social affairs and identification of villains in our society (Koren & Efrat, 2008). Printed media often tends to present various events with exaggeration and sensitization by creating stereotypes. Bennet (1982) claims that the media serves as a "distorted mirror" of reality, whether due to exaggeration (used for amplification) or by diminution (for minimization). The process of selection, of filtering facts, is one of the basic foundations used in the establishment of this "distorted mirror". Hall (1987) explains that this process relies on two main components: simplification and comparison. Simplification includes the presentation of a simplified, shallow description through focusing in the immediacy, dramatization and personalization of the presented events. In addition to this process of simplification, the media uses comparison to different places and events, which allows it to provide possible future scenarios and development of a current event. Crime and violent crime in particular, is present by the media in a way that sets the borders and characteristics of the force division in a given society. The preoccupation of the media in violent crimes provides the portraits of both victims as well as offenders. This

preoccupation teaches us greatly of one's place in the invasive order which organizes social processes (Carter & Weaver, 2003).

Harcup and O'Neill (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001) try to address the issue of how do different events, including cases of crime or deviance, become news. According to them, in order for an event to become newsworthy it must qualify to at least one of the following demands: relations to central powers, celebrities, entertainment, surprise, good or bad news, stories perceived as central or relevant or in case the newspaper's agenda correlates with the organization's agenda.

Jewkes (2004) explains that the methods used by the media to design ideas, values, opinions and behaviors can be perceived as negative or positive, depending on our own perspective. Nevertheless, we expect that the printed media will provide us with the facts of a certain event and that it will represent the general crime status; however, in reality, this is not the case. The crime news cover certain events and almost entirely disregards others: thus, although the media is described as the "window to the world" or as a mirror that reflects real life, it would be more accurate to say that the media is a thought projected through a prism and reflects the world which it represents or blocks the world it chooses not to represent.

The mediated depiction of "reality" is formed through the manufacturing process performed by news agencies and decision making structural elements, weighed by those who create the news. All of these elements can influence the image of crime, criminals and justice system in the eyes of the public. Another central element that molds the news production process is how people involved in the subject evaluate the presumptions existing among the public of consumers (Cavaglioni & Shoham, 2012). As a result, there are processes of selection, sorting of new topics and preference of specific stories over others. These processes – accompanied by editing work, preferential selection of certain phrases and terms as well as the visual image that will accompany the story, decide the leading tones and shades of the story. The process is called "setting the agenda"; initiated in the editors' rooms, it describes the selection of a small number of events out of thousands that occur each and every day. These selected few will allow the transmission of meaning and interpretation realizations. The interpretations create a type of correlation between certain behaviors and certain people. Thus, this approach strengthens the "logical" and "Accepted" perception as well as the solutions deduced from it. Since not every crime event ends up in the news, there is a long line of events, in addition to those that turned into news stories, that receive few if any media coverage or that are modestly presented next to the events perceived as "newsworthy", the stories considered worthy of staying included in the daily agenda in the future as well (ibid.).

Cultural and social perceptions regarding deviation and deviant individuals are constructed or destructed by the character of their media interest. The great strength achieved by media in the 21st century has led to the fact that the social reality and the representation of it in the media are almost indiscernible. The mass media creates public arenas, which construct the images of normal and deviant perceptions. These perceptions rule the social reciprocal relationships and allow individuals to present explanations perceived as "valid and reasonable" regarding what happened in the event in question and what must be done about it. In addition to the media's ability to increase public awareness and to promote the debate and treatment in social affairs, the media constructs images and meanings to a certain topic (Best, 1999). Its control over the public discourse allows it to supervise relevant issues and, while doing so, silence other perspectives and alternative definitions of the matter (Beckett, 1996). The presentation of stories regarding violence towards women has become common crime news and so they are more easily disregarded, since they have become familiar and regular. The media's choice to stereotypically present unrepresentative cases blurs the actual intensity and scope of this very real, daily problem.

This article wishes to examine the daily press coverage of the rape of the Israeli Queen of Beauty, Linor Abargil, and the presentation techniques used in the rape story of what the literature refers to as a "celebrity victim" (Schlesinger, 2006).

1.1 Violence towards Women in Mass Media

Describing violence, especially sexual violence in the media, is deeply rooted in the circumstances, those who take part in them and the myths regarding these acts (on attitudes towards violence against women see; Nayak, Byrne, Martin and Abraham, 2003). Benedict (1992) says that when the media reports rapes, it tends to define the raped woman by one of two categories: either the innocent virgin who was attacked by a villain and deviant stranger or the promiscuous woman, whose looks or behavior led to her attack. Both of these categories perpetuate the concept that women can be Madonnas or whores. Cuklanz (2000) claims that particularly this dramatization of sexual violence in the media and the adversarial and individualistic construction of news reports excludes constructed explanations for these attacks and silences discussions on the wider topics of power and gender.

For instance, portraying abusive husbands as monsters, demons or as insane people categorizes domestic abuse as personal and isolated events and attributes the violence to an individual pathology of men and women who bring on these kinds of random incidents, and therefore avoids discussing constructed social and unequal gender hierarchy, allowing the violence to continue (Cabaglion & Shoham, 2012).

When Negbi (2009) analyzes rape stories in the Israeli Supreme Court, she puts forward that the rape of a spouse, for example, is perceived as lesser of evils in the cases of an acquainted rapist. The rape of a wife isn't perceived as a criminal act, but as another event that happens in stressful marriages, as a private family dispute. Denying and minimizing the rape of a partner as a criminal act is supported by the narrative, which repeatedly puts the blame, directly or indirectly, on the woman who refuses to have sex with her husband. Flipping the roles between the rapist and the victim presents the raping partner as the victim and the woman as a partner that encouraged and contributed to the act against her. Kamir (2002) claims that the process of denial and exclusion is part of a wider narrative, that within its discourse the violence of a "loving" man towards his "love" isn't perceived as regular violence, one that should be treated harshly. The main narrative in the wife-rape stories is "it never happened and even if it did, she deserved it". Different techniques include silencing, exclusion, and alienation allow the continuation of categorizing the assault of a sex partner as a local and particular story, which facts are unclear (on the role of rape myths see also; Kahn & Mathie, 2000; Peteron & Muehlenhard, 2004).

It seems that the media's inclination to exaggerate stories by focusing on defining that monstrous, threatening unusual characteristics of the "true" attacker permit the continuation of denial and the silencing of the wide spread phenomenon's dimensions and severity.

Current research sees sexual aggression as a social phenomenon that is deeply connected to the relationships of power in society and isn't just a coincidental chain of events derived from the uncontrollable sexual passion of non-normative people. Some researchers (such as Weaver, Carter and Stanko, 2000) even claim that these sexual assaults are the central social tool used to limit women's freedoms of movement, action and expression. The analysis of the process of social construction of violence towards women is very important to the construction of this approach.

Lahav (2009) suggests focusing the discussion on the concept of framing. Framing is a form of wording choices, which includes a dimension of knowledge and a dimension of emotion that give a certain interpretation of the social reality. The media's choice to emphasize a specific interpretation while rejecting others, constructs social approaches to different events, reinforces existing constructs and weakens others. The journalistic framing patterns are based on the answer given to three main related questions: What is the issue? How do we view this specific event or the topic it represents? How should we react to this issue? Journalistic framing is always located within certain social and cultural codes, data that gives the event its context and internal logic, while reflecting social and cultural hegemonic understandings. Choosing the various components of a story and arranging them in the private -public sphere as well as the conceptualization that serves it, contribute together to the strengthening of a

specific understanding of a violent event over others. Lahav (2009) describes a number of properties of journalistic coverage that can act in favor of eternalizing the phenomenon of sexual assaults towards women and possibly even the reinforcement of the spiral of denial (on spiral of denial see; Cohen, 2001) towards the dimensions of the phenomenon and its true severity.

Normalization: the sexual assault of women is presented as normal and natural and as an inevitable part of reality. Even if many articles describe the phenomenon and then condemn it, it is still portrayed as an inevitable part of "natural" male sexuality or as the "general" social violence phenomenon.

Sensationalization: the journalistic coverage tends to ignore sexual assaults that are perceived as "normal" or "routine". A "normal" case is usually characterized by one assailant and one victim, who previously knew each other and didn't have a violent relationship. Even though the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel estimated that these cases are the majority of sexual assaults (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005), according to Meyers (1997) these cases are considered not to be newsworthy and are hardly reported.

Pragmatism and Individualization: sexual assaults are often portrayed in the media as isolated events, disconnected incidences without any social connection. Hooks (1997) referred to this discourse that of "modern silencing", which describes the display of details and symptoms but disregards the fundamental problems hiding behind the story.

Eroticizing the Story: the will to enhance the journalistic value of sexual assault stories often leads to a voyeuristic detailed account of the story. Lemish (2007) states that in different cases the journalist uses expressions such as "the polite rapist" (in Hebrew there is a play on words here), "fatal attraction" and so on.

Lahav (2009) also points out the media's focus on the victim, her personality and her behavior, which tag the woman as responsible for the attack. The journalistic framing emphasizes the personal component and not the social meaning that permitted the assault, and at the same time it strengthens the social conception that states that women are a Madonna or a whore, and therefore these kinds of events do not occur to just ordinary women.

The Israeli media, which rates the public agenda and the severity and danger attributed to different social and political issues, usually rates violence towards women as something that should be denounced, but clearly indicates to the audience that in a state with so many problems, violence towards women is rated below important security, financial and policy issues. The cases of violence towards women that will receive intensive and continuous reference in the news are usually the ones perceived as special because of the people involved, such as celebrities, or in cases where the assailant is a villain and dangerous stranger.

Placing the rape story on celebrity helps to ignore and eliminate a very long line of ordinary women who had been sexually molested and raped, inside or outside their houses. Using this technique, the media excludes the ordinary people from the public arena by drawing the attention of the public only to a story such as the rape of Miss Israel, the Israeli Queen of Beauty.

1.2 The Story of the Israeli Miss World - Linor Abargil

Each year, thousands of people, mostly women and children, are sexually assaulted in Israel. Most of these incidents are never acknowledged by the media (Shoham & Regev, 2008). On the other hand, Israeli media has published several sexual assault stories which had a great impact on the public due to the involvement of famous individuals, such as the 8th President of Israel, Moshe Katsav, who was convicted of rape or the story of the rape of Linor Abargil, Israeli Queen of Beauty who also won the Miss World pageant

In 1998, Or (Nur) Shlomo, an Egyptian born who had converted to Judaism, was convicted of raping former Israeli Miss World, Linor Abargil. In the indictment it was stated that the two met at a travel agency in Milan that was owned by the defendant. Linor Abargil had asked the defendant for assistance in reaching Israel quickly and he offered to drive her to the airport in Rome and get her a plane ticket to Israel. During the drive from Milan to Rome, Or (Nur) Shlomo veered from the road, bound Linor and raped her twice at knife point.

A panel of three judges in a county court sentenced Or (Nur) Shlomo, for two counts of rape, to 16 years in prison. The defendant appealed to the Supreme Court claiming that the average sentence for such an offense used to be significantly lower (the trial took place prior to the law amendment which requires at least a quarter of the maximum sentence for sex crimes), and claimed that the court was being severe with him only because the plaintiff is a celebrity. The court rejected the appeal and left the sentence as it was.

In the verdict, the judges describe Or (Nur) Shlomo as a grotesque, pathetic and theatrical character whose version is an “insane fantasy”. The judges state in the verdict that the defendant's smooth talk, his cries and laughs left a harsh feeling that they are dealing with a person who cannot be trusted at all. On the other hand, the judges state that the plaintiff captivated them in her testimony, and even if there were mild contradictions in her version, they believed every word that came out of her mouth, and every movement she made on the witness stand. One of the judges even stated that based on his many years of experience as a judge, the countless amounts of tissue which Miss World used in order to dry away her tears left no room for doubt that she was speaking the truth. The judges even went on to ask how a woman of Miss World's image and status would ever willfully have sex with a man who looked as the defendant did (Cavaglion & Shoham, 2012).

2. Method

In order to examine the manner in which the press covered this event, three newspapers were selected: two of them secular, *Yediot Ahronot* and *Ha'aretz*. The other National Religious, *Hatzofe*. In total, 28 news articles were covered as follows: 14 articles from *Yediot Ahronot*, which is considered a popular newspaper with the widest circulation during the time of the event; eight articles were taken from *Ha'aretz* which is considered a liberal, elitist newspaper; six more articles were taken from *Hatzofe*, which serves the National Religious community. The articles were published during the period between March 1998 and December 1999, and were analyzed according to four criteria: Formative components (Location in the Newspaper, size, and pictures), the type of the article (news reports, news articles, profile stories, editorial articles, and personal interviews), main theme and rape myths.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Formative Components

The frequency of the story's appearance in the press, the visual means to support it, its titles, the position in the body of the paper – all assist in constructing a certain perspective of the problem and the social reality from which it works and which it reflects. These components, as explained by Best (1999), construct images and meanings for certain topics, reflect the severity of the problem, the threat which it bears, and equally the required solutions for dealing with it.

In all publications covering the event in *Yediot Ahronot* (the popular newspaper) (March 26th, 1998; November 29th, 1998; June 7th, 1999; June 8th, 1999) all the articles appeared in the news of the home page section, a fact that attributed the issue's national importance, seeing that the victim is not just an ordinary woman but rather “Miss World” or – even better – “*Our Miss World*”. Most of the articles spanned over more than half a page, some of them took up the whole page, and some of them even two. The titles cried out that the offended woman was not an ordinary woman, but rather a status symbol...“*dear to our hearts and a source of pride*

for all of us". These included titles such as "Queen Linor" "Queen of Rating," and "Natanya (Linor's hometown) Embraces the Queen"

According to Cuklanz (2000), there is a need for sensational reporting which is rich and explicit in details of the horror in order for "ordinary" rapes to invoke public interest. Another way of making the story interesting for the media is by focusing on VIPs, in particular when the victim is considered with excitement the most beautiful women in the entire world.

Hatzofe newspaper(,16.3.99 ,22.2.99), as most religious newspapers, chose not to publish pictures of females, but even it could not resist, and in mid-January 1999, published a small picture of Linor Abargil (headshot only) during her victory and another in October 1999 after the verdict. *Hatzofe* newspaper reminds its audience that it does not deal with beauty and the female figure, however it feels an obligation to intervene, such as in this case, in cases where there is hurt and insult to the nation's honor.

Linor Abargil's rape stirred a patriotic storm of emotions in *Hatzofe* as well – the headlines tell the world that the whole country was affected by the rape of "The Israeli Linor Abargil – Miss World". "Miss World's courage". "Shlomo Nur (the headline disregards his conversion and calls him by his Egyptian name) raped Israel's beauty queen". Even though all of *Hatzofe's* articles were published in the news section, the relative size of the article was small compared to *Yediot Ahronot*.

Ha'aretz (the elitist newspaper) actually chose to publish a picture of the defendant. Three out of the eight articles were accompanied by a medium sized picture of the defendant and a big picture of him after he was convicted on October 7, 1999. *Ha'aretz* doesn't publish pictures of Linor as Miss World, only two pictures of Linor on the witness stand leaving the courtroom.

The presentation of the raped woman's large and beautiful pictures and the use of contradicting techniques enhance the credibility of the "true rape" story and the reliability of the victim's version of the story, as she is an "ideal", beautiful, innocent and decent victim. The enormous gap between the attacker's low, insignificant social status and the highly-esteemed status of the attacked woman, her courage vs. his despicableness, and the large support Linor gets among the public, all turn this into a "true" rape story which the media must cover in extent (to read more about role of contradiction between the assailant's and assault victim's status when constructing a "true" rape case, see Shoham, 2009). It seems that the formative components of the articles clearly conveys the message that this isn't just another usual rape, but an offense against main symbols of the state, and hence the offense against "the nation's soul", therefore the story exceeds the elements of a "man rapes women" story, and make the topic as an important, newsworthy and top-notch story.

3.2 Article Type

In the three reviewed newspapers (two secular and one religious newspaper), the articles regarding Linor Abargil were located in the news pages of the newspaper. All three newspapers attributed the story with the characteristics of an important news story that should be followed in detail: "*Yedioth Ahronot*" published, in addition to the news items, additional profile stories, a personal interview with the plaintiff, large pictures and reference to television reports regarding the item, all allowing the reader to feel closer, more involved and sympathize with the feelings of pain and anger experienced by the plaintiff.

3.3 What is the Item About?

The content of the articles published in "*Yedioth Ahronot*" and "*HaTzofe*" can be chronologically divided into four stages of presentation: the first stage concerns the construction of the ideal victim character, the second stage addresses the full support received by the plaintiff, the third stage regards the credibility of the legal story and the fourth stage deduces conclusions and instructs the public what is the right thing to do.

The first articles concerning this story in "*Yedioth Ahronot*" were meant to construct the image of the beautiful, esteemed, admired and innocent victim of the story (*Yedioth Ahronot*,

March 25th 1998; November 29th, 1998). These profiling articles detail in extent Abargil's winning of the Miss Israel and Miss World pageant, her hobbies, her characteristics, her friends and her longing to Israel. Linor is depicted as the "beautiful child", "new queen", "Israeli pride". (*HaTzofe*, November 27th, 1998). The newspaper "*Ha'aretz*", at this point, does not discuss Linor Abargil's winnings of the Miss Israel or Miss World pageant. "*Yedioth Ahronot*" mostly emphasizes and elaborates the issue of beauty and aesthetics in Israeli society and the immense feelings of national respect and appreciation that accompany the winning of such contests: Abargil's great beauty turned into a national asset which is why this was an assault against the entire nation.

During early January, the articles become more general and put the public's interest in Linor at the center of attention (January 17th, 1999; June 7th, 1999). These articles describe in detail the feelings towards this case as felt by the entire public in general and those living in Linor's hometown, Netanya, in particular. Linor receives appreciation and respect from every direction; citizens go out of their way to protect her, hold her, and support her. Unlike the usual feelings of shame, fear, confusion, doubt and sometimes even accusations, slander and alienation that are the share of more common rape victims, "*Yedioth Ahronot*" presents the general recruitment of the public as they stand by this specific rape victim. The articles are accompanied by descriptions of the shock and distress aroused by the details of this case as it unfolded in the court and the journalist adds and explains that the victim's lawyer could not withstand the horrifying details revealed in court and, despite her extent experience in such cases, bursted into tears. In addition, the articles present great anger with the Israeli judges who usually give very light sentences to sex offenders.

"*HaTzofe*" (January 14th, 1999) explains to the readers that the former Miss Israel and Miss World asked the court to remove the gag order that applied to the case in order to allow the entire population of Israel to continue and become Abargil's partners through this incident. For the third part of the journalistic coverage of the story in "*Yedioth Ahronot*", the newspaper wished to address the legal story and not just the public affair. The articles detail Linor's testimony in court with great detail (the size of the article from June 8th, 1999, for example, is 1,287 cm², approximately 1.3 pages). The day before, "*HaTzofe*" (August 7th, 1999) also published the plaintiff's mother's testimony. It should be noted that, unlike other sex offence trials that are held in Israel in closed doors, during this trial journalists were exceptionally permitted to sit inside the court. On the next day (*Yedioth Ahronot*, July 8th, 1999), the newspaper published another article, much smaller, which contained the testimony of the defendant during the prosecution's cross-examination and four days later they published a detailed description of the defendant's divorcee testimony. "*HaTzofe*" (October 7th, 1999) also describes to its readers the great amount of trust and sympathy that the judges of the court had to Linor Abargil and the inappropriate behavior of the defense attorney and the defendant, whose claims could not be trusted. The defendant's version of the story does not appear in any of the articles.

In both of "*Yedioth Ahronot*" last articles concerning the subject, the newspaper took the role of an educator, guide and designer of social policy (October 7th, 1999; December 30th, 1999). The articles praise Linor, feel her pain, explain women they should take her example and fight for their innocence. In addition, the articles emphasize and prioritize the purpose of retribution through criminal punishment and the role of the media in rape trials.

In contrast to these newspapers, "*Ha'aretz*" chooses to focus on the legal angle of this story through the entire year. The first article in the matter, published on December 8th, 1998, regards the gag order set on this story and the plaintiff's request to remove it. About a month later, another article is published detailing the plaintiff's request to remove the gag order (January 14th, 1999). In mid-February, a relatively large article (337.5 cm²) shows the picture of the court and discusses the question of its authority to trial the defendant in an offence committed abroad. The article also presents the defendant's version and his defense line, claiming that the intercourse were performed willingly and initiated by the plaintiff. About a month afterward another article in "*Ha'aretz*" (March 16th, 1999) specifies the counts of the indictment while emphasizing the description of the violent components of the rape act and

findings from biological samples that support the prosecution's version. "Ha'aretz" newspaper, which does not publish pictures, emphasized, as the other newspapers, in 6 out of 8 articles, that the plaintiff is the Israeli Queen of Beauty that won the Miss World pageant. In later reports (June 7th, 1999; October 7th, 1999; June 8th, 1999; and December 20th, 1999) the newspaper describes the plaintiff's testimony, her mother's testimony, the judges' decision to use this trial to deter – all while mentioning the legal issue. At this stage, "Ha'aretz" joins the welcoming and educating party and presents greetings from women's organizations to the judges' decision and their praise of the former Miss World – the plaintiff – who stood bravely and decisively behind her version.

In its last article, "Ha'aretz" (December 30th, 1999) describes the considerations that led the judges to their final verdict, which was far harsher than the average punishment given at the time due to sex offences. The judges discuss Linor's severe mental difficulties and remind the viewers the life-story of the converted Egyptian. While in the first articles the defendant is mentioned in his full name, Or (Nur) Shlomo, the articles written after the verdict have left out his Hebrew name and mentioned him only as Nur Shlomo.

3.4 Rape Myths

The term "rape myths" was developed by Burt in 1980. According to its definition, rape myths are prejudice, stereotypical concepts or fake beliefs regarding rape, rape victims and rapists. The way rape myths are presented in the media acts as organized cognitive schematic diagrams or "scripts" of events that usually happen in rape situations (Jordan, 2004; Koren, 2008; Peteron & Muehlenhard, 2004; Sunindyo, 2004). These myths clarify who might commit rape or not, who might be a victim or not and where rapes happen or don't happen. According to popular myths, rape happens amongst strangers, involves the use of force, significant resistance is necessary from the victim, and it leaves her injured.

These myths consistently have the stereotypical, sensational and unusual representation of the media (Soothill and Walby, 1991). As mentioned before, Benedict (1992) claims that the press tends to fit the rape victim into one of two main patterns: (1) she is described as a virgin, an innocent victim who was attacked by a deviant or a monster; (2) she is described as a promiscuous or enticing woman who used her sexuality to arouse.

In fact, the three newspapers tend to tell the rape story as a story of extreme contrast; on one hand the rape victim is described as "a beautiful and strong woman, brave, credible, Miss World, Beauty Queen, compassionate from a beautiful family, a woman deserving of praise and admiration..." and on the other hand the defendant is described as "a laughable grotesque character with a split soul, pathetic, or as animal-like, villainous stranger that even his wife doesn't trust.. A man accused by the judges of being " *Barbarically violent*". The extreme contrast between the assailant and the victim reverses the media's bewilderment, which states "how can there be a doubt that this is a severe and true case of rape?"

4. Conclusions

The excessive coverage of the rape incident of a "celebrity victim", Israeli Miss World, by a Judaism-converted Egyptian man, in both secular and religious newspapers, is a prominent example to the denial and exclusion of regular women from the media. The preoccupation with the pretty, the shiny and the successful sparks the journalists' imagination and turns the coverage of a private rape story into a fairy tale, which leaves regular, simple, ugly, poor and unknown women out of the story.

According to Benedict (1992), the version of the "seducing" woman is harmful since it accuses the victim of the crime instead of the one who actually committed it, but she claims that the "Madonna" version, as presented in Linor Abargil's case, is just as destructive. This version perpetuates the perception according to which women can be either Madonnas or

whores; it depicts women in a misleading way and leans on the description of suspects as deviant or monstrous strangers.

The social construction of sexually violent predators does not confront the very threatening realization that sexually violent predation is but one form of patriarchal violence. Websdale (1999) argues that lawmakers and the news media, resorting to anecdotal and individualistic attention to violent sexual offenders, fail to consider the systemic sexual violence that characterizes patriarchal relations and the domination of men over women. Women are more likely to experience rape or attempted rape at the hands of husbands or ex-husbands than they are from strangers.

The extensive preoccupation in Linor Abargil's rape story is not only a great sales promoter for the newspapers and an opportunity for the public to have a peek at what happens with famous and important people, to feel sorry for them and sympathize with them. This story also reinforces the common myth that true cases of rape only happen to good, beautiful women by strange, deviant men who use great violence towards them. In our story, the raped woman is a beautiful, successful woman who stood bravely and with courage before the court, a court that compassionately embraced her version of the story and protected her from the evil Egyptian man.

However in the real world, many of the rape incidents that are presented to the court, especially the ones where the state decides to correct the indictment counts through a plea bargain, lack the perspective of the raped woman and her voice is excluded, denied and pushed away from the main story of the court (Shoham & Regev, 2010). In the Abargil rape case, the media created a false presentation where the raped woman's voice, her pain and disaster allegedly assume top priority in the eyes of the court. Despite the courage of the Queen of Beauty and her plea to open the doors of the court in order to support and empower other women who were raped but did not go to the law-enforcement representatives to complain, it seems that the media's excessive preoccupation in the details of the raped woman and her specific rape story, as well as the spotlight directed to the issue of status and cultural contradiction between the assailant and the victim, can lead to the opposite result. After all, in reality – as claimed by Koren (2008) – most raped women are ordinarily women who face a situation in which they are attacked by someone close or familiar to them. Their voices are silenced by the legal narrative of the court (Negbi, 2009), their suffering denied and in many cases they are deemed responsible for the rape they experience.

The results of this research join other studied performed in Israel (Lahav, 2009) which point out the need to redefine the media coverage of sex assaults in order to improve the social struggle against this phenomenon. A further investigation is needed in order to understand the manner in which the media covers "regular" sexual assaults and certain representative structures of assailants and victims in such crimes.

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