



103142768

STATUS: PENDING 20130410 OCLC #: 27481928
 REQUEST DATE: 20130410 NEED BEFORE: 20130510 SOURCE: ILLiad
 BORROWER: IVU RECEIVE DATE: DUE DATE:
 RENEWAL REQ: NEW DUE DATE: SPCL MES:
 LENDERS: *KPS, IOJ, OPU, GZU

LHR SUMMARY: no.1-(1992-)
 TITLE: Feminist theology : the journal of the Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology.
 ISSN: 0966-7350
 IMPRINT: Sheffield, England : Sheffield Academic Press, 1992-
 ARTICLE TITLE: Rape and spiritual death
 ARTICLE AUTHOR: Messina-Dysert,
 VOLUME: 20
 ISSUE NUMBER: 2
 ISSUE DATE: 2012
 PAGES: 120-
 VERIFIED: <TN:171444><ODYSSEY:206.107.42.163/IVU> OCLC
 SHIP TO: ILL/Christopher Center/Valparaiso University/1410 Chapel Drive/Valparaiso IN US 46383

BILL TO: ILL/Christopher Center/Valparaiso University/1410 Chapel Drive/Valparaiso IN US 46383
 SHIP VIA: ODYSSEY: 206.107.42.163, IN...
 MAXCOST: IFM - 0.00
 COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE: CCG
 BILLING NOTES: Must include patron name and IL number with invoices or we cannot pay. Please
 co...
 ODYSSEY: 206.107.42.163/IVU
 FAX: 219-464-5792
 EMAIL: ill@valpo.edu
 AFFILIATION: LVIS, INCOLSA Pillow, ALI, ULILSU, AGCU, IVU HAS RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS AVAILABLE
 BORROWING NOTES: We are an LVIS library! Please deliver electronically if possible (ODYSSEY:
 206.
 107.42.163) (maxCost: \$0)

PATRON: Mallette, Wendy

Pulled by _____
 Copied by _____
 Copyright Notice _____
 Posted OCLC _____
 Sent via: Mail E-mail Fax Courier
 Date / By _____ / _____

This material may be protected by copyright law (title 17 U.S. Code)



Rape and Spiritual Death

Gina Messina-Dysert

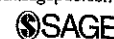
Feminist Theology
20(2) 120-132

© The Author(s) 2012

Reprints and permission: sagepub.
co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0966735011425305

ft.h.sagepub.com



Abstract

Rape is a form of violence that causes destructive consequences to both the physical and spiritual health of women. Due to its taboo nature as well as the societal response to the victim, rape is especially harmful and results in *han*, a Korean concept that signifies a compressed suffering. The continual torment caused by *han* damages the rape victim's spiritual health and ultimately leads to spiritual death.

This article offers a definition of spiritual death and explores how the experience of the violent act of rape within a rape culture constructs *han*. Specifically, the victims' inability to express pain as well as assumed qualities of shame, self blame, and invisibility are examined with a focus on the societal response's ability to provoke these qualities, further contributing to the emotional and spiritual trauma which results in a spiritual death. The possibility for multiple spiritual resurrections through various practices including the application of the traditional practice of *Han-Pu-Ri*, a Korean shamanistic ritual that releases *han* is discussed.

Keywords

Han, *Han-Pu-Ri*, Rape, Resurrection, Spiritual Death, Suffering

At that moment, I really wanted to die. Dying was better than giving in to this man and being raped by him...I can find no words to describe this most inhumane and brutal rape. To me, it was worse than dying (Ruff-O'Herne, 1994: 84).

Introduction

'A fate worse than death' is a common phrase utilized to describe rape. In fact, for many victims¹ of rape, physical death is preferable. While for some victims, the goal is survival

1 Note that I will use the term 'victim' throughout this paper to refer to women who have experienced sexual assault. I have chosen to use the term victim rather than survivor because this paper examines the spiritual death that occurs as a result of the sexual assault during a time period where while physical survival has occurred, emotional and spiritual survival has not yet occurred.

Corresponding author:

Gina Messina-Dysert
Email: gmessina@lmu.edu

regardless of the brutality they will endure, for others 'once their body has been sexually violated, life is not worth living – the most sacred and private parts of their bodily integrity have been invaded and they will never feel whole or safe again,' (Askin, 1997: 73). This sentiment was expressed loudly during WWII on 25 June 1943 when 24 Jewish girls were raped by SS soldiers. After being brutally assaulted they were offered their lives if they agreed to become sex slaves for the German guards. The girls refused and chose death 'either because they had already been sexually assaulted and could not live with this gross bodily invasion, or because they could not bear the reality that they might have to endure more sexual assault,' (Askin, 1997: 73).

Sexual violence targets the core of the woman's nature and is an attack on one's basic human rights. It is a form of violence that transcends all boundaries causing destructive consequences to not only the physical but also the spiritual health of women. Because of the taboo nature of rape as well as the societal response induced by the assault, rape is especially harmful and results in the wounding of the woman's interiority damaging her connection with her true self and leading to continuous suffering. 'The way women feel about themselves and their environment is permanently altered by the incidence of intimate assault in their lives,' (West, 1999: 55).

Rape culture² permeates society and is present in every culture where rape and other forms of sexual violence occur; thus it should be understood as a culture that is present around the globe. In a rape culture victim blaming is commonplace and those who have been raped suffer some sort of community rejection and punishment. Women are seen as inferior and deserving of the violence perpetrated against them causing an additional victimization or 'second rape.' The response to rape and treatment of victims triggered by rape culture is widespread. Rape culture must be understood as a key component of the suffering endured by the rape victim; thus the destruction to a rape victim's spiritual health occurs across cultural boundaries and is experienced regardless of ethnicity, religion, class, or other qualifying factors.

The experience of this violent and brutal assault within a rape culture, results in *han*, the compression of multiple sufferings that Andrew Sung Park describes as 'a slow death of the spirit' resulting from 'sadness, resignation, hopelessness, and despair,' (Park, 2004: 10). Although *han* is a traditional Korean concept and term, it is fitting to apply it to both the collective suffering of rape victims and the individual suffering endured by women following a sexual assault because it exemplifies this suffering as distinct while encompassing its multiple contributors. It properly articulates the overall experience of a compressed suffering that results from both the violent act itself as well as the violence of the community response invoked by rape culture. *Han* is a suffering that is the physical, emotional, and spiritual consequence of horrendous injustice; a suffering turned inward to wound the spirit and often results in spiritual death. As Beverly Lanzetta explains, 'What harms a woman's soul reverberates in her physical, emotional, and mental spheres, generating suffering in every area of her life,' (Lanzetta, 2005: 2).

2 For more information on Rape Culture, see, Buchwald E, Fletcher P, and Roth M (eds) *Transforming a Rape Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed, 1993.

In this paper I will define spiritual death and explore how the experience of the violent act of rape within a rape culture constructs *han*. I will focus specifically on the victims' inability to express pain as well as assumed qualities of shame, self blame, and invisibility. I will examine how societal response has provoked these qualities, further contributing to the emotional as well as spiritual trauma which results in a spiritual death. Finally, I will discuss the possibility for multiple spiritual resurrections through various practices including the application of the traditional practice of *Han-Pu-Ri*, a Korean shamanistic ritual that releases *han*.

Spiritual Death

In order to understand what spiritual death is, it is necessary to first discuss what spirituality is and how it should be defined. Spirituality refers to the mystical experience of the individual. It is,

the binding force of the unity between the inner and outer life...the all-pervading divine energy and seamless web of oneness intimate to life itself. Creation is not alone, separate from its source, but deeply and mysteriously imbued with spirit in every aspect of mind, soul, and matter (Lanzetta, 2005: 28).

According to Ewert Cousins (1987: xiii) 'The spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person experiences ultimate reality.' Sandra Schneiders (1997) also upholds this emphasis of one's inner relationship to her or his 'ultimate reality.' She states that spirituality should be understood as 'a fundamental dimension of the human being...and the lived experience which actualizes that dimension,' (Schneiders, 1997: 17). Thus, spirituality is not only constitutive of the person, but can also be developed and articulated through the activities associated with spirituality in the individual's life, in addition to the entirety of the life of faith which includes political, social, and bodily dimensions. Accordingly, spirituality is not only the individual's life in relation to the divine; rather it is the person's life lived in the divine.

Schneiders (1997) also asserts that a 'generic' spirituality is non-existent. Instead, spirituality is determined by the focus of the individual's life. She explains that spirituality is,

the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self absorption but of self transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives. It is progressive, consciously pursued, personal integration through self-transcendence within and toward the horizon of ultimate concern (Schneiders, 1997: 17).

While spirituality has frequently been associated with otherworldliness and opposition to the body, it would be better understood as striving towards goodness and righteousness within the world. 'Spirituality unifies the tension between mind and heart, body and soul, and inner and outer life... [it] is the awareness of the oneness that underlies duality and difference, as each outward action reveals the interconnected presence of the holy,' (Lanzetta, 2005: 29). Thus a spiritually aware temperament is marked by feelings of empathy, compassion, and oneness with life.

A woman's spirituality is at the core of her being. The violation and invasion of her body, attack upon her dignity and personal self, followed by societal blame, silencing, and shame, results in a disconnect with the true self. Self-determination is quashed and self-transcendence is no longer possible. The societal imaging of a rape victim, caused by rape culture, creates the self-image of a woman as depraved, soiled, damaged, and unworthy. The continued experience of *han* and inability to release the multiple sufferings endured slowly murders the spirit. As any serious wound that goes untreated presents the possibility of death, deep spiritual wounds that are continually exacerbated by one's own self-image presents the possibility of a spiritual death.

For the woman who is victimized by rape, re-victimized by society, and ultimately loses her own self-worth as a result, spiritual death is nearly inevitable. With such depraved self-image and continual assault on the perception of self she can no longer see herself in relation to the divine.³ While she is physically alive, spiritually she is dead.

Han

Han is not a single feeling; rather it is many feelings compressed together that interact with each other to generate a particular *han* depending on the circumstances. It has been defined as 'the suppressed, amassed and condensed experience of the oppression caused by mischief or misfortune that forms a kind of lump in one's spirit,' (Suh Nam-Dong, 1981: 65). It has also been described as 'a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of total abandonment, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wiggle, and an obstinate urge to take 'revenge' and to right the wrong all these constitute,' (Hyun Young-Hak, 1982: 7).

Han is an appropriate term and concept to describe the unbearable and unjust suffering experienced by the rape victim and identifies her experience as more than an issue of theodicy and different from other types of suffering. Suffering is often described as having potential value offering innovative ways of thinking and atypical states of being. According to Walter Kasper (1984), suffering ultimately leads us through a greater mystery. He states,

No one has experienced humanity to the full unless he or she has experienced its finiteness and suffering. But then experience becomes a way of leading into an open immensity, into a mystery that is ever greater and never to be completely plumbed (Kasper, 1984: 84).⁴

This being said, a brutal rape followed by community rejection does not offer a full experience of humanity, nor does it provide an innovative way of thinking. There is absolutely no value to the destructive suffering endured by the rape victim.

3 Note that victims who maintain belief systems that do not uphold the existence of a divine being ultimately have a loss of self in relation to a larger power, which affects their overall existence and results in a 'spiritual death.' The larger power will be determined by the belief system.

4 Also see, Morris D (1989) *The Culture of Pain*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

The suffering of the rape victim does not simply encompass the questions of traditional theodicy which attempt to determine how to speak about the divine in the midst of suffering. The victim is not necessarily concerned with whether or not the divine is omnipotent, benevolent, or omnipresent. Rather, the victim is concerned about her own ability to see herself in relation to the divine. Because of the feelings of immorality that have been thrust upon her by the community, she no longer feels capable of embodying the divine. The concern is focused directly on the perception of self rather than on the divine's ability to have kept the rape from occurring or to end the suffering which is being endured.

Suffering has been defined as a common, even universal experience; however the experience of the rape victim is drastically distinct from suffering incurred through other circumstances and is not one that non-rape victims can relate to. *Han* allows for this understanding and also permits the communication of a universal experience among rape victims due to their common experience. Finally, *han* does not focus on a single type of suffering; rather it encompasses the multiplicity of suffering endured simultaneously by women who experience sexual assault. It symbolizes the cry of rape victims as oppressed people and acknowledges the structural oppressions that create and perpetuate this overall torment of the woman's inner self. Thus, *han* should be understood as different from the traditional concept of suffering and a more suitable term to describe the experience of the rape victim.

Victims of rape experience *han* on a collective as well as an individual level. The victim is part of the larger group of women who have experienced sexual assault and community rejection due to rape culture and oppression which results in the collective experience of *han*. Rape in addition to the second assault of the societal response, results in the individual experience of *han*; 'the will to revenge, resignation, regret, diffuseness, absence, bitterness, and helplessness, reacting to a private oppression that can also often be connected to collective and structural oppression,' (Park, 2004: 15). Rape culture blames the victim and seeks to silence her which creates an additional suffering beyond the rape itself. It is this element that distinguishes rape from other forms of violence. For the rape victim, it is the intertwined experience of the rape itself and the response of the community which constructs her *han* and this *han* is what murders her spirit.

Rape Culture and the Construction of Han

In a rape culture girls are told from a very young age that rape is the worst possible thing that could happen in their lives. They are told that their lives will be destroyed and that they will become impure. Those who are raped are told that feeling dirty is natural. These societal messages set women up to experience these feelings if raped and prepare them to be 'collapsible women.' In addition, they are left with the impression that there is no other 'healthy response other than to breakdown,' (Veselka, 2006: 57).

In a rape culture, a woman's chastity is valued over her life. This is well demonstrated by the case of Maria Goretti, a 12 year-old girl who was murdered after she refused to submit to rape. She became a mythic figure and was canonized as a saint by the Catholic

Church for protecting her virginity.⁵ At her canonization, Pope Pius XII referred to her life-threatening rape as 'an attractive pleasure' stating that 'From Maria's story carefree children and young people with their zest for life can learn not to be led astray by attractive pleasures which are not only ephemeral and empty, but also sinful.'⁶

The pope's comments epitomize the nature of rape culture and also demonstrate the cultural tendency to confuse rape with sex rather than recognizing it as a brutal exercise of power and control. 'The pressure cooker theory of male nature' (Seifert, 1994: 55), claims that men are not responsible for their actions and instead are victims of their own uncontrollable and instinctive nature. However, rape has very little to do with nature or sexuality. Instead, it is an extremely violent act that is a product of power and control, implemented by sexual means. As Ruth Seifert explains, 'studies show that rape is not an aggressive manifestation of sexuality, but rather a sexual manifestation of aggression,' (Seifert, 1994: 55). Rape is an expression of rage as well as domination over the woman. For the perpetrator, the goal is to humiliate and degrade the woman while achieving control; thus sexual means is utilized to commit this violent act.

Although rape functions to control and dominate, women who experience sexual violence are routinely blamed by society and accused of causing their own victimization. The community responds to their brutal assault with rejection rather than support leaving the victim feeling shamed and isolated. One woman explains,

The aftermath was almost as bad as the act itself. When people read about the rape in the papers I was actually shunned, even in church. The women whispered behind my back. They thought I must have brought the rape upon myself. Some even asked me why I didn't fight back. Months passed before the gossip subsided... Even my husband listened to those voices. The pastor? He did not know how to handle the situation. He never said anything to me. Never, (Pellaur, 1987: 84).

Victims of rape are silenced and denied justice. Fear and shame produced through rape culture often keep victims from coming forward and reporting their rapes. Women who suffer sexual violence often do not report their rapes in an effort to avoid further pain, humiliation, rejection, blame for their victimization, and denial of their experience. In addition, authorities utilize their power to deliberately silence victims who do choose to report. Instead of giving attention to their testimony, victims are inundated by accusations and antagonistic messages about themselves from persons and organizations of

- 5 See, Zuanich Young K (1995) The imperishable virginity of Saint Maria Goretti. In: Adams CJ, Fortune MM (eds) (1995) *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum, 279-86. Maria Goretti was canonized just 48 years after her death, in 1950, an extraordinarily short time (only two other people have been canonized in such a short period). In addition she became a model of chastity and her story was part of the curriculum in parochial schools up until Vatican II.
- 6 Pope Pius XII, Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 1975. Quoted in Zuanich Young K. The imperishable virginity of Saint Maria Goretti. In Adams CJ, Fortune MM (eds) (1995) *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum, 282.

authority. 'The rules of the abuser, the court, the church, and the racist patriarchal culture can forbid a woman to interrupt their established order by naming the torment she has endured,' (West, 1999: 12). Lydia, a survivor of stranger rape, describes her torment dealing with the justice system explaining that she was repeatedly ignored by the prosecutor before receiving an impersonal letter in the mail explaining that her rapist was offered a plea bargain. Although she had been tortured and raped for hours, her opinion was of no value to the court (Gamble and Madigan, 1991).

Rape culture normalizes the victimization of women on multiple levels and leaves victims of rape feeling ashamed, isolated, silenced, and unable to articulate their own experiences. This cultural assault results in the victim experiencing additional anguish that is compressed with the suffering she has endured from the rape to create the overall experience of *han* which compresses the inability to express pain, feelings of invisibility, isolation, shame, and self-blame.

Inexpressibility of Pain

The inability to describe or communicate one's pain makes it all the more unbearable. Although most would acknowledge experiencing suffering or knowing others who have suffered, clear explanations of suffering are consistently elusive. Virginia Woolf states,

The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her; but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry, (Woolf, 1948: 11).

According to Elaine Scarry, 'whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language,' (1985: 4). While victims of rape experience their suffering as a prime reality and often the very focus of their lives, others cannot understand what they are feeling and are part of the larger culture that further victimizes the woman. Although one can be aware that another person is suffering, they are unaware of what causes that suffering or what that specific experience of suffering is. In this way, suffering is also the experience of isolation. Consequently, the suffering is heightened by this intrinsic loneliness. Eric Cassel explains,

Because the sufferer's loss of connection with the group is one of the most important aspects of suffering both from the standpoint of its origins and its opportunities for relief, the loneliness of the sufferer is not only the feeling of being alone but an absence from the general "we-ness" of the world, from a shared participation of the spirit, (1995: 1902).

Thus, suffering is inexpressible and the inability to communicate suffering results in disconnection and isolation intensifying the anguish of the victim.

Invisibility

Due to social notions about rape and the community's reaction to the victim, women feel invisible. Societal response acts to desocialize and depersonalize victims of rape causing

the experience of an overall estrangement from the community. As a result these women feel abandoned, isolated and 'cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life,' (Herman, 1992: 52). Subsequently, every relationship is pervaded by a sense of alienation and disconnection. The rape symbolizes an assault on every valuable connection between the victim and the community. The feeling of being betrayed, loss of trust, and recognition of the potential for harm, severely ruptures communal ties and erodes every facet of relational life for the victim. 'When trust is lost, traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than to the living,' (Herman, 1992: 52).

Victims of rape feel abandoned or intentionally rejected by the divine. The woundedness and deprivation experienced by the woman is sensed as invisible to the divine or as punishment and suffering that is warranted. Marie Fortune explains:

If a person believes God to be omnipotent, loving and rewarding of the righteous, then suffering is either a sign of God's disfavor or a realization that God does not play by the rules... This feeling of abandonment occurs for the victim who expected God to protect her from all pain and suffering. When she encounters suffering, she feels betrayed. The sense of abandonment by God is profound and often creates a crisis of faith for the victim (1983: 202).

Victims are faced with a spiritual crisis and are disoriented about the essence of the divine which results in a breach of their relationship. Rape can be understood as a decision by the divine to break the covenant with a woman, and thus destroys faith. This being said, as West asserts, a faith crisis can result even when one does not hold the notion that the divine protects from all suffering and pain. Instead, this crisis occurs due to feeling abandoned by the divine while attempting to survive the after effects of the rape. According to West,

A perception of God's absence when she tries to cope with the oppressive aftermath of intimate violence might be even more startling and enervating than if she had begun with an assumption of God's omnipotent power to protect her from all suffering (West, 1999: 60).

Shame and Self-blame

Shame, a poisonous result of the suffering women endure during and following a rape, is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonoring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct of circumstances, or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency,' (1989). This definition supports the societal view that the victim has acted in a way that has brought her shame. After being brutally violated and abused, women feel powerless, humiliated, and ashamed. Although they have done nothing wrong, society's response to their victimization tells them different. According to Park,

Reporting a rape is equivalent to suicide. Laid bare to the scrutiny of voyeurs by the media, the victim is, in effect, forced to splay her legs before the public eye... In spite of the fact that a rape victim needs privacy, human dignity, and security, the media exposes every aspect of her life so that there is no place to hide. The media capitalizes on the victims suffering until it, and she, are used up (2004: 40-41).

While many victims of rape choose not to report for the very reasons Park states, they nevertheless experience the second assault of society's response through their own awareness and understanding of the community's perception of women who have suffered sexual violence. As Brene Brown explains, women experience shame as --

the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. Women often experience shame when they are entangled in a web of layered, conflicting and competing social-community expectations. Shame leaves women feeling trapped, powerless and isolated (Brown, 2004: 30).

Shame, which is invariably aimed inward, has the invasive ability to subsume parts of the victim's identity. While shame is initiated by the assault, it works its way into the consciousness and becomes rooted in the perception of self. According to Kathryn Quina and Nancy Carlson (1989), who emphasize shame as a significant element of the experience of rape, the feeling of being dirty following the assault incorporates major segments of the woman's self-concept. The victim may see herself as soiled, damaged, and immoral with the rape leaving her feeling self-hatred and repulsed by her body.

Shame invoked by sexual violence often merges with cultural views of women as temptress or defiled. Women are denigrated as being unclean during menstruation and are claimed to beguile men with their sexuality. Shame and self-blame that result from rape are nurtured by these deeply embedded cultural myths. As West explains,

Women's open expression of sexuality is already sullied by its common linkage to immodest or whorish behavior in popular cultural definitions of femininity. Especially when she is raped by an acquaintance, a "date," or a spouse, a woman can easily equate any sexual interest or attraction she may have felt prior to the incident with the behavior of "scummy" bad girls, (West, 1999: 69).

Shame and self blame relate to each other in a cyclical fashion with one causing the other and vice versa. Questions of why the victim was chosen to be raped by the perpetrator often surface. She may think that she caused the assault in some way, which is reinforced by stereotypes that are perpetuated in rape culture. Women are labeled as 'asking for it' because of clothing, sexual history, alcohol consumption, and so on. Being female is viewed as 'exuding sexual signals that invite exploitation by men,' (West, 1999: 71). The idea that women 'naturally' provoke men into committing justifiable rape results from these characterizations. 'Self-blame is often wrapped in a discrediting, slippery package called "the authentic victim." Based on some idea of what constitutes an "authentic" rape experience, women often grapple with a sense of personal failure or self-doubt which can fuel their sense of shame' (West, 1999: 69).

Spiritual Resurrections

Although victims of rape experience a spiritual death, this death does not have to be a permanent reality. As Ivone Gebara asserts, resurrection must be understood as a state that is 'lived and grasped within the confines of our existence' (Gebara, 2002: 122). However, she also explains that it must be understood that resurrection is not an

irreversible state one achieves; rather resurrection can be found in everyday experiences and has multiple occurrences. It is the experience of 'recovering life and hope and justice along life's path even when these experiences are frail and fleeting,' (Gebara, 2002: 122).

In order to experience a spiritual resurrection, the victim must heal her self-image and rid herself of *han*. *Han-Pu-Ri*, the release of *han*, can offer a beginning to the spiritual resurrection process. The term *Han-Pu-Ri* originally arose from Korean shamanistic tradition and offered ghosts who were voiceless the opportunity to speak about their experience of *han*. It was the community that was responsible to then solve the *han* by either eliminating oppression or comforting the ghosts. Thus, *Han-Pu-Ri* can be an opportunity for collective healing and spiritual resurrection for victims of rape as well as for collective repentance for the communities that have participated in creating and perpetuating *han*.

In Korean shamanistic tradition, the ritual of *Han-Pu-Ri* was performed primarily by women priestesses. In addition, women were both the majority of those who participated in the ritual of *Han-Pu-Ri* and whose ghost stories were told. According to Chung Hyun Kyung, 'These factors provide an important clue for the hermeneutics of suspicion... women have been the embodiment of the worst *Han* of our (Korean) history,' (1997: 35). Because women often do not have the public channels to communicate the *han* they are experiencing, a sense of impassibility is developed. This shared experience among women allowed them to understand one another and *Han-Pu-Ri* became a space where Korean women were not dominated by patriarchal religious authorities and could play a spiritual role. *Han-Pu-Ri* offered Korean women the opportunity to come together and release their *han*.

This traditional ritual practiced by Korean women is applicable to rape victims because women who have been sexually assaulted have also experienced what can be characterized as the worst *han* in women's history. Society has made that clear through its continual message that no worse thing can occur in a female's life than being raped. Like the Korean women who practiced *Han-Pu-Ri*, rape victims also have no channel to express their *han* which leads to a sense of isolation and impassibility. However, women who have been sexual assaulted can come together to share their stories and experience a sense of accompaniment which will begin the process of releasing their *han* and begin the spiritual resurrection process.

Han-Pu-Ri is comprised of three important steps; speaking and hearing, naming, and changing. In speaking and hearing, the shaman provides the persons or ghosts the opportunity to break their silence, express their *han*, and be heard by the community. The second step, naming, allows the source of oppression to be identified by the persons or ghosts. Finally, changing is the attainment of peace by the persons or ghosts through the transforming of unjust situations through action.

'Take Back the Night' has become a means of allowing rape victims to achieve the steps of *Han-Pu-Ri*. This event is put on by college campuses and feminist organizations to protest rape culture and the oppression of women and typically consists of speak outs, rallies, marches, and candle light vigils against violence against women. The 'Take Back the Night' event provides a public forum for victims of sexual assault, as well as all women and men who are victimized by the current rape culture, to assert how they have

been wronged, acknowledge the unjust patriarchal system, and for the community to hear the problem and seek a transformation. Although some may claim that Take Back the Night is no more than group therapy, it offers a spiritual encounter through the end of isolation, empowerment, and sense of accompaniment within a community of women who share a similar experience.

While 'Take Back the Night' offers the practice of *Han-Pu-Ri* on a large scale, not every woman will find that it is the right place for her to begin her spiritual resurrection. Women can participate in *Han-Pu-Ri* on any scale. Community can be two people. By reaching out to one other individual the rape victim can accomplish the steps and begin her journey of spiritual resurrection. Because the divine is experienced within those intimate interactions with others, the woman is able to achieve redemption.

Following the commencement of the resurrection process, which begins with the release of *han* and healing of the self-image, resurrection will be a process that is achieved through daily experiences. As Gebara asserts they will be momentary resurrections rather than a permanent state that one achieves,

It is there like a glass of water that quenches thirst for the moment, but thirst comes again, sometimes stronger than before...The moment of the hoped for salvation comes, sometimes seen, sometimes unforeseen...This fragile redemption is what we find in the everyday life of every person. Today it is the story of the life and speech of women (Gebara, 2002: 123).

Although *han* has been released, suffering will not simply cease to exist. Because the brutal assault permanently altered the existence and psyche of the woman and is one that will be carried with her throughout her life, momentary resurrections are necessary to quell her continued emotional affliction.

Conclusion

For victims of rape, the brutal attack itself followed by the community response of a rape culture results in the experience of *han* which causes the core of a woman's nature, her embodiment of the divine, to be broken. The victim's perception of self is altered which ultimately begets a spiritual death. The rape itself takes away the woman's ability to control her own body and wounds the personal self. The societal response of blaming creates shame that becomes rooted in the perception of self, causing the victim to view herself as 'dirty' and immoral, no longer capable of embodying the divine.

Although a spiritual death is experienced by the individual rape victim, spiritual resurrection can be attained. By participating in *Han-Pu-Ri*, the victim is able to articulate the wrong done to her, release her *han*, rid herself of self blame and shame, and reclaim her identity. In addition, she rejoins the community ending her isolation and acknowledges her worth. Through this practice the journey of spiritual resurrection begins. While spiritual resurrection is a process rather than a one time achievement, once the process has begun, the victim becomes a survivor and is again able to see herself in relation to the divine.

References

- Adams C (ed.) (1995) *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum.
- Allen B (1996) *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Askin KD (1997) *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.
- Brown B (2004) *Women and Shame*. Austin, TX: 3C Press.
- Buchwald E, Fletcher P, and Roth M (ed.) (1993) *Transforming a Rape Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed.
- Cassel E (1995) Pain and suffering. In: Reich WT (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Bioethics, Vol. 4. Rev. edn.* New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA/Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Chung Hyun Kyung (1988) *Han-pu-ri: doing theology from Korean women's perspective*. *Ecumenical Review* 40(1).
- Farley W (2005) *The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Farley W (1990) *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Fortune M (1983) *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin*. New York: Pilgrim Press.
- Gebara I (2002) *Out of the Depths: Women's Experiences of Evil and Salvation*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Herman JL (1992) *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kasper W (1984) *The God of Jesus Christ*. New York: Crossroad.
- Lanzetta B (2005) *Radical Wisdom: A Feminist Mystical Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Lee, Jae Hoon (1994) *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds – Han*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.
- Madigan L, Gamble NC (1991) *The Second Rape: Society's Continued Betrayal of the Victim*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Morris, D (1989) *The Culture of Pain*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Pellaur M (1987) A theological perspective on sexual assault. In: Pellaur MD, Chester B, and Boyajian JA (eds) *Sexual Assault and Abuse: A Handbook for Clergy and Religious Professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row.
- Quina K, Carlson N (1989) *Rape, Incest, and Sexual Harassment: A Guide for Helping Survivors*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.
- Rankka KM (1998) *Women and the Value of Suffering: An Aw(e)ful Rowing Toward God*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Ruff-O'Herne J (1994) *50 Years of Silence*. Sydney: Editions Tom Thompson.
- Scarry E (1985) *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schneiders SM (1990) Spirituality in the academy. In: Hanson B (ed.) *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.
- Seifert R (1994) War and rape: a preliminary analysis. In: Stiglmeier A (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Stiglmeier A (ed.) (1994) *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Suh Nam-Dong (1981) Towards a theology of *han*. In: *Minjung Theology*. Singapore: CCA.
- Sung Park, A (2004) *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Taesoo YIM (2006) *Minjung Theology: Towards a Second Reformation*. Singapore: CCA.

- Veselka V (2006) The collapsible woman: cultural response to rape and sexual abuse. In: Jervis L, Zeisler A (eds) *Bitchfest*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- West T (1999) *Wounds of the Spirit*. New York: New York University Press.
- Woolf V (1948) On being ill. In: Woolf V, *The Moment and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Zuanich Young K (1995) The imperishable virginity of Saint Maria Goretti. In: Adams CJ, Fortune MM (eds) *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum.

The Spiritual Implications of Sexual Abuse: Not Just an Issue for Religious Women?

Beth R. Crisp

Abstract

Although there is now some recognition that sexual abuse, particularly that which occurs in religious settings, has spiritual implications for women who have been abused, the spiritual implications of sexual abuse which occurs beyond the confines of specific religious practices and beliefs tend not to be acknowledged. Taking a stance that all people, irrespective of their involvement in a formal religion, are inherently spiritual, this paper identifies the key concepts associated with spirituality as meaning, identity, connectedness, transformation and transcendence. Examples as to how each of these may be issues following the experience of sexual abuse are provided. This approach challenges prevailing notions that sexual abuse only has spiritual implications for women who identify with a particular religious tradition. Instead it is argued that an experience of sexual abuse can be critical for the spiritual life of any woman who is subjected to abuse.

Keywords

sexual abuse, spirituality, women's experiences

Introduction

In recent years in many countries including Australia, Britain, Ireland and the USA, allegations about sexual abuse happening within religious contexts have appeared so often in the media that we are now rarely shocked at new reports. From the perspective of many media outlets, scandals make good copy, and particularly scandals involving the seemingly good, i.e. religious officials, engaging in the seemingly bad, i.e. illicit sexual activities, especially those involving minors. Typically, the focus will be on what happened, often long ago. If current consequences are even mentioned, these tend to be concerned with acute mental health or relationship problems, with religious or spiritual implications hardly, if at all, considered. Similar critiques can be applied to the reports of formal inquiries into

Corresponding author:

Beth R. Crisp
Email: beth.crisp@deakin.edu.au