

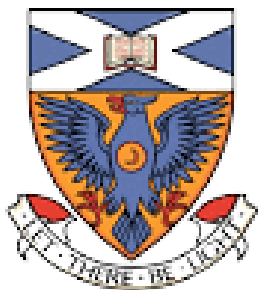


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AN OBSESSION WITH BLOODY WOMEN

*an investigation into Gender Based Violence as plot development in
crime dramas on British television*



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METHODOLOGY

While these shows exist within the same genre and in some cases sub-genre of television, in order to conduct a fair reading, I created a model to apply to each chosen moment of violence, so analysis is consistent and easily comparable across all three shows. Feminist theory is applicable in different areas of each of these questions, hence why it is not its own separate category.

- What was the act of violence?
- Was there a particular convention used to show this?
- How was the act conveyed on the screen?
- Who was the victim and perpetrator of the violence in question?
- Did this assist in developing the plot?

POLICE LINE - DO NOT CROSS

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POLICE

Gender based violence (GBV) is a serious public health issue and epidemic. According to the 2020 Femicide Census, 'over the ten years from 2009 to 2018, at least 1,425 women were killed by men in the UK' although the real number is likely significantly higher. It covers a spectrum of violence and abuse, committed primarily, but not exclusively, by men against women. This includes, but is not limited to, rape and sexual assault, stalking and harassment. (NHS Scotland, 2022).

BACKGROUND

This project discusses how female characters are used as devices to expand plots in British crime dramas. While audiences have seen a more feminist presentation of female characters on British television, violence and rape are regularly shown in crime dramas with a focus usually on the display of these acts of violence, rather than the trauma and effects of said violence. The purpose of the paper was to determine from three popular and well received dramas (Happy Valley, Luther and The Fall) whether the efficacy in storytelling of GBV improves or worsens when showing explicit recreations of said violence. This paper aims to determine whether it is necessary for plot or character development to have violence depicted graphically on television.

From the 3 shows I analysed certain patterns became apparent:

1. Women's bodies are frequently used as collateral without acknowledgement for the traumas and ramifications on said characters.
2. These tropes used in TV are not new. There are parallels from many other forms of media and literature including books, plays and comics.
3. The binary of what is feminist and what is misogynistic is blurred in many programmes. The binary of this does not seem to be followed and a show that depicts GBV graphically can also have other redeeming features.

FINDINGS

From my research, it seems that the presentation of violence is nuanced and will differ for every show analysed and encountered. While graphic violence can actually be a draw to some programmes, in the case of GBV, the importance comes in dealing with the after effects like *Happy Valley* or the lack thereof in some cases like *The Fall*. It is not to say that the latter is misogynistic, we have strong and nuanced female roles and what is depicted might be horrifying but it's not beyond belief. The show-runners obviously have a reason for showing this violence and as long as that reason is evident to an audience the violence does not become senseless and without point.