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## **Plots, Pressures and Penetration: Neo-Conservative Economics and the Injustice of Rape**

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for

“Milton Friedman, Naomi Klein and Jesus: A Salon Discussion”

A reading from 2 Samuel, chapter 13.

...David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. <sup>2</sup>Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. <sup>3</sup>But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. <sup>4</sup>He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." <sup>5</sup>Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.' " <sup>6</sup>So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

<sup>7</sup> Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." <sup>8</sup>So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. <sup>9</sup>Then she took the pan and set them<sup>a</sup> out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. <sup>10</sup>Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. <sup>11</sup>But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." <sup>12</sup>She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! <sup>13</sup>As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." <sup>14</sup>But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

<sup>15</sup> Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get out!" <sup>16</sup>But she said to him, "No, my brother;<sup>b</sup> for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. <sup>17</sup>He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her." <sup>18</sup>So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. <sup>19</sup>But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

<sup>20</sup> Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house.

*What happened to Tamar?* We know that Amnon was her half-brother, and that he lusts after her to the point of distraction, though not enough to want to marry her. Amnon distances his own relationship to Tamar by calling her only “Absolom’s sister.” [We know that Amnon is frustrated by the fact of Tamar’s virginity because it means that he cannot have an affair with her.] We know that Amnon plans to make Tamar vulnerable by isolating her from any form of protection (servants, other male relatives, etc.); he then plans to ask her to come to bed with him and, if she refuses, to violently force her. We know that Amnon executes his plan perfectly. He pressures Tamar, she refuses, even expressing fear and desperation. She reminds him that what he is doing is morally and legally wrong. When Amnon doesn’t give in, Tamar suggests that, as the King’s favoured son and heir to the throne, he could ask to marry her. Amnon again declines and then uses his physical strength to rape her. We know that after his lustful, sexual desire for Tamar is fulfilled, Amnon immediately hates her even more than he “loved” her in the beginning. Tamar pleads with Amnon not to send her away because to do so would be even greater than raping her was. Instead he sends her away, saying (as in the original Hebrew), “Get *this* out of here!” and bolt the door afterwards. As the story concludes, we know that Tamar tears her robes, and puts ashes on her head – she is a woman in mourning.

This story ends by telling us that Tamar is a desolate woman. *But what happened to Tamar?* Did she die a desolate woman in her brother’s house? Did she cry? Did she always feel like her dignity had been stolen from her? Was she able to talk about it? Did she have any friends to talk to? Did anyone listen to her? Did she find healing? Was she respected in her community? Did she ever marry? Did she live for very long?

The story of Tamar is a story of the violation of the weak by the powerful. Klein’s *Shock Doctrine* also tells the story – many stories – of the violation of the weak by the powerful. There’s the group of Amnon-like antagonists played by the World Bank, the IMF, the US Treasury Board, the US government, and of course the Chicago School of Economics. I’ll call them the Chicago Boys Consortia. The protagonist-Tamars are the countries who are shocked and imposed upon by the Chicago Consortia. In some cases these countries are in the West, but in many cases they are located in the global south; they are less developed countries, or LDCs.

According to the story the Chicago Boys are sick with lust for the LDC. The Chicago Boys scheme amongst each other in order to take advantage of the LDC. They put the LDC in a vulnerable position and ask it to join in on the typical Friedmanite policies: privatization, deregulation, and social spending cuts. The LDC declines, telling the Chicago Boys that Friedmanite policies are not what the people voted for, and is not in the best interests of the country. The Chicago Boys then disregards the wishes of the LDC, and uses its strength to penetrate the LDC with Friedmanite policies. These policies shock the country, and often lead to the ‘rape’ of resources, companies and entire industries as foreign companies and multinationals sweep in and buy up any valuables. Once the LDC is ‘raped’, the Chicago Boys force out all opposition;

where Tamar is merely ushered out and the door bolted, resisters in the LDC are rounded up and ushered *into* torture cells where their opposition is forcibly removed. The LDC mourns – for the loss of those disappeared, for the torture of its citizens, for the loss of savings, and for the loss of resources. The mourning, however, is silenced. Just as Tamar is told to be quiet and to not “take it to heart,” the LDC is told to be quiet with more shocks, and then silenced further as the international media fails to cover the extent of the tragedy or the rationale behind it. The LDC remains shocked and desolate.

And then...there is no story. Most victims of extraordinary brutality such as sexualized violence have a problem verbalizing – narrating – the story of how it happened. They literally cannot say what they have seen, or put into words what they have felt. Picking through the shards of their former life, survivors can no longer put the pieces into relation with each other to tell a coherent and compelling narrative about how things disintegrated. Therapists suggest that only time can truly heal these emotional wounds. The traumatized memory needs time to sort out what happened; it needs time to collect, compare and construct a coherent narrative. A key part of the process is feeling that the world is a safer place in which to tell complete stories. Often, it takes some time for narratives to come out. And when first told, the narratives are often repetitious, stereotyped and emotionless.

The first framework we use to respond to any stimulus is the *least* critical, and the *least* reflective. Given the time to critically consider stimuli we tend to evaluate them according to other frameworks – a framework of feminism, or anti-discrimination, a framework of justice, or of truth. It is only with time that a victim of sexual harassment or rape will be able to critically reflect on the experience...able to consider such things as power dynamics, or injustice.

Time heals stories. What was broken and disorganized can become coherent and whole. What was repetitious and panicked becomes calm and persistent. What was dull and emotionless, becomes pain-filled and compelling.

But these stories emerge from silence, or grow from incomplete story fragments articulated in the panic that comes immediately after brutality. And unfortunately, *that* makes them suspect – both in a court of law, in the media, and in the public.

By putting populations into a state of shock, the Chicago Boys ensure stories are suppressed. Then, when stories finally begin to emerge, they are discredited.

“If this really happened, why did you stay silent for so long?”

Why is there more detail each time you tell the story?”

The Chicago Boys ask these questions. The media asks these questions. And we, the equally suspicious public, ask these questions. And the questions are asked in the context of a culture that is partial to the facts, the specifics. Emotion,

reflection, and critical assessment are not welcome. Leave the analysis to the experts. You see, no matter what the answers to the questions are, there are assumptions:

Lies. False witness.

Opportunist. Fraudster. Fake.

Radical. Extremist. Activist.

Politically biased. Prejudiced. Partial.

And like that, the stories are silenced again.

Stories. Then silence.

This is a story of stories silenced by the powerful. This is a story of stories that are suspect when they finally re-emerge. This is a story of how a constructed reality impacts how we perceive the truth.

Let me tell you a story. Fifty percent of women will experience domestic violence in their lives. One in every three women will be a victim of sexualized violence. And yet...and yet woman battering and rape are still portrayed as *unusual* experiences – they are portrayed as an exception to the rule of non-violence in relationship. The battered or raped woman stands out against this rule as an abnormality, or an exception. Our brains generally try to explain exceptions through a model of deviance, thus the battered or raped woman is soon morphed from a victim to a (willing) deviant participant. If violence is ‘not supposed to happen’ or is ‘not supposed to happen to me,’ then it’s hard to narrate the violence credibly. The woman must first explain to herself why this particular ‘I’ was singled out for the violence that was not supposed to happen and why this particular ‘him’ did this. To tell such a story, a woman must actively narrate into powerful cultural headwinds, forces of opposition that appear natural. And yet, we know that her story *is natural*.

The story of *The Shock Doctrine* tells us that policies of economic repression must always be enforced through violence in the form of multiple shocks. Klein narrates this story into powerful cultural headwinds telling us that free voting and free markets go hand-in-hand to make a free people. The constructed cultural reality says: “The free person is free both politically and economically.” And so the Bolivians, the Peruvians, the Chileans, the Russians, the Poles, the Iraqis, the Sri Lankans....they are all left stunned and shocked, sorting out what was ‘not supposed to happen’ and why it did happen to ‘these particular people in this particular country.’ You see, just as victims of rape and domestic abuse must narrate their story into cultural headwinds and forces of opposition appearing natural, so too must the victims of the Chicago Boys policies.

The meta-narrative says that the norm is non-violent relationship. The meta-narrative says that the norm is free votes, free markets, and free people. And yet...and yet, we *know* that 50% of women are abused. And we *know* that one in

three women will be raped. And we *know* that where Friedmanite policies are implemented, torture and repression accompany them.<sup>1</sup>

And if the way it *really is* runs contrary to the way the meta-narrative tells us it is? Then it's time to change the meta-narrative.

Here is a story: A woman was sexually assaulted by a male co-worker for years. She tried to limit her contact with him, but on some things it was impossible. She just wished it would stop. She didn't want to quit her job, or lose her job...she just wanted the space and the peace to *do* her job. For years she kept silent, or told only a few close friends. More years pass. Then she heard that the man was running for office. And she speaks out. Suddenly, there's controversy. Doubt.

"Why didn't she speak up before this?"

"Did it really happen?"

"She's such an opportunist!"

She's mean.

Rude.

Liar.

Bitch.

In court lawyers question her, ask her to tell the story again. And again. They compare it with what's on record, and point out inconsistencies. "You said previously he touched your breast eight times, but today you said it was six. Was it six or eight?" She questions herself, unsure she's telling the right story.

The lawyers are surgeons. Snipping and cutting her statements from their contexts, comparing them with one another and discarding the inconsistencies as inaccurate lies. Each cut takes away credibility. Each cut de-narrativizes, makes the story less of what it was. Of what it is.

But we can get lost here in all the false correctness of specificity. In all the detail. We have a fetish with detail. Relax. Refocus. Look at the patterns.

Iran.

Guatemala.

Brazil

Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> There are not two separate projects: economic transformation to a free-market, and torture / terror. Is only one project of economic transformation that relies on the use of terror (p 117, p 140)

Chile.  
Uruguay.  
Argentina.  
UK.  
Poland.  
China.  
South Africa.  
Russia.  
Iraq.  
Sri Lanka.

1953 CIA-supported coup  
1954 CIA-supported coup  
1964 US-backed junta  
1965 US-backed junta  
1973US-backed coup  
1973 coup  
1983 Falklands War  
1988 voodoo politics  
1993 bombing of Parliament  
2003 invasion of Iraq  
2004 tsunami  
The Shah  
Colonel Castillo  
Marshal Branco  
General Suharto  
General Pinochet  
Bordaberry  
Thatcher  
Deng Xiaoping  
Mbeki  
Yeltsin  
Paul Bremmer  
Subversives tortured  
Leftists hunted down  
Indiscriminate massacres  
Civilians arrested  
Re-education  
Death flights  
Torture chambers  
Electroshock  
Cattle prod  
Controlling subversion  
Tiananmen square massacre  
Siberian work camps  
Red Zone Iraq

This is the pattern. It is a pattern of coups, voodoo politics and bombs. It is a pattern of brutal and illegitimate rule. It is a pattern of torture chambers, death camps, holding cells, imprisonment and shock. Always shock. This is the pattern. This *is* the meta-narrative.

So, what *did* happen to Tamar? We'll never know. But what *is* happening in some of the shocked countries is rebuilding, re-emergence. Not *rebirth*. Not *remaking*. The Chicago Boys never did succeed in shocking their patients into a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. Yes – they were violated. Yes – they were shocked. Yes – they were even silent.

But then there were whispers.

And the whispers became louder, and louder, and louder. The abused, the tortured, the dead? They named them. The torture centres? They bulldozed them and made parks. The mass graves? They exhumed them. The land? They took it back. And they told stories. Stories of what happened before...stories of how it happened...stories of why it will never happen again.