

Coelho, M.C. M. N. (2020) “‘We been haunted a long time’: raped women in Westerns, in S. Matheson (ed), *Women in the Western*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 187-200.

Homer's epic texts are widely thought to be foundational to Western Civilization, and his poetry has played a central role in shaping the characterization of heroic behavior. Should we view this narrative as rape-revenge story due to the the most beautiful women kidnapping (Helena *causa belli*)? If you turn to cinema and, more precisely, to westerns, a major genre sharing with Homeric epic some sort of heroic fight between civilization and the wilderness/barbarism, we will also find rape-revenge patterns composing the narrative and course of action. There are rape scenes which don't have a crucial importance to the development of the plot, but they are there. With this motive in mind, I want to explore a group of very different westerns, My aim is to investigate how rape (or attempt of raping) is shown, indicated or reported (by women or men) and the reaction of women to it. Following gender-oriented studies about rape (*Images of Rape: The 'Heroic' Tradition and its Alternatives*, Wolfthal, 2000), I propose in this chapter to indicate the complexity of picturing through images and/or words, an outrageous act that seems to shape stories and moralities regarding the (dis)honor, role and behavior of women.