

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

ARTS AND SCIENCES

RAPE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE: WRITING WOMEN AS
RAPEABLE

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A Thesis submitted to the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2007

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ABSTRACT

In the 1970's, with the second-wave feminist movement, sexual violence became a forefront topic in feminist studies and it continues to trouble the boundaries between disciplinary studies. When I refer to rape, I consider it a criminal act, a violent sexual invasion on the body in connection to hegemonic discourse, resulting in sexual victimization. Looking at the cultural representation of rape in literature allows us to understand the cultural fears and fascinations with rape while respecting the victims of assault. Looking at novels beginning in the late 1930's and continuing to the present, I hope to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse surrounding rape. Through the corporeal acts of sexual violence, we can understand ways the writer socially constructs sexuality, race, and gender and ways fictional assault both is scripted by and scripts cultural norms.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1970's, with the second-wave feminist movement, sexual violence became a central topic in feminist studies and it has continued to trouble the boundaries between disciplinary studies. When I refer to rape, I consider it a criminal act, a violent sexual invasion on the body in connection to hegemonic discourse, resulting in sexual victimization. Looking at the cultural representation of rape in literature allows us to understand the cultural fears and fascinations with rape while respecting the victims of assault. Looking at novels beginning in the late 1930's and continuing to the present, I hope to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse surrounding rape. Through the corporeal acts of sexual violence, we can understand ways the writer socially constructs sexuality, race, and gender and ways fictional assault both is scripted by and scripts cultural norms.

First, I want to demonstrate ways society positions women as inherently rapeable. Second, I want to explore ways in which rape taboos reinforce, develop, and trouble this passive position. Last, I want to look at problems with defining rape and explore representative selections of the masculine script. The gender politics behind rape rhetoric demonstrate that the real issue is not rape but rather the polar gender boundaries that position women as passive, and therefore rapeable and men as aggressive and therefore rapists. Rape and its fictional representations becomes a vehicle to explore a sex culture that dramatizes gender politics. Throughout my work, I focus on women, not because men are not raped, but rather because "woman" is no longer a subject but rather a position. As a result of a strong cognitive gender system, "woman" represents a place of passivity; if a man is raped, this fact forces him into the position of "woman."

In chapter 1, "Writing Woman as Rapeable," I analyze the corporeal acts of sexual violence and the cognitive system that writes women as rapeable within these texts: Ann Petry's The Street, Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, M.F. Beal's Angel Dance, Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina, and Margaret Atwood's The Blind Assassin. Fictional representations of rape indicate several crucial elements that contribute toward rape. I want to examine the way in which these novels dramatize the polar gender boundaries, casting women as victims, vulnerable to rape. The male rapists

label women as transgressive, deviant, and expendable in order to justify their assault, further reinforcing gender hegemony. Following an assault, women are ostracized in and by the texts as a result of their sexual victimization, helping to perpetuate women in the position of passivity.

The feminist outcry surrounding rape in the 1970's brought rape from a silent topic to a public concern and fear. With this shift toward sexual liberation, rape became more apparent in public discourse. During the sixties the public turned its attention to sexuality and gender roles. As Pamela Barnett demonstrates in Dangerous Desires, “[e]xpressions of sexual freedoms like interracial and homosexual sex obviously have a long history prior to 1967, but a new, more open and permissive cultural attitude circulated then, one that manifested itself in popular culture and representation” (xxi). Following the sexual liberation of that era, the second wave of feminism also took a direct interest in sexuality and sexual violence. A common goal of feminists in the 1970's was to bring a voice to the silence surrounding rape. Parallel to this emphasis on the part of second-wave feminism, rape became a much more open topic in literature. Earlier novels may have alluded to or talked about sexual violence, but it is not until the 1970's – with the exception of Ann Pertry's The Street – that rape becomes more public in literature. Petry's novel was published in the 1940's, only several years after Margaret Mitchell published Gone With The Wind in 1939. Petry's novel publicly confronts rape, drawing attention to the sexual gender script in violent sex, and makes rape a public concern. Now, in the early twenty-first century more than ever before, the culture bombards us with fears and fascinations of rape; it is especially important to examine what these observations tell us about hegemonic discourse. What does rape tell us about culture?

In 2005, I counseled rape survivors and those connected with rape. When I began researching rape, I would often read books with “RAPE” written on the cover. During all of my experiences, the first question people often asked was whether or not I had been raped. What is it about rape ideology prompts this question? When sitting across from a rape survivor in the hospital at 3:00 am, while blue handprints are still appearing around her neck as she retells the horrific crime, why does she ask my reasons for involving myself in anything that has to do with rape? In my experience, this rape question stems

from numerous reasons regarding the fears, fascinations, and the public opinion of rape. The answer to their question was always irrelevant. What was important was the reason for asking. While theories regarding rape have covered significant ground, there is still important work our culture has left uncovered. By exploring rape in literature, I hope to uncover issues that contribute toward a culture where the first mention of rape brings the question of another person's involvement.

The proliferated images of rape dramatize the public's fears and fantasies regarding rape. I will explore ways the texts I have listed above represent this fear and fascination with rape. My goal is to understand ways rape consciousness and fictional representations of sexual victimization reinforce the cognitive system that writes women as rapeable. With the second-wave feminist movement, scholars such as Susan Brownmiller and Catherine MacKinnon introduced groundbreaking analyses of rape. While Brownmiller argues rape is about power rather than sex and MacKinnon argues that all heterosexual intercourse is rape, both offer major contributions to feminist philosophies regarding rape. In 1975, Brownmiller gave a detailed review of rape history in Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape. She explored rape in connection to biblical times, war, marital and date rape, and more. Her groundbreaking text introduced her theory that rape is about power rather than sex. Her work includes statistics and hard evidence toward her analysis of rape but focused on moments of crisis. She explores the rapist's identity, the public's fears and desires, myths surrounding assault, real rape situations, and the public view of those assaults. Brownmiller utilizes the history of rape to examine the current condition concerning rape.

Many scholars believe there are two major theories regarding rape: those who believe rape is about power, such as Brownmiller, and those such as MacKinnon, consider all heterosexual intercourse as rape. MacKinnon's "Rape: On Coercion and Consent," which appears in the 1997 collection of essays Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory, looks at the definition of rape and/or the lack of definition. MacKinnon has several texts that focus on sexuality, but many of these texts center on legal issues and pornography rather than on sexual violence. In this thesis I concentrate on her essay "Rape: On Coercion and Consent" because it best summarizes her theories on sexual violence. Focusing on the concrete reality and the repercussion of

rape, she attempts to analyze the meaning of consent: “Women’s sexuality is, socially, a thing to be stolen, sold, bought, bartered, or exchanged by others. But women never own or possess it, and men never treat it in law or in life, with the solicitude with which they treat property” (43). She struggles with the idea that some women are more rapeable than others, stating:

All women are divided into parallel provinces, their actual consent counting to the degree that they diverge from the paradigm case in their category. Virtuous women, like young girls, are unconsenting, whores, unrapable. (46)

MacKinnon works within binary oppositions to explore femininity and race in order to critique the definition of rape and the stereotypes reinforcing this definition.

While Brownmiller and MacKinnon may have laid the foundation for the direction of feminist theory today, where does that leave us now? Contemporary feminist theory has quietly let rape fall into the background and focuses instead on issues of pornography and sexuality. If and when feminists do tackle rape issues, they focus on the female psyche, advocating speaking out. Katie Roiphe demonstrates this shift in The Morning After: “the rape crisis movement peddles images of gender relations that deny female desire and infantilize women” (65). A range of scholars and social commentators condemned Roiphe and her book, focusing on this obviously loaded reference to “peddl[ing].” Still Roiphe’s book still plays an important role in literary discourse. While her theories continued to be discredited, she alludes to several important issues surrounding rape crisis. Through labeling women as “victims” and “survivors,” Roiphe and others insinuate that a woman often finds identity as a woman who was raped. When “postmodern feminists do tackle rape and antirape politics, they seem unable to do so in any other way than in the psychologizing and victim-blaming terms that have dominated hegemonic approaches to gendered violence in contemporary culture” (Mardorossian 747). Current feminist theory looks at rape the same way society looks at rape, focusing on the female victim and reinforcing the hegemonic discourse surrounding rape. While there are contemporary feminists, such as Wendy Brown who alludes to rape crisis, they mostly focus on breaking down the existing arguments rather than supplying their own.

In chapter 2, “Rape Fantasy,” I analyze the rape script in terms of fantasy. Fantasy has been central to the debate regarding sexuality. Historically, “rape fantasy” referred to myths that women want to be raped and men want to rape and reinforced a rape script wherein women are passive and men are powerful. However, rape is now challenged by female fantasies where the female sexuality is not passive. Through Petry’s The Street, Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, Beal’s Angel Dance, Rossner’s Looking for Mr. Goodbar, and Jong’s Fear of Flying, I want to examine varieties of historical rape fantasy and ways in which these texts trouble rape fantasy.

Through fantasy I want to examine how these texts simultaneously reinforce and challenge rape scripts. Through these texts we find that rape scripts are actually gendered sexuality scripts. As Roiphe stated, “The crisis is not a rape crisis, but a crisis in sexual identity” (26). Fantasy demonstrates that violent and non-violent sex shares the same script that we see in rape narratives, illuminating that it is not really about understanding the rape script but rather the gendered sexuality script that plays itself out in both violent and non-violent sex.

In Chapter 3, “The Trouble with Rape: Looking at the Male Side,” I deconstruct the problems defining rape, consent, and coercion. While it may be necessary to define rape for legal issues, doing so is irrelevant for the rape crisis movement. Looking at the male script, both sexually and in rape, it makes evident that we need to focus on the gendered sexuality script that reinforces rape. The male characters who rape in these narratives never, in fact, define their actions as rape but rather simply as sex. Here I examine texts such as Petry’s The Street, Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, Beal’s Angel Dance, Rossner’s Looking for Mr. Goodbar, Jong’s Fear of Flying, and Morrison’s The Bluest Eye. Analysis of the male script calls attention to the sexual gender politics that these novels’ respective characters play out in violent and nonviolent sex.

As each of these texts is grounded in its historical influences, I will illustrate disturbing patterns that are persistent throughout different rape narratives and ways these texts transform the rape trope through troubling sexual gender roles. As rape is so politically charged, I do not want to denote rape but rather through fictional representations I want to explore social issues of sexuality and gender through the rape trope. As Pamela Barnett demonstrates in Dangerous Desires, “rape reestablishes and

even fortifies binary notions of identity” (Introduction). I will examine the “binary notions of identity” which are played out in sexual assault.

As Sabine Sielke demonstrates in Reading Rape, interpretations of rape “limit our understanding of sexual violence while producing norms of sexuality in the process” (3). All of the texts I discuss can, in some ways, produce and reinforce myths surrounding sexuality, gender identity, and rape, but more importantly, these texts challenge and trouble the ideologies surrounding a sexual gender script.

Many feminists have been denounced for the way in which they present rape as something women should fear from every man. I want to examine sexual violence for the sexual gender script these texts subsequently produce in rape narratives. I do not want to give the impression in my work that I devalue the previous works of feminist theories on rape. Previous critics such as Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin have made major contributions to the field, but I do take issue with their use of language and female subjectivity. I attempt to look at rape and examine a full range of complexities surrounding sexual assault and the sexual gender issues rather than focusing on what numerous feminists have termed “rape victims.” I attempt to examine these women as women who have been sexually assaulted, rather than placing their identity in their assault. In my work I look at rape narratives for the persistent patterns surrounding rape and ways in which those patterns are challenged. I am looking at women who are raped in the text but attempt to examine the ideologies surrounding their situation without labeling them as victims and connecting their assault to their identity.

CHAPTER 1

WRITING WOMEN AS RAPEABLE

Representations of rape, sexual assault, and attempted sexual assault have become increasingly apparent in public discourse. While rape and its fictional representation have been a large topic, the gap between the fictional representation and scripted reality is vague. While reported rapes offer insight into cultural factors, “one must approach all statistics with caution,” as Susan Brownmiller demonstrated three decades past, given that “there are many acts of rape, few arrests and still fewer convictions, a huge gulf of unavailable information unfortunately exists” (174). The fictional representation of rape echoes the cultural reality but steps outside the individual story and into a world where rape exists “as a context independent of its occurrence as a discrete event... and contributes to the social positioning of women and men and shapes the cognitive systems that make rape thinkable” (Higgins 3). The positioning of gender politics and the absent or silent female body scripts women as rapeable. Through Ann Petry’s The Street, Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, M.F. Beal’s Angel Dance, and Dorothy Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, I attempt to make connections between the fictional account of sexual assault and the reality, and ways both drive cultural norms.

Fictional representations of rape indicate several crucial elements that contribute toward rape. These novels dramatize the polar gender boundaries, casting women as victims, vulnerable to rape. The texts, and the characters in the texts, label women as transgressive, deviant, and expendable, and such labeling too often leads to an assault. Following an assault, women are ostracized in and by the texts as a result of their sexual victimization. I do not want to give the impression that these women are constantly silent and without agency but rather am emphasizing that these texts depict women as victims, vulnerable despite their agency. In the novel’s introduction Petry establishes Lutie, her heroine, as a victim:

The wind lifted Lutie Johnson's hair away from the back of her neck so that she felt suddenly naked and bald, for hair had been resting softly and warmly against her skin. She shivered as the cold fingers of the wind touched the back of her neck, explored the sides of her head...The wind pried at the red skullcap on her head, and as though angered because it couldn't tear it loose from its firm anchorage of bobby pins...It smacked against her ear as though it were giving her a final, exasperated blow as proof of its displeasure in not being able to make her move on. (3-4)

This passage depicts the wind violently and sexually assaulting Lutie, foreshadowing her later assaults and demonstrating her status as a victim. While Lutie is a fighter, determined to move to a different street, fight social injustice, and save her son, she fails at each attempt and is bound for just another "goddamned street." Lutie, "the protagonist, is not just the victim of the street; a complex character, she is both a conscious and unconscious fighter and rebel" (Lattin 69). Similar to Lutie, Kat, a lesbian detective in Angel Dance, is physically, mentally, and emotionally strong.

Throughout the novel Kat is a woman who can defend herself, arm-wrestle, and fight, but Beal ultimately depicts Kat as a victim of rape resulting from her political involvement in a government case surrounding drugs and rape. Surprisingly, after a man attacks, rapes, and beats Kat, she states, "I've been hurt worse and it wasn't even my first rape if your operating definition for rape is 'forces sexual intercourse'" (122). As Brownmiller noted in Against Our Will, women "are trained to be rape victims" (309). At an early age women learn that rape is something that happens to their sex, "something awful that happens to females: it is the dark at the top of the stairs, the indefinable abyss that is just around the corner, and unless we watch our step it might be our destiny" (309). A patriarchal philosophy of gender and female sexuality trains women to be victims of rape. For Lutie, the economic system and race force her to remain on the street, but ironically, she "attempts to live her life according to principles that she has no real hope of effectively deploying in a racist and segregated society" (Hicks 95). Beal writes Kat as a repetitive victim of rape. Each text writes the woman as a victim of her sex, race, and class.

One interesting aspect is that these women, as with most fictional female victims, are without any male relationships such as a father or husband. The absent father plays a disturbing role in the vulnerability of these females. In The Street, Lutie leaves her father's house, stating, "The thing that really mattered was getting away from Pop and his raddled women, and anything was better than that" (4). Lutie's economic situation forces her to leave her husband for work, and as a result of her absence, he abandons her for another woman. This abandonment forces Lutie, alone with her eight-year-old son, to live on the crowded street.

The absent father plays a more prominent role in fictional representations of children who suffer sexual assault. In Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina, Anne Boatwright, also known as Bone, is a bastard in a family full of strong self-identity. Unlike her family members, Anne struggles with finding identity. Marked literally from birth, Anne is without a father's protection. As the title makes clear, Anne is a bastard and the absence of any direct male protection leaves her vulnerable to her stepfather's advances. With her contrasting appearance, Anne appears an outcast in her close family. Anne notices the similar family appearance of blond hair and gold eyes, stating: "My mouth wasn't like that, or my face either. Worse, my black eyes had no gold. I didn't look like anybody at all" (30). Speculation leads the reader to believe she must look like her absent father, drawing attention to her illegitimacy and separating her from her family. When comparing Anne to her father, her grandmother tells her, "None of us quiet, all of us fighters. None of us got those blue eyes, and no one but you got that blue-black hair. Lord, you were a strange thing! You were like fat red-faced doll with all that black black hair. Just as quiet and sweet-natured as he used to be" (27). Complicating matters more, Anne's mother is often absent; ironically, her mother is absent during Anne's birth. The mother wakes after a car wreck to discover that her daughter has been "certified a bastard by the state of South Carolina" (3). The mother often tries to rectify Anne's bastard status but fails:

Mama always said it would never have happened if she'd been awake. "After all," she told my aunt Alma, "they don't ask for a marriage license before they put you

up on the table.” She was convinced that she could have bluffed her way through it, said she was married firmly enough that no one would have questioned her. (3)

The mother’s belief that she could have fictionalized a marriage is evidence that a father’s protection is necessary while a father could be physically absent. It is important to note that Anne does in fact have a father, but the characters only speak of him in connection to Anne’s unusual looks; otherwise, he is absent from the text.

In a story about “family history and the violence of racial, class, and sexual victimization” (Horeck 37), the father’s absence is most prominent. Brownmiller explored the issues surrounding the sexual assault of children to find that society often blames children and mothers for the assault (276). As a result of Anne’s mother’s absence at her birth, the government calls attention to her lack of paternal protection. Anne’s mother later marries Anne’s stepfather, Glen, who sexually assaults Anne. It is interesting to note that Anne has a younger sister, who is legitimate and whom the stepfather does not assault. As Brownmiller states, “Rape is a man’s act, whether it is male of female man and whether it is a man relatively permanently or relatively temporarily; and being raped is a woman’s experience, whether it is a female or male woman and whether it is a woman relatively permanently or relatively temporarily” (5). If rape is a crime against women, is a crime against a child also against her male protectors? Is it easier for society to accept a child’s sexual assault if a father is absent, or does this absence reinforce the mother’s blame? The assault “of children is an outrage to which people universally react in uncontained horror” (Brownmiller 272). While it is understandable that a female child is vulnerable to sexual assault, it is surprising that strong women such as Lutie and Kat share this same vulnerability. As their vulnerability demonstrates, the texts write women as being as vulnerable as children, reinforcing the necessity of masculine protection.

The social constructs that position women as vulnerable also encourage men to label women as transgressive, a behavior that men punish with rape. In Bastard Out of Carolina, society punishes Anne for her mother’s unconscious state at her birth, which results in her label of Bastard, as well as for her mother’s absence throughout the text. While Anne’s bastardry is not the result of her own actions, her stepfather punishes Anne

for her mother's behavior and in her mother's absence. As money gets tighter for the family, Anne's mother must work later hours, and in her absence Glen molests Anne:

He had one of the short routes, not much money to be made on it, and not enough work to make it full-time. He came home at odd hours, early and late. Mama started working later and later, for whatever money she could get, and I stayed out of the house as much as I could. If I went home when he was there and Mama wasn't, he was always finding something I'd done, something I had to be told, something he just had to do because he loved me. And he did love me. He told me so over and over again, holding my body tight to his, his hands shaking as they moved restlessly, endlessly, over my belly, ass, and thighs. (108)

Glen blames Anne for her mother's absence, stating "You're the one. You're the reason. She loves me, I know it. But it's you, you're the one gets in the way. You make me crazy and you make her ashamed, ashamed of you and ashamed of loving me. It ain't right. It ain't right her leaving me because of you. It ain't right" (283). At the final scene between Anne and Glen, he tells her, "'You're not even thirteen years old, girl. You don't say what you do. I'm your daddy. I say what you do'" (282). At Bone's refusal to comply with his wishes he rapes her and repeats, "You'll learn," and "I'll teach you, I'll teach you" (285). As Brownmiller noted:

The unholy silence that shrouds the interfamily sexual abuse of children and prevents a realistic appraisal of its true incidence and meaning is rooted in the same patriarchal philosophy of sexual private property that shaped and determined historic male attitudes toward rape. For if a woman was a man's original corporal property, then children were, and are, a wholly owned subsidiary. (281)

Glen uses Anne's transgressive behavior as his reason for raping her, punishing her for her deviant behavior, taking advantage of his position as an authority figure in her life.

Similarly, Lutie, the protagonist from The Street, must leave her husband for work, as a result of his unemployment, suggesting that the male protection depends on the financial situation. A common and misleading myth suggests rape happens to the working class females: “The ideology of rape is fueled by cultural values that are perpetuated at every level of our society” (Brownmiller 389). The socio-economic background of the female victims forces them into positions that make them more vulnerable to assault. As Sharon Stockton demonstrates in The Economics of Fantasy, few narratives consider the “negative social and economic conditions that might tragically and/or horrifically incline individuals toward violence, sexual or otherwise” (12). Where few authors tackle the social and economic conditions connected to rapists, numerous authors consider the social and economic conditions that make women vulnerable to these assaults. As both Petry and Allison demonstrate with their female victims, economics often plays a part in female vulnerability. Petry writes Lutie as vulnerable in the city as a result of her absent husband; her husband’s absence can be attributed to economics. Similarly, Allison writes Anne as vulnerable in her mother’s absence; her mother’s absence can also be attributed to economics.

Men rape women for numerous reasons but most often as “punishment for being uppity, for getting out of line, for failing to recognize one’s place, for assuming sexual freedoms, or for behavior no more proactive than walking down the wrong road at night in the wrong part of town and presenting a convenient, isolated target for a group of hatred and rage” (Brownmiller 254-55). Anne’s stepfather punishes her for “getting out of line” and her mother’s absence, playing off both females’ transgressive behavior.

In Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, Cholly sexually assaults his daughter, Pecola, and the text suggests he does so as a result of an experience he had had with Darlene: “*The Bluest Eye*, for instance, depicts the father’s sexual aggression against his daughter as resulting to a considerable degree from his own troubled first sexual experience” (Sielke 152). Chronologically, the first assault is that of Cholly and Darlene. Darlene initiates the sexual activity with Cholly, demonstrating transgressive behavior that Cholly later repeats in his treatment of Pecola. Cholly, as a child, had sneaked away from his aunt’s funeral to walk with Darlene, and when “he got his hand in her bloomers, she suddenly stopped laughing and looked serious. Cholly, frightened, was about to take his hand

away, but she held his wrist so he couldn't move it" (147). Darlene demonstrates transgressive behavior by forcing Cholly to touch her. During their sexual act, two white men show up and force Cholly to continue to have sex with Darlene while they watch. During this assault on both Cholly and Darlene, the reader gets the first glimpse of Cholly's violence. He blames Darlene for the encounter and, as the narrator informs us, "He hated her. He almost wished he could do it – hard, long, and painfully, he hated her so much" (148). Cholly punishes Pecola with rape, taking out his anger against women on Pecola as a result of another woman's transgressive behavior and the previous assault on him. Does Cholly see all women, in particular black women, as sexually transgressive because of Darlene and their experience? Cholly certainly fears losing his masculine power and justifies his masculinity, believing that he is a man free "to take a woman's insults, for his body had already conquered hers. Free even to knock her in the head, for he had already cradled that head in his arms. Free to be gentle when she was sick or mop her floor, for she knew what and where his maleness was" (159). This passage depicts Cholly's satisfaction in overpowering the female body. Cholly objectifies the female body and understands it as something for him to conquer and control. Sex becomes a demonstration of power for Cholly, whereas Morrison's text continuously depicts Pecola as a victim in sexual and nonsexual encounters.

Transgressive behavior is a common theme surrounding rape and, as these particular texts illustrate, hegemonic discourse of the female body politic encourages men to punish women with assault for transgressive behavior. As bell hooks noted in "Selling Hot Pussy," black women face a different challenge dealing with sexuality: "[b]ombarded with images representing the black female body as expendable" and extremely sexual, the public labels black women as transgressive (117). Hooks states, "[u]ndesirable in the conventional sense, which defines beauty and sexuality as desirable only to the extent that it is idealized and unattainable, the black female body gains attention only when it is synonymous with accessibility, availability, when it is sexually deviant" (117). Black women face a difficult challenge regarding rape, including the racist stereotype of being sexually deviant. Catherine MacKinnon explores the idea of woman as rapable in her essay "Rape: On Coercion and Consent":

All women are divided into parallel provinces, their actual consent counting to the degree they diverge from the paradigm case in their category. Virtuous women, like young girls, are unconsenting, virginal, rapable. Unvirtuous women, like wives and prostitutes, are consenting, whores, unrapable. (46)

While I agree that hegemonic discourse establishes a woman's vulnerability to sexual assault based on an ambiguous ideology of her sexuality, I disagree that some women are unrapeable. The fictional representation of sexual assault, against women such as Kat, whom people supposedly see as a whore, demonstrates these women are in fact rapeable. If a woman's consent depends on her status within the hegemonic discourse, a black woman-- who already has the label "transgressive"—is even more vulnerable to violence and rape. As other scholars have noted, the "sexuality of blacks, and of black women in particular, transformed into the very icon of deviant sexuality" (Sielke 16). Petry's Lutie, a black woman, is vulnerable to the black female stereotype that labels the black female body as transgressive. Before moving to the city, Lutie works for a white family, who assume she is promiscuous because of her black skin:

Apparently it was an automatic reaction of white people – if a girl was colored and fairly young, why, it stood to reason she had to be a prostitute. If not that – at least sleeping with her would be just a simple matter, for all one had to do was make the request. In fact, white men wouldn't even have to do the asking because the girl would ask them on sight. (45)

Several men and Mrs. Hedges, who runs a "fairly well-kept whorehouse" (57), proposition Lutie for sex with promises of financial gain. For example after Lutie meets Boots, a black man singing in a bar, he propositions her, stating: "You don't have to be poor any more. Not after tonight. I'll see to that. All you got to do from now is just be nice to me, baby" (225). Both Boots and the Super attack Lutie, assuming that they have a right to her body. Lutie constantly struggles with the stereotype that the black female body is sexually available and expendable. When she tries to audition for a singing career, Mr. Crosse, a white man, tells her that a "good-looking girl like you shouldn't

have to worry about money.... In fact, if you and me can get together a couple of nights a week in Harlem, those lessons won't cost you a cent. No sir, not a cent" (321). Lutie immediately gets angry: "Yes, she thought, if you were born black and not too ugly, this is what you get, this is what you find" (321). More enraged at the thought that she would succumb because he is white and she is poor, she grabs the inkwell on the desk and throws it in the man's face, literally painting him black, lashing out against the stereotype and men: "When Lutie hurls an inkwell full force in [Crosse's] face, transforming his piglike countenance into blackface (322), she forces herself to acknowledge the black violator yet at the same time insinuates that all black aggressors are the product of white culture" (Sielke 134).

Petry's The Street "highlights how notions of sexuality and sexual violence are framed by established racialized and class-inflicted discourse" (Sielke 117). The social hierarchy that enrages working-class men and results in Lutie's numerous sexual propositions and sexual victimization also contains her and the rest of the black community living on the street. The social factors that influence Lutie's vulnerability to sexual assault also reinforce her class position. This social repression is most identifiable when the text depicts Lutie and other black characters as animalistic, a common depiction of transgressive women and particularly black women. The narrator dehumanizes the black characters with animalistic terms. For example, people in the city, or rather black people in the city, turn into animals when they are the most aware of the social injustice that objectifies and contains them. When Lutie refers to Crosse, she says he had "small pig eyes engulfed in the fat of his face" (322). After Jones, the Super, attacks Lutie, the narrator informs the reader that "Jones had never been the same after Mis' Johnson moved in, and he got worse after that night he tried to pull her down in the cellar; got so bad, in fact, that living with him was like being shut up with an animal – a sick crazy animal" (354). Previous scholars have noted that "Lutie is blinded by an American ideology of individualism and self-making that renders invisible the insurmountable barriers created by racial prejudice" (Hicks 94). As the novel progresses, Lutie becomes increasingly aware of the social barriers that confine her. The barriers are in fact the literal small room apartments, the dark hallways, and the street, as well as the obscure

patriarchal system that contains them. Frustrated with her situation and confinements, Lutie

thought of the animals at the Zoo. She and Bud had gone there on Sunday afternoon. They arrived in time to see the lions and tigers being fed. There was a moment, before the great hunks of red meat were thrust into the cages, when the big cats prowled back and forth, desperate, raging, ravening. They walked in a space even smaller than the confines of the cages make necessary, moving in an area just barely the length of their bodies. A few steps up and turn. A few steps down and turn. They were weaving back and forth, growling, roaring, raging at the bars that kept them from the meat. (325)

Lutie finds she is turning into animals like at the zoo, “frightened at the sight and the sound of such uncontrolled savagery. She was becoming something like that” (325). Recognizing the confinements fills her with rage and hatred of the white patriarchal system that contains her. As Lutie becomes more enraged about her circumstances, she becomes more animalistic and more transgressive. Yet, equally striking, Jones and Boots become more aggressive toward Lutie as they feel their own social confinements. For example, Boots has fantasies about Lutie from their first meeting, but as the novel progresses he becomes more animalistic and more violent. The men’s sexual propositions, rage, and attacks toward Lutie stream from the confining environment, essentially writing women as victims and rapable. As McKay demonstrates, the “cultural meaning of rape is rooted in a symbiosis of racism and sexism that has tolerated the acting out of male aggression against women and, in particular black women” 248). Stamped with the sexual-deviant stereotype of black women and confined in a racist system that enrages black men, black women in the text in fact face exploitation at every turn.

Twin operations of racism and sexism within the texts write these women as victims of the patriarchal system, as well as of the men who attack them. While black women are vulnerable to a deviant stereotype as a result of race, society holds white women to an unattainable sexual purity, demonstrating paradigmatic concepts of

sexuality for gender and race. Beal's Angel Dance explores two cases of sexual assault. Kat, a lesbian Chicana detective, sets out to discover the political mystery surrounding Angel. Beal creates a novel full of sexual violence in the center of political chaos. Two particular scenes demonstrate sexual violence as punishment for transgressive behavior. Angel, a white writer, is taken into custody, sexually assaulted, and plied for information. A "well-tanned white man in his forties, thick-skinned and a little heavy in the jaw" attacks and rapes Kat (120). As with the other texts, Kat struggles between silence and voice. At first she asks, "Why me" but thinks, "I guess I should have screamed instead" (119). During one moment she attempts to fight her attacker but he hits her, and from there she "couldn't move a muscle, trying to work out some way to deal with what was happening" (120). Kat is a regular fighter throughout the novel, but at the end of her attack she thinks

I would have told him to kill me unless he wanted me to do it to him, but the time he took to shove up and off and zip his fly wasn't enough to give me the breath I needed even if he'd turned loose of the gun, which he hadn't. I think he said, "One more chance. Tell your friends" before he left me to figure out who they were. (121)

The assault is a warning, a planned attack; there "was an odd tentativeness to his manipulations...he was acting to plan" (120). Each woman is attacked as a result of her political involvement in a case surrounding drugs and rape. The text illustrates women as both vulnerable and transgressive as a result of their deviant behavior toward a corrupt government.

After her attacker deserts the area, Kat states she is "simply filthy, soiled beyond salvation, near-helpless on my knees, crawling as best I could in search of a broken bottle to attack the cuffs" (123). Similar to Petry's treatment of Lutie, Beal's text dehumanizes Kat with animalistic terms: "I was an injured animal: I had been reduced to that. I tried to feel angry but it was too late or too early. I even tried to be glad I was still alive but it hurt too bad. Finally I just tried to fall away into blackness all around me and that worked" (125). Throughout the novel, Beal's text depicts Kat as a deviant character, a

lesbian detective which other characters regard as butch. Kat refers to herself and other character as “socio-politico-sexual-intellectual deviants” (117). A single stranger rapes Kat, whereas Angel is “kidnapped and taken someplace under the influence of drugs and photographed with half a dozen assorted unidentified black men” (200). Angel doesn’t have any memory of the attack and the only evidence is several disturbing, violent, and sexual pictures and “electrode scars” on her genitals (204). Their involvement and transgressive behavior toward the hetero/patriarchal capitalist system and their individual assaults illuminate their political powerlessness.

The intensely patriarchal systems within these texts write women as vulnerable and position them as rapeable regardless of their agency, voice, or power. Whereas the attackers deem these women as transgressive and punish them with sexual assault, society further punishes them as a result of their assaults. As children, Pecola from The Bluest Eye and Anne from Bastard Out of Carolina are by far the most innocent characters, but society punishes them after they had been assaulted, along with women who have more agency, such as Lutie from The Street. The weakness and/or vulnerability that labels women as transgressive and rapeable also assists in punishing them after they are attacked.

Society often blames women for their attack, placing responsibility on them for being raped. As Mackinnon demonstrates, society labels women in categories of virtuous to promiscuous, some rapeable while others are not (46). Toni Morrison calls attention to the myth that women are to blame with her satirical writing of a 12-year-old child. After Pecola is raped and impregnated by her father, the women in the community discuss the assault as partly Pecola’s responsibility. Laying blame on Pecola includes such statements as, “the girl was always foolish” and “She carry some of the blame” (189). When one woman questions this judgment by stating “Oh, come on. She ain’t but twelve or so,” the reply is, “Yeah. But you never know. How come she didn’t fight him?” (189). The women are unaware of the circumstances but rather assume that the 12-year-old girl must be partly to blame for her rape. Pecola is blamed for her assault as a result of lacking proof that she refused to consent. As MacKinnon points out in her discussion of legal issues surrounding rape, “[t]he implicit social standard becomes: if a woman

probably could not prove it in court, it was not rape” (50). As a result of the ambiguous circumstances, Pecola is held accountable for the assault.

As a result of the ideologies regarding assault, women and children are accountable for their assault and therefore punished after an assault. Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina writes Anne as vulnerable as a result of her father’s and occasionally her mother’s absence, as I have demonstrated previously, but after Anne’s attack she is further punished through her mother’s absence. Anne’s mother finds her and Glen during the assault and rushes Anne to the car, but she feels torn between leaving Glen and helping her child. Before leaving for the hospital, Anne’s mother holds Glen while Anne is thinking, “I’d said I could never hate her, but I hated her now for the way she held him, the way she stood there crying over him. Could she love me and still hold him like that?” (291). Anne’s mother takes her to the hospital and leaves her there alone for her aunts to find and look after: “Mama had been there, had carried me in from the car and make the doctor look at me right away.... I looked at the nurse’s face and then looked for Mama, but she was gone. Before she could give her name or mine, she had disappeared” (294). Anne repeatedly asks for her mother and her mother’s location, but the other characters in the text are unaware. As a result of the mother’s absence, Anne becomes untouchable and unlovable. In her desperation for her mother, she feels abandoned: “No one cared about me. I didn’t even care about myself anymore.... My Mama had abandoned me, and that was the only thing that mattered” (297, 302). Anne also demonstrates feelings of guilt for having been sexually assaulted but more so with her mother’s absence.

It is all too common that a victim will feel guilt after an assault and, as Brownmiller noted, this guilt leads to a “natural reluctance on the part of women to admit that sexual abuse has occurred” (142). In Lutie’s case she, like Anne, wonders “if there was something about her that subtly suggested to the Super that she would welcome his love-making, wondering if the same thing had led Mrs. Hedges to believe that she would leap at the opportunity to make money sleeping with white men” (Petry 240-41). Two men, Boots and Jones, attempt to rape Lutie. During the last attack she defends herself against Boots, and her defense turns into murder. As a result of this action, the “only thing she could do was go away and never come back, because the best thing that could happen to Bub would be for him never to know that his mother was a murderer” (433).

The novel ends with Lutie, alone without her son, traveling on a train to a different city. Her original goal to make a life for her and her son has failed, and all she can think is “it was that god-damned street” (436). The ambiguous circumstances that force Lutie to flee the city and her son also create insanity in Pecola.

Morrison’s The Bluest Eye centers on this especially vulnerable member of a poor black community. After her father impregnates Pecola, she “stepped into madness.... The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sap green days, walking up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear” (204). Pecola retreats into a state of madness, a world where she is alone and can believe she has attained blue eyes. As a result of her father’s assault, her community punishes her, and “the severity of the experience figures in the victim’s madness and premature death” (Sielke 152). After the attack on Pecola, the community is suddenly surrounded by death. The community becomes dark and sterile, a place where even the “marigolds did not grow” (Morrison 4). The sexual assault and the forces leading into the assault completely destroy Pecola and the novel’s black community.

The sexual offenders in these texts justify their actions by imposing transgressive behavior on their victims. Rape becomes a punishment for females who step out of line or present deviant behavior. In some cases men impose transgressive behavior on a woman as a result of a racial stereotype, such as Lutie. In other cases men impose transgressive behavior on a woman as a result of a previous woman’s transgressive behavior and/or a previous assault on that man, such as in Pecola’s case. If men rape or sexually assault women for transgressive behavior, it would seem that rape would attempt to correct the women’s transgressive behavior. For example, Kat in Angel Dance is raped as a warning against her and her friends’ involvement in a government case. As I have demonstrated above, rape is unsuccessful in correcting the transgressive behavior as the women are further punished for being assaulted. Rape consciousness and fictional representation of sexual victimization reinforce the cognitive system that writes women as rapeable.

CHAPTER 2

FANTASY, FEAR, AND RAPE: RAPE MYTH TOUBLED THROUGH FANTASY

The exploration of sexual freedom in the 1960's era, particularly the exploration of female sexual freedom, produced a question of sexual violence and rape, drawing attention to fantasies and fears surrounding this violence. I use fantasy as a relative term that applies not only to desires but also to scenes outside of reality and maintain focus on public fantasies within texts that reinforce and question cultural myths surrounding rape fantasies and desires. Common understandings of rape fantasy include the idea that women want to be raped and that men desire to rape women. The theory that women “secretly fantasize about sexual violation has been grounds for dismissing women’s charges of rape in the legal arena” (Horeck 4). Rape fantasy in these terms plays a dominant role in placing blame on women and naturalizes rape. Three decades ago, Susan Brownmiller pointed out that “the idea is floated that all women want to be raped and sometimes we hear that there is no such thing as rape at all, that the cry of rape is merely the cry of female vengeance in postcoital spite.” These patriarchal terms insinuate that regardless of the scenario, “the woman is at fault” (Brownmiller 313).

Texts such as Ann Petry’s The Street, Dorothy Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, M.F. Beal’s Angel Dance, Judith Rossner’s Looking for Mr. Goodbar, and Erica Jong’s Fear of Flying demonstrate how historical hegemonic discourse influences fictional representations of rape and grounds those historical influences within the present discourse. These texts demonstrate and trouble the rape script that defines women as passive and without agency. Fantasy becomes a place where these writers demonstrate and challenge historical rape myths and myths of female sexuality. In this chapter, my goal is to examine textual representations of rape fantasy in these terms and the fears they evoke, and explore texts that simultaneously reinforce and question patriarchal myths surrounding rape fantasy.

Ann Petry's The Street demonstrates the common myths surrounding rape fantasy. Petry's novel dramatizes historical rape myths common in the late-1940's era, where rapists are sexed-crazed unstable individuals that prompt women to fear rape and troubles rape fantasy myths by satirizing those ideologies. In the late 1940's the term "psychopathic personality" began to include the rapist. This era induced a fear of rape that was "driven not so much by an actual increase in sexually related crimes as by demand from the media, law-enforcement groups, and organized private citizens that sex crimes be prevented" (Sielke 126). The insinuations that rape can be prevented, coupled with the myth of the "sexual psychopath," invoked fear in women and held women responsible for assaults. Lutie, the black protagonist, and Bud's white school teacher, demonstrate the fear of assault, suggesting this fear transcends race and class. At Lutie's introduction to the Super, Mr. Jones, she fantasizes his "eyes had filled with a hunger so urgent that she was instantly afraid of him and afraid to show her fear" (10). When the Super leads her to the apartment for rent, she fantasizes he is plotting to rape her:

She didn't need to turn around, anyway; he was staring at her back, her legs, her thighs. She could feel his eyes traveling over her – estimating her, summing her up, wondering about her. As she climbed up the last flight of stairs, she was aware that the skin on her back was crawling with fear. Fear of what? she asked herself. Fear of him, fear of the dark, of the smells in the hall, the high steep stairs, of yourself? She didn't know, and even as she admitted that she didn't know, she felt sweat start pouring from her armpits, dampening her forehead, breaking out in beads on her nose. (13)

By having Lutie fantasize that the Super desires her but fails to understand where her fear comes from, Petry suggests that fear of rape is not always conscious. At the end of Lutie's introduction to the Super, she contemplates her fear, stating: "It isn't possible to read people's mind, she argued. Now the Super was probably not even thinking about her" (15). Lutie compares herself to her Granny, who always told her tales of men and danger. Lutie recalls that Granny told about "things that people sensed before they actually happened. Tales that had been handed down and down and down until, if you

tried to trace them back, you'd end up God knows where --- probably Africa" (15-16). This passage calls attention to the historical development of myths and her fear, suggesting that her fear is not simply an individual event for Lutie, but rather grounded in history.

Later in the text Lutie's suspicions about the Super are verified as the reader learns that the Super is fantasizing about Lutie. As Sabine Sielke demonstrates in Reading Rape, "[w]hen Petry re-presents the scene through Jones' perspective, Lutie's rape fantasy turns out to be a complement of his own" (126). While Lutie fantasizes that he "radiates desire for her that she could feel it" (14), the Super is fantasizing about following her into the bathroom, where he "would force her down on the floor, down against the worn floor boards" (99). The Super demonstrates his sexual psychopath tendencies by exhibiting animalistic characteristics. Before the attack, Lutie refers to the Super as a "half-human creature" (222). Mrs. Hedges rescues Lutie from attempted assault, telling Mr. Jones, "You done lived in the basements so long you ain't human no more. You got mould growin' on you" (237). The characters see the Super as an unstable, sexually aggressive animal, but unlike common beliefs from the 1940's that criminals were born criminals. Petry's text demonstrates that men become unstable through their environment. Mrs. Hedges calls attention to the Super's environment of living in basements, representing not only the specific basement location but the more general economic conditions and patriarchal system that contains him in the basement. As Sielke notes, "Petry thus shifts ground in many ways. Exploring the mind-set of a would-be rapist, she takes issue with the dominant assumption that some men are born criminals, and highlights the significance of failed perception and acts of misreading for sexual aggression" (127). Petry challenges the idea of the born criminal and the fear of rape women place on all men as a result of this idea.

While Lutie's fears of Jones' desire are validated by his complementing thoughts and actions, Bud's school teacher exhibits a fear of black men which proves unfounded and through the text seems unreasonable. Brownmiller suggests that fear of rape naturally follows the existence of rape: "[a] world without rapists would be a world in which women moved freely without fear of men. That some men rape provides as sufficient threat to keep all women in a constant state of intimidation, forever conscious of the

knowledge that the biological tool must be held in awe for it may turn to weapon with sudden swiftness borne of harmful intent” (209). This passage explicitly calls attention to Brownmiller’s beliefs that fear of rape is “natural” for women because rape exists. While Petry demonstrates this fear is real and grounded in history, she also challenges the idea that fear is natural and presents this fear as being simultaneously both grounded and ridiculous.

Miss Rinner, a white teacher in Harlem, fears her black students, Harlem, and everyone in Harlem, but particularly black men. When Miss Rinner began class, “the sight of their dark skins, the sound of the soft blurred speech that came from their throats, filled her with the hysterical desire to scream” (329). Petry’s text repeatedly calls attention to historical myths and stereotypes about rape. Miss Rinner’s fear became so overwhelming that she thought “every person she passed as a threat to her safety” (331). She takes security in standing by other white people on the train ride home, but in one experience she demonstrates that her fear is ungrounded:

Once she had been so tired she sat down on one of the benches in the station. A black man in overalls came and sat next to her. His presence sent such a rush of sheer terror through her that she got up from the bench and walked to the far end of the platform. She kept looking back at him, trying to decide what she should do if he followed her.

Despite the fact that she remained quietly seated on the bench, not even glancing in her direction, she didn’t feel really safe until she boarded the train and the train began to pull away from Harlem. After that, no matter how tired she was, she never sat down on one of the benches. (331-2)

Throughout the text, Petry emphasizes the importance of historical rape rhetoric. Miss Rinner calls attention to the fear of black men. Her fear, like the Super’s animalistic and sexually violent characteristics, demonstrates Sielke’s point that “[t]he so-called myth of the black rapist – the image of the oversexed and bestial African American man – is by no means exclusively a postbellum phenomenon” (Sielke 33). Similarly, when Lutie is

faced with a white man propositioning money for sex, she states, “It was a pity he hadn’t lived back in the days of slavery, so he could have raided the slave quarters for a likely wench any hour of the day or night” (322), drawing attention to the historical influences on the current beliefs about sexuality and gender.

Petry questions the notion of born criminals and rapists again with Lutie’s second attack. Whereas the author bases Jones’ attack on his oversexed psychopathic mind state, she has Boots fantasize about raping Lutie as a way to gain power over his white boss and his oppressive situation. Planning a timed visit from Lutie, Jones plans to “have” Lutie. Whereas Jones desires Lutie, Boots desires to have power through sleeping with Lutie. Boots fantasizes, not about sleeping with Lutie but rather that his white boss “can have the leavings. After all, he’s white and this time a white man can have a black man’s leavings.... This would be his revenge” (423). Boots’ and Jones’ attempts at rape come from two different beliefs about sexuality, drawing attention to the different origins: “[w]hereas Jones’s assault is projected as uncontrollably driven, Smith’s [Boots] is cast as normal aggressive male sexuality involving Lutie as complicit victim” (Sielke 123). Like Sielke, Petry focuses on “refiguration of rape as well as on rape as refiguration that texts do not simply reflect but rather stage and dramatize the historical contradictions by which they are overdetermined” (5). It is interesting to note that the myth of the black rapist “that accompanied and followed slavery positioned an animalistic hypermasculinity, to be corrected through castration and lynching” (Stockton 14). In Petry’s novel, Lutie essentially castrates Boots and leaves Jones, the sex-crazed black man, alone, dramatizing and altering the historical myth of the black rapist.

Rape fantasy, which suggests women want to be raped and the fear of rape that follows, centers around the female body as a place of passivity, without agency, a subject that is acted upon. To use Sharon Stockton’s terms, the female subject in connection to rape becomes a subject of “passivity, productivity (without agency), and penetrability” (2). For Lutie, fantasy and fear are connected, as her fantasy of Jones becoming a dog demonstrates. The fantasy/dream begins where Jones “and the dog had become one. He was still tall, gaunt, silent. The same man, but with the dog’s wolfish mouth and the dog’s teeth – white sharp, pointed, in the redness of his mouth” (191). Lutie fantasizes that the building is “chained to his shoulders like an enormous doll’s house made of brick” (191).

In the fantasy, Jones runs down the street begging people to let him loose when he realizes that Lutie has the key:

He thought she, Lutie, had the key. And followed her through the street, whining in his throat, nuzzling in back of her with his sharp, pointed dog's face. She tried to walk faster, but the shambling, slow, painful sound of his footsteps was always just behind her, the sound of his whining stayed close to her like someone talking in her ear. (192)

Lutie can't escape Jones and sexual assault. The fear of assault follows her throughout the street. When she finds herself with the key, it seems a place where she could demonstrate agency, she is in fact holding the key to Jones' lock. Rather than exhibit agency she begins to unlock him, as Jones and the other characters command her:

She reaches out her hand toward the padlock and the long white fangs close on her hand. Her hand and part of her arm were swallowed up inside his wolfish mouth. She watched in horror as more and more of her arm disappeared until there was only the shoulder left and then his jaws close and she felt the sharp teeth sink in and in through her shoulder. The arm was gone and blood poured out. (192-93)

Lutie's fantasy represents her fear of rape, as something she can't control or escape and regardless of her circumstances she is forced to watch as she is consumed. Petry grounds her reflections on rape fantasy and fear in a sexually violent society. The only escape from this violence is through murder, forcing Lutie to commit the violence she is trying to escape.

In contrast to Petry's text, later novels such as Beal's Angel Dance and Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina highlight fantasy as a means of rape revenge. In Allison's novel, Anne, a young child is molested by her stepfather. In the reality of Anne's life she is without agency and helpless during the assaults and helpless to make sense of her situation:

I did not know how to tell anyone what I felt, what scared me and shamed me and still make me stand, unmoving and desperate, while her rubbed against me and ground his face into my neck. I could not tell Mama. I would not have known how to explain why I stood there and let him touch me. (109)

Similar to Lutie, Anne can't vocalize her situation and lacks agency to resist the assault. Anne experiences fantasies and dreams that express her fear, like Lutie, but Anne also fantasizes her assault in order to cope and find identity. As Tanya Horeck demonstrates in her analysis of Allison's novel, "in the realm of fiction Bone finds a space of self-preservation where she can survive the everyday violence she must endure" (37). Similar to Lutie, Anne experiences dreams or fantasies that express her fear of assault and lack of agency. After Glen, Anne's stepfather, assaults her, she focuses on his "big, impersonal, and fast" hands, stating: "My dreams were full of long fingers, hands that reached around doorframes and crept over the edge of the mattress, fear in me like a river, like the ice-dark blue of his eyes" (70). While Anne does demonstrate her fear through dreams, she creates fantasies where people witness her attack and she can exhibit agency:

Yet it was only in my fantasies with people watching me that I was able to defy Daddy Glen. Only there that I had any pride. I loved those fantasies, even though I was sure they were a terrible thing. They had to be; they were self-centered and they make me have shuddering orgasms. In them, I was very special. I was triumphant, important. I was not ashamed. There was no heroism possible in the real beatings. There was just being beaten until I was covered with snot and misery. (113)

Anne's fantasies allow her to move her shameful experience from behind closed doors into the public eye, where she could be "proud and defiant" (112). In this passage Anne differentiates between the reality of the beatings and her fantasies, allowing her to create a fictional reality where she is the heroine. After Glen attacks Anne, the doctor asks several revealing questions regarding Anne's condition, the mother leaves the hospital

without answering the questions or confirming the doctor's suspicions, but in Anne's fantasies the doctor accuses Glen. The accusations force Glen into a confession and passive position where Anne holds power over him:

"You son of a bitch," that doctor would scream. "You ever touch that child again and I'll grind you into meat and blood!"

Daddy Glen would weep tears of blood. Jesus, maybe, would come into his heart. He'd follow us out to Alma's and get on his knees before the whole family. "I have sinned," he'd say, and hold his hands out to me, beg my forgiveness and cry my name. Mama would say no. My aunts would say no. My uncles, Reese, the minister, everyone in the world would say no. But I would pull myself up from my sickbed. I would look right into his eyes, into the lamps of his soul.

Yes, I would say.

Yes, I would forgive you.

Then I'd probably die. (116)

In this fantasy Anne holds Glen's salvation in her hands. She has the authority to forgive him regardless of the family's opinion; Anne's "sexual fantasies, in which she is able to identify with the various position of spectator, victim and perpetrator, enable her to take an active part in what was a terrifying passive situation" (Horeck 38). In Anne's fantasy she is able to create remorse in Glen and has power over him, whereas the reality of her situation is quite different. Two weeks after the hospital incident and Anne's fantasy, in which Glen feels remorse for his actions, Glen does get on his knees and ask forgiveness, but the family and Anne's mother forgive him:

Nothing had changed. Everything had changed. Daddy Glen had said he was sorry, begged, wept, and swore never to hurt me again. I had stood silent, stubborn, and numb. He had gotten down on his knees in front of Alma, Wade, and their kids, and Mama, pulled Reese and me into his embrace, and vowed that he couldn't live without our love. Mama had knelt on the floor with him and made him swear an oath never to raise his hand to me again. (117)

While Glen does beg for forgiveness, he begs the other family members and embraces Anne, making her a part of his plea -- rather than the subject of power -- as in her fantasy. In Anne's fantasy she has power over Glen's fate, whereas in reality of the novel, Anne "stood silent, stubborn, and numb" (117). Fantasy allows Anne to receive justice and agency, both of which she lacks in the reality of the text.

M.F. Beal's Kat is raped as a warning against her political involvement in a governmental case. While the rape is not central to the text, she does experience fantasies of fear and revenge. After being attacked, beaten, and raped, she drives herself back to the house where she is staying, and when her friend questions Kat's conditions, Kat thinks:

Maybe I should have told her all the wandering freaked-out fantasies of blood and violent premature death which had hunted me the long ride back, and told her I had but one life to give and I was going to shop around a little more before I decided on my favorite charity. Probably I should have said my body was sending warnings collect, making me an offer I couldn't refuse namely *you quit or I split*.
(127)

This passage explains that Kat fantasizes of violence and death directly after her rape, demonstrating her fear of rape and assault. While Kat's fears are similar to Lutie's fear, Kat also experiences rape revenge fantasies, exhibiting agency. After waking from a nap she states, "I had dreamed of slicing hotdogs with a very sharp knife, *snik snik snik*" (126). Kat's fantasy about slicing hotdogs suggests a castration fantasy as a means of revenge on her attacker. The last fantasy helps Kat deal with the fear her fantasy about death and violence had demonstrated. As with Anne's fantasy, Kat's gives her power and agency, something she lacked during her attack.

Fantasy within these texts calls attention to the boundaries between reality and fantasy. While fantasy and reality can appear similar -- as the reader sees through Anne's fantasies of Glen's confession -- they are very separate. Anne Petry's text is an exception. Petry's first novel blurs the boundaries of fantasy and reality in the final scene where

Lutie murders Boots. After Lutie's son is arrested, her dream of becoming financially secure and moving to a better street begins to crumble. When she realizes that her dream of improvement and security is impossible in a corrupt, patriarchal system, fantasy and reality begin to merge. While she is sitting in her apartment, her anger grows and she places her anger toward a corrupt system on Junto, a white man who wants to sleep with her. She fantasizes that he is in her apartment:

Before it had been formless, shapeless, a fluid moving mass – something disembodied that she couldn't see, could only sense. Now was she stared at the couch, the thing took on form, substance. She could see what it was.

It was Junto. Gray hair, gray skin, short body, thick shoulders. He was sitting on the studio couch. The blue-glass coffee table was right in front of him. His feet were resting, squarely, firmly, on the congoleum rug. (418)

As she fantasizes about Junto's being in her apartment, she panics, thinking she "would start screaming and never be able to stop, because there wasn't anyone there" (418). Later, when Lutie enters Boots' apartment, Junto is there, but she is "not certain whether this was Junto in the flesh or the imaginary one that had been on the studio couch in her apartment" (419). While both men desire Lutie, Junto leaves while Boots plans to sleep with Lutie, but when he propositions her she transfers her rage onto him. Lutie hits Boots with a "heavy iron candlestick" and "her vision cleared; the room stopped revolving and Boots Smith became one person, not three" (429). During the attack Lutie switches between fantasy and reality. As she continues to hit Boots with the candle stick she again fantasizes that he represents all of the negative forces in her life:

These things set off her anger, but as she gripped the iron candlestick and brought it forward in a swift motion aimed at his head, she was striking, not at Boots Smith, but at a handy, anonymous figure – a figure which her angry resentment transformed into everything she had hated, everything she had fought against, everything that had served to frustrate her. (239)

In Lutie's previous fantasies she lacked agency, but when she confuses reality with fantasy she exhibits agency, which ironically turns into murder and forces her self-destruction.

In the 1970's feminists argued that rape fantasy was a patriarchal trope that "tyrannized women" (Horeck 4). The feminist arguments by Catherine MacKinnon, Susan Brownmiller, and Andrea Dworkin focus on rape fantasy where men want to rape women and women want to be raped (Horeck 4). While myths of rape fantasy in these terms are problematic for female sexuality, novels such as Judith Rossner's Looking For Mr. Goodbar, M.F. Beal's Angel Dance, and Erica Jong's Fear of Flying trouble the myth of rape fantasy with a female sexuality that is not "natural" or passive. As Katie Roiphe demonstrates in The Morning After, the rhetoric of rape "is not a rape crisis, but a crisis in sexual identity" (171). As I have demonstrated, fictional representations of rape are central for the way in which they dramatize and transform historical rape narrative. Working off of Sielke, I believe the literary representations of rape narrative "refigure, re-present, depoliticized, and thus reinterpret previous literary interrogations of rape and sexual violence, and in this way inscribe themselves into a tradition of readings of rape, a tradition they simultaneously remember and interfere with" (6). These texts question a rape script and constructions of female sexuality through their distinction between fantasy and reality. These texts trouble the myth of rape fantasy with female sexuality and desire.

Judith Rossner's Looking For Mr. Goodbar is problematic in many ways. While the text calls attention to a female sexuality with agency and desire, it also reinforces the belief that women are responsible for rape. While focusing on rape narrative is essential to studying the ideologies of rape, I want to first examine how Rossner troubles the rape trope through her creation of a different gendered sexuality script. Theresa, a single woman living in the city, is torn between her desires and the desires that her culture has trained her to want:

Actually, when she thought about it at all, she didn't really feel that she had a life, one life, that is, belonging to a person, Theresa Dunn. There was Miss Dunn who

taught a bunch of children who adored her (“Oh, that Miss Dunn,” she heard one of her children say once to a parent. “She’s one of the kids. A big one.”) and there was someone named Terry who whored around in bars when she couldn’t sleep at night. But the only thing those two people had in common was the body they inhabited. If one died, the other would never miss her – although she herself, Theresa, the person who thought and felt but had no life, would miss either one. (136)

Theresa lives the life that society expects, while Terry lives out her fantasies and desires. It is interesting to note the children refer to Theresa, the school teacher who exhibits little or no sexuality, as a child. As feminist theory has previously noted, rape rhetoric has labeled women as passive and without agency, comparing women to children. Placement of women as children is a common critique of ideologies about women in connection to rape. Theresa dates two men, James and Tony, each representing one of her two personalities. Theresa considers James a nice guy who “obviously liked her, which was funny because he didn’t appeal to her at all” (143). Theresa dates James for several weeks, they begin to have sex, but their sex is very unsatisfying for Theresa:

Usually he stayed over. They made love. Usually it didn’t hurt. Usually she had no feeling at all while he was in her – as though she’d been given a local anesthetic. The part before sex was nice, through, except for the negative anticipation. And it became very comfortable to fall asleep with him. She was comfortable with him, in general. (223)

Sex with James is painful for Theresa but something that she considers part of the relationship, regardless of the absence of pleasure. During the first sexual encounter Theresa has desires but refuses to tell James, deciding to be a passive and silent sexual partner:

She wanted him to play with her, to stick his finger in her, to do something, but she couldn’t just tell him to do it, she couldn’t, so she squirmed in frustration,

getting angry at him, wishing she never met him until maybe ten years from now, until finally he got on top of her, sort of kneeling over her, wanting to get into her but not sure how. Still resentful she rubbed his penis against her vagina, began to guide it in, but then realized that she was dry and closed, not at all ready to receive him. She let go of him, hoping he'd withdraw, but instead he slowly pushed into her until he was all the way in. And the pain was nearly excruciating. She closed her eyes so he wouldn't see how she felt. Slowly, tentatively, he began moving inside her. But it didn't get better; it remained dry and painful. (230)

After sex Theresa can't believe how painful it was; there "was no pleasure at all mixed with the pain" (230). After sex with James, Theresa can only feel relief. It is interesting to note that this passage is very similar to other rape narratives. In fact, intercourse with strange men and her violent boyfriend Tony is often filled with pleasure, whereas with James, he physically has to force himself into her, making sex with James more like rape. While James and Theresa's sex is literally forced, there is no mention of assault or rape but rather acceptance.

In fact, Theresa thinks about rape after a consenting sexual experience with a stranger. She met a man that she didn't really like but "his body was there and it felt good" (143). When she wakes up in the morning with a headache she "felt as though she'd acquiesced in her own rape" (135). It is interesting to note that the sexual encounter with the stranger is actually pleasurable for Theresa whereas it is forced with James. With James it is a comfortable relationship and painful sex, but she thinks of rape after a pleasurable encounter with a stranger. I can't help believing this contrast is a direct attack against rape narrative and ideologies of female sexuality. Rape ideology enforces rape as something that happens to promiscuous women, while rape is almost nonexistent in traditional relationships. Rossner demonstrates and reinforces rape ideologies with Theresa's connection to rape with the stranger, but Rosser also challenges the cultural ideologies surrounding rape with Theresa's forced sex with James. Rape narrative suggests that rape happens to women who put themselves in perilous situations or who behave transgressively. Theresa's experience and thoughts about rape stem from ideologies that women should find pleasurable sex with an intimate partner and are

cautioned against promiscuous behavior for fear of rape. While Theresa's feelings toward sex coincide with rape scripts, she switches the roles. Rape script "presupposes masculine power and feminine powerlessness" (Mardorossian 752), but in reality Theresa has agency and voice with strangers and connects it with rape, while she is powerless and silent with James.

While Theresa is dating James she is simultaneously dating Tony, whom she considers slow and uneducated. She attempts to keep her job as a teacher a secret from Tony, separating her two personalities, whereas she shares her job with James. Sex with Tony is pleasurable for Theresa, and she is more vocal in giving commands during sex. Although she experiences one violent and forced sexual experience with Tony, she pacifies his violent tendencies. For example, when they were lying around her apartment he "kicked her and she grabbed his foot and then they were tussling and he was down on her, she fighting hard because she knew it only turned him on" (207). Theresa connects pleasurable sex to Tony and sex without pleasure to James. When she wanted to meet a man to have sex she would compare Tony to James, stating, "She felt the need of a man. A Tony, not a James. A good hard fucking and no words" (241).

Theresa is torn between her two personalities: the desire to be sexual and free and the need to be close to James. Theresa examines desire, realizing that desire is not something anyone can control:

The phrase "controlling your own destiny," which Evelyn had used more than once, had a delightful ring to it, but there were huge limits, after all. You couldn't control which men you met, or which ones liked you. You could make sure you didn't have a baby, if you worried about that sort of thing, but you couldn't make sure you did.... If you drove a car you could make fairly sure that you wouldn't smash into something else, but you could never control whether someone smashed into you. (256)

Similar to the feminist debate against rape myth that suggests women control their rape destiny, Theresa recognizes that she can't control her desire. She is torn between James and Tony but is afraid James will leave because he wants marriage. When James gives

her a ring, symbolizing marriage, she panics. When James' family asks if she is going to put on the ring, she

started to say she couldn't just now, but somehow the laughter at the idea of her not putting it on had made that impossible. She took it out of the box and very slowly (she was having that same difficulty breathing, as through she were putting something around her neck instead of her finger) slipped it down on the fourth finger of her right hand. (251)

Theresa's panic over marriage and the fact that she puts the ring on the wrong finger demonstrate her desire to go against convention and remain single but she is torn between what she society tells her she should do and what she desires.

While Rossner's novel troubles the rape narrative, it is problematic because of its chilling ending. After her relationships end, Theresa finds herself at Mr. Goodbar, a local bar. She picks up a stranger and takes him home. After they enjoy sex she tries to get him to leave and the scene escalates and the stranger, Gary Cooper White, rapes and murders her. After sex, Theresa tells Gary to leave, stating she will call the cops. This scene turns violent. Theresa begins to scream and Gary puts a pillow over her face. While Gary is attempting to keep her quiet, he rapes her and finally smashes her head with a lamp. As a result of the rape and murder, this novel simultaneously issuing a warning to sexually transgressive women and perpetuating the myth that women want to be raped. The novel begins with Gary's confession, making the reader aware of the assault from the beginning and encouraging the reader to look for fault with Theresa's behavior that places her in a position of rape. The novel's ending jeopardizes the previous challenges on female sexuality.

Similarly Kat, a lesbian detective, questions the norms of sexuality and gender relationships but is raped directly after. Kat considers the choices available for a woman. She remembers her friend telling her: "If all there is to life is begin born, growing up and getting married so you can have children and watch them grow up and get married so you can be a grandparent – then it is not worth living" (117). Contemplating the choices, Kat considers, "what was the other coin side?... socio-politico-sexual intellectual deviants?"

(117). Kat recognizes that outside of the “natural” script of getting married and having children, a person become a “deviant.” In her attempt to contemplate the social script of marriage and children, she asks:

So what was wrong with everybody (white) looking the same, wearing the same clothes, running the same line of patter? Was it any different anywhere else? Fact was, the barest idea of people having relationships outside of Mommy/Daddy/Baby was so recent the problem was only the beginning to be firmed under the word alienation, referring to conditions under which an impenetrable barrier to expression of feelings had been acculturated. (118)

This passage calls attention to the distinct choices of behavior and the fact that a person who chooses to step outside the bounds of the “normal” script becomes alienated. For these reasons, Kat’s deviant sexual life pushes the boundaries of the socially expected lifestyle script she terms “Mommy/Daddy/Baby.” Kat, once married, now is sexual with both men and women, outside of committed relationships. During her sexual experiences she is far from acting out the standard passive female position. When Kat has sex with Mickey and Aida, Mickey ties them with scarves and states, “Isn’t it interesting how you girls went along with everything I suggested and now I could do whatever occurs to me? Ever think about that, Kat?” (97). The scene draws attention to their compliance and passivity but immediately shifts to where the women act. When Mickey says, “You are...completely in my power” (97), Kat’s response is to inform the reader that “of course we had to show him we were not, kissing long and keen till fluids dance and pounded and the frontier was once again crossed to that mindless place orgasm dwells, blind and tidal. I loved it. I got off, I did, it was really good” (97). Kat’s response immediately demonstrates that the women have agency and power, and it is sexual.

These novels challenge the rape script with female sexuality that desires and possesses agency. These novels challenge the cultural framework that creates particular ideologies of sexuality, gender, and sex. While these novels do call attention to the limited ideologies of culture, they are problematic in the way they reinforce what they argue against. As Pamela Barnett points out, these “novels suggest, in myriad and

inventive ways, that the past haunts the present” (xix). These novels both challenge and reinforce sexual boundaries as a result of historical influences. It is impossible to write a scene that exists in a vacuum where historical influences are void, just as it is impossible to analyze these texts through any lens but the present.

Unlike Rossner’s text, Beal’s novel ends with Kat continuing on her course of life, questioning ideologies and herself. While she never finds the answers to her questions, it is essential that she is neither condemned or murder, as with other sexual deviant rape narratives. Erica Jong’s Fear of Flying takes sexuality one step further. Isadora is not raped or murder for her sexual experience; instead, she is struggling with her marriage and her “zipless fuck” fantasies. Similar to Rossner’s Theresa, Isadora refers to two halves of herself, stating:

I had never been able to make peace between the two halves of myself. All I had managed to do was suppress one half (for a while) at the expense of the other. I had never been happy with the bourgeois virtues of marriage, stability, and work about pleasure. I was too curious and adventurous not to chafe under those restrictions. (100)

What is it about female gender norms that make women individually divided in order to be sexual or different? Are the gender boundaries so constricted that a woman can’t enjoy sex, fantasy, and agency without dividing herself between pleasure and a scripted life of marriage? As Isadora points out, “there just didn’t seem to be any way to get the best of both exuberance and stability into your life” (101). While in her marriage, Isadora is forced to focus on the “zipless fuck”:

The zipless fuck was more than a fuck. It was a platonic ideal. Zipless because when you came together zippers fell away like rose petals, underwear blew off in one breath like dandelion fluff. Tongues intertwined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the mouth of your lover. (17-18)

Forced to fantasize in order to find pleasure, she creates a fantasy with men she doesn't understand or know very well. When Isadora meets Adrian, she believes him to be her fantasy zipless fuck. Jong draws attention to the difference between the reality of sex and fantasy: "Jong's novel is consequently of interest here not because her protagonist entertains rape fantasies, but because she learns to discriminate fantasies of female desire from desirable sexual encounters" (Sielke 169). While the fantasy of the zipless fuck is about sex and sexual desire, Isadora differentiates fantasy from reality.

When Isadora meets Adrian, she hopes he is her zipless fuck but, ironically, he can't physically have sex because of "the prick which lies down on the job. The ultimate weapon in the war between the sexes: the limp prick. The banner of the enemy's encampment: the prick at half-mast" (126). Their failed sexual encounter reinforces Isadora's earlier words, "The Zipless fuck is the purest thing there is. And it is rarer than the unicorn" (22). Like the unicorn the zipless fuck is only a fantasy, something Isadora can't have in reality.

During Isadora's marriage to Brian, he becomes psychotic and uncontrollable. Their marriage becomes distant without sex, and Isadora faults herself for the distance, stating, "marriage went from bad to worse. Brian stopped fucking me. I would beg and plead and ask what was wrong with me. I began to hate myself, to feel ugly, unloved, bodily odoriferous – all the classics symptoms of the unfucked wife" (264). After several weeks of the unstable, sexless marriage, Brian attempts to show Isadora his power through sex:

He wanted to prove he could satisfy me. He hadn't screwed me in about six weeks, but no he wouldn't stop. He fucked like a machine, refusing to succumb to an orgasm himself but urging me to come again and again. After the first three times I was sore and wanted to stop. I begged him to stop but he wouldn't. He kept banging away at me like an ax murderer. I was crying and pleading. (276)

Although this scene fits most definition of rape, Isadora never defines it as rape. In fact, after the assault she is fairly calm. It is not until he tries to strangle her that she becomes

really scared. Throughout the sexual assault and the strangling Isadora, never refers to herself as a victim, a survivor, as a woman without agency.

Throughout the novel Isadora never fears rape nor fantasizes that the men she sleeps with could rape her. Even after the attack and violent scene with her husband Brian, she doesn't fear rape. Unlike characters in other rape novels, Isadora doesn't die or seek rape revenge; instead, she continues on with life.

In conclusion, what do novels that include rape tell us? They are full of rape, assault, victims, survivors, woman as passive. They express a fear of rape, where women like Lutie are looking for Mr. Goodbar or Jones, the psychopathic rapist that can't control his desires. Novels like Rossner's read like a fictional warning, a fairy tale, a lesson learned: sexual women, women who visit bars and have sex, get raped and murdered. If you want to avoid this fate, you are forced to commit murder like Lutie, condemning yourself. They present rape as something women can prevent and/or control. They write women as vulnerable and at fault for their transgressive sexuality. Jong's text transgresses the old myths of rapists and moves into a world where men aren't rapists but potential sexual fantasies. While these novels call attention to stereotypes, sexuality, and the body politic, they all—in various ways—reinforce a Victorian purity that warns women of the consequences of sexuality and holds them accountable for their assaults. While it is impossible for these texts to leave their history behind they do challenge rape rhetoric in one particular way, through creating a narrative where women aren't passive and essentially rapeable. It is through troubling the gendered script that these women challenge rape rhetoric.

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEMS WITH RAPE: LOOKING AT THE MALE SCRIPT

The fictional representation of rape is often much easier to analyze because of the simplicity of voyeurism. Voyeurism allows the reader to witness the event at an emotional distance and to define or describe rape based on the viewer's beliefs or those of the narrator. In reality, attempting to describe rape is problematic because of its subjective and ambiguous circumstances. Susan Brownmiller defines rape to a woman as "a sexual invasion of the body by force, an incursion into the private, personal inner space without consent – in short, an internal assault from one of several avenues and by one of several methods – [which] constitutes a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity and is a hostile, degrading act of violence that deserves the name of rape" (376). Catherine MacKinnon believes rape "is not an isolated event or moral transgression or individual interchange gone wrong but an act of terrorism and torture within a systemic context of group subjection, like lynching" (42). While every theorist attempts to define rape, what are they ultimately saying? They speak in circles about invasion, terrorism, violence. Some scholars rest the definition of rape on another ambiguous term such as consent or penetration, placing it in a category that usually highlights violence against women and thereby suggesting that rape is a gendered crime; doing so leaves us without a definition. The reader of this study need not expect me to define rape. I could only attempt to replace the word rape with something else to define. Many scholars bring the definition of rape down to consent or coercion, but, as Frances Ferguson demonstrated in "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," consent holds its own problems of definition. As a result of the numerous definitions, rape "becomes a catchall expression, a word used to define everything that is unpleasant and disturbing about relations between the sexes" (Roiphe 80).

Regardless of the definition of rape and/or ways we form consent or coercion, we are still left with figuring out the truth of an accused rape. The issue of authenticity of

rape is often easier to define in literature, as the reader is usually a witness to the act. Coincidentally, Samuel Richardson famously writes Clarissa's rape between letters, drawing attention to ambiguous circumstances surrounding assault. Similarly, Margaret Atwood writes assault as ambiguous in The Blind Assassin. First, I want to examine the problems with the issue of authenticity through Atwood's text. Second, I would like to demonstrate that – for the purpose of rape prevention – it is not an issue of defining rape and/or the rape script but rather an issue of analyzing the sexual gender script present throughout the fictional accounts of rape.

Atwood beautifully creates a novel full of ambiguous circumstances that unwind but never unravel. Laura's narrative calls attention to the ambiguous circumstances regarding rape, consent, and coercion, while her sister Iris's narrative only confirms these questions. As Atwood presents the story through sections of Iris's life, the reader is a voyeur, attempting to see through the holes of the story and to discover the truth. As Iris puts the pieces together, she is torn between the two stories, her husband Richard's story or her sister Laura's story, stating, "This was the crossroads: either Laura had been mad, or Richard had been lying. I couldn't believe both" (485). After discovering that Laura was pregnant, she knows that sex was involved but is unsure of the circumstances. As Ferguson points out, the body is often the only evidence to a rape (91). Here, Laura's body, as a result of pregnancy, becomes evidence of sex but not of seduction or rape. Iris originally assumes Laura had sex with Alex, but Laura tells Iris that she had sacrificed herself in order to save Alex: "It was horrible, but I had to do it. I had to make the sacrifice. I had to take the pain and suffering onto myself. That's what I promised God. I knew if I did that, it would save Alex" (487). Laura's language of "pain and suffering" gives evidence to rape, suggesting Laura was coerced into sex. If Laura willingly had sex with someone – whom we later find out is Richard – is it rape if she consented to sex with him in order to save Alex? Is it rape only if she is coerced? As Ann Cahill explains, coercion is a threat:

The victim who is coerced into having sex with the assailant—who chooses, for example, to have sex rather than to place a loved on at risk—does, strictly speaking, consent to the sexual encounter. However, because that consent was

obtained not freely, but under serious threat, it is understood legally and morally as not a full or valid consent. (171)

As Cahill defines consent, Laura did not give valid consent to sex with Richard because she was coerced into doing so and so the sex, as a result, can be defined as rape. But when Iris confronts Richard about the incident she believes the sex was assault because of Laura's age. Although the actual age of Laura at the time of the incident is vague, Iris challenges Richard's right to their child, stating that she will not "permit such a thing. He has a yen for young girls.... Even at eighteen I was pushing the upper limit. Having Laura in the same house was just too much temptation for him, I see that now. He couldn't keep his hands off her" (506). As Iris demonstrates, not only must one decide what consent and/or coercion is, but then one must decide who can consent. The issue of age and consent "generates questions of subject position" (Sielke 18). To define consent, one has to define those who can and cannot consent. When Iris confronts Richard with accusations of rape, Richard denies raping Laura and states, "That's untrue! I did nothing without her consent!" (511). Atwood demonstrates how difficult it can be to define what happened when there are no witnesses but the only two people involved, each with a different story.

Drawing even more attention to the ambiguity of consent and coercion is Iris's marriage to Richard. When Iris is forced to decide if she will marry Richard, her father tells her that, financially, she and Laura depend upon Richard's protection through marriage: "What he was saying was that unless I married Richard, we wouldn't have any money. What he was also saying was that the two of us – me, and especially Laura – would never be able to fend for ourselves.... I was cornered. It wasn't as if I had any alternatives to propose" (226). Out of desperation for herself and Laura, Iris gives her consent to marriage and sex with Richard. For a reader who shares Cahill's definition of consent and rape, however, then the sex between Iris and Richard becomes problematic. As a result of her forced consent to the marriage, Iris has to, as she defines it, "open my legs and shut my mouth" (332). Further troubling the definition of rape, Iris states, sex with Richard is "unpleasant and most likely painful" (241). Recalling her first experience, Iris states:

I did not yet know that my lack of enjoyment – my distaste, my suffering even – would be considered normal and even desirable by my husband. He was one of those men who felt that if a woman did not experience sexual pleasure this was all to the good, because then she would not be liable to wander off seeking it elsewhere. Perhaps such attitudes were common, at that period of time. Or perhaps not. I have no way of knowing. (241)

Similar to Laura, Iris describes the sex with Richard as “painful” and “unpleasant” (371). As is common with many narratives about pleasant and unpleasant sexual activity, Iris considers the unpleasant sexual life as being separate from another life, stating,

Or rather there were two lives, a daytime one and a nighttime one: they were distinct, and also invariable. Placidity and order and everything in its place, with a decorous and sanctioned violence going on underneath everything, like a heavy, brutal shoe tapping out the rhythm on a carpeted floor. Every morning I would take a shower, to get rid of the night; to wash off the stuff Richard wore on his hair – some kind of expensive perfumed grease. It rubbed off all over my skin (371)

Iris refers to the sex in her marriage as “sanctioned violence,” drawing attention to the similarities between her situation and Laura’s. Forced to split the night and day into two separate lives, she takes a shower every morning to wash away her life in the night.

Drawing even more attention to evidence of rape is Iris’s body. Richard develops a habit of leaving bruises on her body, evidence to the violence: “Sometimes – increasingly, as time went by – there were bruises, purple then blue, then yellow” (371). If readers define Laura’s experience as rape, based on the evidence in the text, do they also have to define Iris’s experience as rape? Does it become acceptable because it happens in a marriage and is therefore supposedly normal? Does it become institutionalized rape? As Ferguson points out, rape is most easily proved when there is physical evidence on the body; the body becomes the text “that bespeaks not only her

intention not to have consented but also the perpetrator's intention to have overridden that refusal to consent" (91). But the evidence to violence appears on Iris's body, whereas there is no evidence of force on Laura's body. Does the violence then assist the accusation of rape or rather contradict those accusations? I do not want to give the impression that Atwood or I advocate that all heterosexual sex is violent; rather, I am drawing attention to the ambiguity of consent, coercion, and rape. As MacKinnon has argued, consent is irrelevant because all heterosexual sex is violent; I believe that there is indeed a difference but, as Atwood illustrates, the lines between the two can be blurry.

While the importance of defining rape is significant for legal issues, it is not as significant for rape prevention or even for understanding rape scripts. As Catherine Mardorossian has it, "For the last three decades, representations and discussions of rape and domestic violence have almost exclusively concentrated on the suffering of victims and have comparatively all but ignored the few studies of the behavior and psychological traits of perpetrators" (753). Why has rape rhetoric not shifted its focus to include all of the dimensions of the rape script? It is ambiguous as to why rhetoric continues to look at the passive female script and excludes the aggressive male script. As Mardorossian, Roiphe, and Stockton demonstrate, for feminists, "Rape has become academia's undertheorized and apparently untheorizable issue" (Mardorossian 743). As the history of the American novel demonstrates, the rapist's perspective has only just recently begun to appear in literature. MacKinnon alludes to a sexual gender script when she talks about consent, stating: "[c]onsent is supposed to be women's form of control over intercourse, different from but equal to the custom of male initiative. Man proposes woman disposes" (45). The script of feminine passivity and masculine agency MacKinnon refers to suggests two distinct roles, so why do scholars continue to only focus on one side of a two-sided script?

The very mention of a woman's consent assumes that women have agency to grant it. Katie Roiphe demonstrates that, by "protecting women against verbal coercion, these feminists are promoting the view of women as weak-willed, alabaster bodies, whose virtue must be protected from the cunning encroachments of the outside world" (67). If women are so often scripted as passive, why do we not shift our focus to the male side, the side that implies action, decision, and agency? While these texts do not answer

the question of defining rape and consent, they do give us fictional representations of the male rapist or would-be rapist. I want to look at ways masculinity figures into the rape script. With the previous chapters I have chosen particular texts that demonstrate points of rape rhetoric, leaving other texts out of the discussion, but with the question of masculinity and sexual gender scripts, I need to point out here that all of the texts I have previously discussed position rape in connection to men proving their masculinity. As MacKinnon argued, the “larger issue raised by sexual aggression for the interpretation of the relation between sexuality and gender is: what is heterosexuality?” (49). While I agree that the issue of rape raises questions about the connection to sexuality and gender, I disagree that assault raises issues of heterosexuality or homosexuality. As I discussed in the introduction, “woman” is socially defined by her passivity and penetrability. “Woman” does not follow sex or sexuality but rather a position void of agency; parallel to “woman,” “man” becomes a position of power and agency. In connection to rape, the position of action becomes masculine and the position of being acted upon becomes feminine.

Regardless of whether the situation involves heterosexual or homosexual intercourse, these positions maintain their gendered roles. While MacKinnon argues that rape raises questions of sexuality, I advocate that the sexual gender script is the underlining force perpetuating rape scripts. Social issues, such as race, class, and sexuality, vary throughout these texts, but the sexual gender script transcends boundaries and appears in all rape narrative. As Atwood’s narrator Iris points out, “Everything was known, but nothing could be proven. That much was clear” (501). While rape becomes more ambiguous when proof is required, I believe that we should shift our focus toward sexuality and gender issues that insinuate and accompany rape.

Ann Petry’s The Street demonstrates rape in connection to proving black masculinity. She gives us two characters, the sexual psychopath Jones and Boots, the average black male in a patriarchal system. Jones attacks Lutie directly after he begins to fear Min, his live-in girlfriend. After she hangs a cross over the bed, Jones must sleep on the couch because of his fear: “After Min hung the cross over the bed, Jones took to sleeping in the living room. He could no longer see the cross, but he knew it was there

and it made him restless, uneasy” (231). There is a textual pattern where Jones thinks of Min, the cross, and his fear, then immediately thinks of his desire for Lutie:

He couldn't go to sleep. His mind was filled with a vast and awful confusion in which images of Lutie warred with images of Min. His love and desire for Lutie mixed and mingled with his hatred and aversion for Min. He was stuck with Min. He hadn't been able to put her out. (233)

Jones' desire for Lutie becomes a way in which he can counter his fear of Min. Min and her cross scare Jones, but she also represents his inability to get young attractive women: “When he was younger, he didn't have any trouble getting women – young, well-built women. It didn't worry him that they left him after a few days because he could always find others to take their place” (86). This passage not only demonstrates Jones' youthful ability to get women, but also emphasizes the way in which getting women becomes a testament to his masculinity. He doesn't worry if women leave because he has the ability to get another woman, representing the way Jones measures his masculinity by his ability to attract women. Unfortunately, “now that he had an apartment of his own, he had grown so much older he found it more and more difficult to get a woman to stay with him” (87). Now that Jones is older he has only been able to get “drab, beaten, middle-aged women.... As a result he wanted this young one – this Lutie Johnson –worse than anything in his life” (87). As a result of his inability to prove his masculinity with young women, he attempts to rape Lutie. She becomes a tool to prove Jones' masculinity through sex, and as a result of her refusal, Jones attempts to rape her.

Similar to Jones, Boots has issues with his position as a black man. When Junto, his white boss, tells Jones to stay away from Lutie, he begins to think of his position as a porter, a nameless subject whose job forces him to answer to white people:

Porter! Porter this and Porter that. Boy. George. Nameless. He got a handful of silver at the end of each run, and a mountain of silver couldn't pay a man to stay nameless like that. No Name, black my shoes. No Name, hold my coat. No Name, brush me off. No Name, take my bags. No Name. No name. (264)

After realizing that he would have to go back to being a porter if he defied Junto, Boots comes to the conclusion that Lutie “didn’t weigh enough when she was balanced against a life of saying ‘yes sir’ to every white bastard who had the price of a Pullman ticket” (265). After telling Junto that Lutie will be safe with him, he immediately regrets “at having lost the chance to conquer and subdue her” (275). The language Boots uses when referring to Lutie involves words like “challenge” and “conquer,” representing his desire to overpower her, his desire to assert his masculinity. As I mentioned previously, Boots does change his mind about sleeping with Lutie, regardless of the necessary force. He sees sleeping with her as a way to have power over Junto, stating, “he’s white and this time a white man can have a black man’s leavings” (423). Lutie becomes a tool for Boots to get revenge against a system that contains and stifles black men. His ability to conquer Lutie would mean that he has conquered Junto. While Petry depicts Jones as the “sexual psychopath, the ravenous brute, or the sexually aberrant male” (Bevacqua 115), she depicts Boots as a normal black man rebelling against his subjective position. Regardless of their depictions and circumstances, each man attempts to rape Lutie as a result of trying to assert black masculine power.

Petry sets up her novel with two very different types of men, but each attempts to rape Lutie as a way of asserting his masculinity and power. While Petry’s texts demonstrates two men asserting power because of a system that objectifies them, Toni Morrison creates a male character who is first violated, thereby put in the position of woman, and then proceeds to rape his daughter. In The Bluest Eye Morrison gives a detailed account of a previous assault on Cholly that has feminized him through assault:

When he was still young, Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl. The men had shone a flashlight right on his behind. He had stopped, terrified. They chuckled. The beam of the flashlight did not move. “Go on,” they said. “Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good.” The flashlight did not move. For some reason Cholly had not hated the white men, he hated, despised, the girl. Even a half-remembrance of this episode, along with myriad

other humiliations, defeats, and emasculations, could stir him into flights of depravity that surprised himself. (42-43)

The textual focus shifts away from Darlene and onto Cholly and the men watching, placing Cholly in the feminine and vulnerable position in the assault. Cholly is forced to perform the action, but he recalls the experience using passive language such as “defeats, and emasculations.” Morrison sets up Cholly’s rape of Pecola in connection to his own previous assault. When Cholly rapes Pecola, he thinks of his failures and the fact that he can’t provide for her, stating, “What could he do for her – ever? What give her? What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter?” (161). Despite his anger and the tenderness he feels for Pecola, Cholly rapes her. As Bevacqua informs us, the “stereotype of a man with overwhelming sexual urges or an unresolved childhood psychodrama stems from this discourse and remains with us today” (114). While Cholly does not directly connect his masculinity to raping Pecola, he does rape her directly after feeling despair for his position as a black man with nothing to give his daughter and in connection to his previous assault. He rapes Pecola at a moment of passivity, a position the culture defines as feminine. For Cholly, rape becomes a trope to counter his feminine position with a masculine action.

Atwood’s The Blind Assassin presents a vague account of possible rape but maintains a clear focus on gender scripts. As I demonstrated earlier, Iris and Laura are vulnerable because of their financial situation. As Winfred tells Iris, “If it wasn’t for us, you would’ve been out walking the streets instead of sitting on your bottoms like the silver-plated spoiled brats you were. You always had everything handed to you, you never had to make an effort” (370). Iris and Laura are financially dependent on Richard. The novel and Iris, its narrator, assume that Richard raped Laura. It is interesting to note the way in which Richard views Laura as a puzzle:

It seemed to me that he’d come to regard Laura as a puzzle, one that it was now his business to solve. I’d catch him looking at her at odd moments, in much the same way as he looked at the stock-market pages—searching out the grip, the twist, the handle, the wedge, the way in. According to his view of life, there was

such a grip or twist for everything. Either that, or a price. He wanted to get Laura under his thumb, he wanted her neck under his foot, however lightly placed. But Laura didn't have that kind of neck. So after each of his attempts he was left standing with one leg in the air, like a bear-hunter posing in a picture from which the slain bear has vanished. (381)

Iris positions Richard as a hunter that can't kill his prey, as someone who needs to control Laura – but she resists. Similarly, Iris tells the reader of her unpleasant sex life with Richard, stating, “Did it bother him that I was indifferent to his nighttime activities, even repelled by them? Not at all. He preferred conquest to cooperation, in every area of life” (371). The novel makes it abundantly clear that Richard desires control over his surroundings, including people. I think it is important to note that Laura is the only person throughout the text who defies Richard – and that he possibly rapes her.

While the rape script does reveal a script of sexual gender roles, it is important to consider the sexual gender script when rape does not occur. Interestingly enough, the sex Iris and Richard have and the sex Iris and Alex have follows the same script. Atwood writes the inner story of Iris and Alex with predatory language from the male role. It is full of self-warnings such as: “Too much urgency might put her off” (10) or “Go easy, he thinks. No sudden moves” (22). When Iris is nervous, Alex thinks, “He doesn't mind her nervousness: he likes to think he's already costing her something” (17). The novel sets up a sexual script where the man hunts his prey and the woman runs. In this script the woman “struggles briefly, then surrenders to his embrace. Not that she has much of a choice” (279). This sexual gender script outside of rape is in effect the same as the script in rape. As Atwood's text demonstrates, the rape script is really a sexual gender script. “The ideology of rape is fueled by cultural values that are perpetuated at every level of our society,” Brownmiller argues, “and nothing less than a frontal attack is needed to repel this cultural assault” (389). The ideology of rape is in fact an ideology of sexual gender roles, and to “repel” this action we need to reexamine the established sexual gender roles.

While men rape women for numerous reasons, they all seem to follow the same sexual gender script. As I demonstrated earlier, Erica Jong's Isadora is raped by her

husband as a means of demonstrating power. Brian became mentally unstable, thinking he is God. Along with Isadora, he wanted to demonstrate his God like abilities:

He wanted us both to close our eyes and cross the streets against the lights (to prove we were gods). He would go into stores and ask the storekeepers to take down various items, handle each one, talk elatedly about each one, and then walk out. He would go into a coffee shop and play with the sugar pourer on every table before he sat down. People kept staring at him. Sometimes the storekeepers or waiters would say, "Take it easy buddy, relax buddy," or sometimes they'd throw him out. Everyone sensed that something was wrong. His agitation jangled the air. To Brian, this was only proof of divinity. (275)

It is in his God-like mental state that he rapes Isadora in order to prove his power. Similar to Petry's depiction of Jones, Jong presents Brian as a "psychotic" (280) who rapes Lutie, and it is interesting to note that he equates both walking through the street with his eyes closed and raping Isadora as a means of proving his superior status. This scene could also be read as Brian's raping Isadora as a means of revenge. During Brian's rant about being God, he tells Isadora that he is in hell and she should meet him there. When Isadora asks where, he replies, "You ought to know. You sent me here" (273). Later he refers to his hospitalization as Isadora's fault.

Directly after Brian rapes Isadora, she goes into the bathroom and finds a picture of "The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" that Brian drew (277). As Isadora informs the reader, it "depicted a short man with a halo and an enormous erect penis. Another man with a long beard was about to blow him. Behind them both was a huge eagle (resembling the American eagle) except that it had a very obvious and human-looking erection" (277). It is essential that Brian draws powerful male figures with large erect penises. In his psychotic state, Brian equates masculinity and power with a huge erection.

While readers could see Brian's connection between masculinity, power, and the penis as part of his psychotic state, it is too close to other rapists' psychological connections to power and rape. M. F. Beal's Kat is raped by a white man as a means of warning her away from her behavior in a governmental case. During the attack, the rapist

says very little. The only dialogue from the rapist is a series of short commands such as warning her to cooperate and shut her eyes. The only other comment is his warning after he zips his fly and states, “One more chance. Tell that to your friends” (121). As Sielke demonstrates, “texts mean just as much by what they leave unsaid as by what they say, by what is absent as by what is present” (3). The lack of dialogue is important in this rape scene. While the rapists give Kat a warning, the rape actually becomes the threat and the message. What could the rapist mean by “Tell that to your friends”? The only thing Kat can tell her friends is that she was raped, making rape the message. Kat is raped as a means of stopping their involvement. He doesn’t threaten to kill her, or arrest her, or any other possible threat but instead rapes and warns her. The threat is not to rape her again but rather a demonstration of power over her body. In Beal’s text, the government becomes something similar to Brian’s spiritual drawings, a masculine power represented by a penis.

Kat’s friend Angel experiences a similar but vague situation when she is taken “under the influences of drugs and photographed with half a dozen assorted unidentified black men and redeposited where she was picked up and she doesn’t remember any of it” (200). She is taken to a “famous Army medical facility” (201) where they proceed to assault her. When asked about the purpose of her kidnapping, Beal informs us that she was taken for “[n]ames, dates. Details. Perhaps details to build a case” (201). Kat comes to the conclusion that the purpose of assaulting Angel was to discredit her or because “she was effective. Because they couldn’t get a hold of Michael any other way” (202). The conclusion that the characters come to is that Angel was assaulted in order to control her involvement in the governmental case and as a way to send a message to Michael, her husband, who is also involved in the case. Angel is drugged, suggesting that the actual event of her assault is not important but rather the pictures of the black men with her or the information they retrieved. As Angel doesn’t remember the event, she is left with a message, an electrode scar on her genitals. Both Kat and Angel are sexually assaulted in order to control their behavior. The assaults are a warning, but the message is written on their bodies.

Whereas the men in Beal’s novel rape in order to prove their power, Allison’s Glen assaults Anne, in Bastard Out of Carolina, as a means of control. For example, the

first time Glen assaults Anne happens in the car at the hospital, waiting for Glen's son to be born. He is feeling insecure and afraid about the delivery when he begins to assault Anne, asserting masculine power to counter weakness. Anne tells us that he "started talking again, telling me Mama was going to be all right, that he loved me, that we were all going to be so happy" (45). It seems Glen is telling Anne that everything is going to be okay but really trying to convince himself. Each time Glen feels down or vulnerable, he gets angry and assaults Anne, explaining that he is going to teach her a lesson. When Anne's uncles are talking about Glen, they say he "gets crazy when he's angry.... Use his dick if he can't reach you with his arms, and that'll cripple you fast enough" (61). The men associate Glen's penis with his ability to fight and with his masculinity. The women excuse his violent behavior. For example, Anne's mother informs the reader that Glen was struggling and as a result was demonstrating bad behavior:

Glen's had so much trouble, been through so many jobs. An't many people would take him on at all at this point, and God knows, he's trying so hard. He's out of the house at dawn, don't get home till after sundown, goes in on weekends to do maintenance on his truck. (131)

The characters often excuse his violent behavior with a list of his problems and his effort to improve. During the assaults he is always telling Anne that he is punishing her because he loves her, but Anne believes it is because he blames her for his problems. After Anne's mother discovers that Glen has physically hurt Anne, she leaves him, but soon they reconcile and move back in with Glen. Anne explains that her mother would forgive him and he "would be good, he would be careful. But after a while, Daddy Glen would begin to talk about the accident a little differently. He would remember things that had happened around that time, things I had said, looks I had given him" (117). Glen's good behavior wouldn't last. Over time he would begin to justify his actions as punishment, but Anne explains that he punishes her for the absence of her mother:

One day, maybe months from now, there'd be something I'd done that would make it all seem justified. Than Daddy Glen would take me into the bathroom

again, crying that it hurt him more than it could ever hurt me. But his face would tell the truth, his hands on my body. He would show me just how much he hurt when Mama left him in that parking lot, and then when he beat me, we would both know why. (118)

Anne's assaults become a punishment for the mother's finding out and leaving Glen. Glen assaults Anne the last time as a warning, instructing Anne that she has to get him and her back together. While Glen is raping Anne, he states, "You'll never mouth off to me again. You'll keep your mouth shut. You'll do as you're told. You'll tell Anney what I want you to tell her" (285). Glen blames Anne's mother's absence on her and punishes her with assault. Rape becomes a way for Glen to demonstrate masculine power over Anne.

Unlike most novels where the male psyche appears in small pieces, Rossner's Looking For Mr. Goodbar gives a detailed confession of the male rapist. As with most texts, the previous novels give very little detail concerning the male role in rape; rather, the male becomes an object of power. The lack of male dialogue within these texts and objectification of males as subjects of power demonstrate the direction of rape theory. While defining assault in other texts is often problematic, the confession and brutal murder make assault more evident in Rossner's text. Historically, rape has "been easiest to prove when it is most nearly identical with battery and mayhem" (Ferguson 90). The novel opens with an introduction about Gary Cooper White, the man who "brutally assaulted and murdered Theresa Dunn a few hours after meeting her in a Manhattan singles spot called Mr. Goodbar" (1). Contradictory to standard narratives, Rossner's novel explains that Gary is traveling, looking for a job. Following the introduction we get Gary's confession. Interestingly enough, the novel begins with this confession. It is not until several pages into the text that we meet the promiscuous Theresa, several months before her murder.

During Gary's confession he admits to murdering and raping—although he never defines it as rape—in a relaxed manner but is agitated and horrified at confessing his involvement with a homosexual friend, George. It is essential to note the contrast in Gary's confessions about George and about his sexual relationship and Theresa's murder.

Gary makes excuses and lies about his relationship with George while he explains, in detail, his relationship with Theresa. As Rossner informs us, Gary “had a very clear sense of himself as the victim of the woman he had murdered” and “seemed to think that almost anyone in the same situation would have committed the same murder” (1). Rossner explains that Gary was having sex with George prior to the murder but was horrified over sharing this information during his confession.

Gary contradicts himself about his relationship with George, stating that at first he didn’t know George was gay and later stating that he had known:

The way he handled it was to have sex with George for a week or so without ever suggesting to George that all he really wanted was a place to stay while he found a job. Only when George brought another man onto the scene did Gary rebel and then he seems to have been more perturbed by the idea of the extra man as a witness than by the notion of a third sexual partner. Until then he had regarded what he was doing as a practical matter. (3)

Gary resented George for their homosexual activities but admitted that he wasn’t forced. As a result of his anger, George convinced Gary to dress in drag.

The novel explains that in “contrast to his readiness to relate much of what happened with Theresa, Gary gagged as he described, at the urging of the police, the wig, tiara, white satin gown and silver platform sandals George had provided for him” (3). Gary is very concerned with his masculinity, which he thinks George challenges. Coincidentally, Gary meets Theresa at a bar with George, and against his lack of attraction to her, he plans to sleep with Theresa in order to prove his masculinity to George and to give himself a place to stay the night. When George notices that Theresa is sitting at the bar, he encourages Gary to sleep with her, stating, “you can have her if you want her” but then compares her to the “queer at the dance,” telling Gary, “They really turned you on, huh, Gary?” (6). Gary immediately thinks that George is questioning his masculinity and thinks “he gonna tell me he don’t believe I got a pregnant wife” (6). Sex with Theresa becomes a means for Gary to demonstrate his masculinity and heterosexuality:

I figured what the hell. I was pretty wasted, like I said, and she didn't turn me on, but she wasn't all that bad and it's a flop for the night. I'll go home with this crazy chick, get some, you know. Get away from George. (6)

When Gary arrives at Theresa's place, he decides that he doesn't want to sleep with her and when he is almost ready to leave, Theresa asks, "You queer like your friend?" (7). This is Gary's explanation, in his attempt to explain why he had sex with Theresa even though he wasn't attracted to her, demonstrating his belief that sex with a woman proves his masculinity and heterosexuality, as well as connecting the two together.

After intercourse, Theresa tells Gary to leave but he refuses and responds by asking her, "I just fucked you pretty good, didn't I?" Theresa replies, "just okay" and, as a result of her answer, Gary becomes agitated (9). In their argument over whether Gary is going to leave, they struggle for the telephone and Gary becomes violent. Theresa starts to scream, and in his attempt to shut her up he covers her face with a pillow:

When I first put the pillow down over her face it was just to shut her up. I tried one hand but she kept biting. I put the pillow over her...it was, like, her mouth. I mean, I thought in my mind I was covering her mouth. Then, I don't know, we was both naked. I got turned on[...]I'm not thinking about he pillow and she gets it off and starts screaming and I'm scared shitless because of the neighbors and before I know it I pulled the lamp off the table and smashed it down on her head. (10)

In Gary's confession he seems to explain all of his actions, including the rape and murder, as a result of Theresa's actions. When he leaves the scene of the murder, he is limping and states, "I don't know what she did to me" (11). Throughout his confessions, he explains his actions as if he is the victim.

Gary never admits to raping Theresa, although he admits to having sex with her while he holds the pillow over her face and when she is unconscious. Throughout his confession, Gary keeps repeating, "I don't know" as if he didn't have control over his

actions, but rather that the rape and murder are reactions to Theresa. As Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver demonstrate in Rereading Rape, “representations of rape after the event are almost always framed by a masculine perspective premised on men’s fantasies about female sexuality and their fears of false accusation, as well as their codified access to and possession of women’s bodies” (2). In his confession, Gary attempts to justify his actions based on his beliefs that he was only responding to Theresa. For example, he justifies his attack, stating, “I swear to you, that’s the truth, all I wanted was out and she wouldn’t let me out” (9). By this statement alone it would seem that Theresa trapped him in the apartment but he in fact can’t leave because she is screaming and he has to stop her before the neighbors hear. Gary is also much more comfortable talking about his sexual experiences with Isadora, where he is uncomfortable discussing anything about George. Gary’s confession attempts to place Isadora in the place of perpetrator rather than victim, blaming her for his actions.

The men who rape in these texts never define their actions as rape, but when caught they explain that they were crazy. If these men are not defining their actions as rape, how can we describe a rape crisis? Rape definitions often “include a criterion of actual or threatened force; some demand a lack of consent; others assume that rape always includes vaginal penetration by a penis” (Cahill 11). Developing a strong definition of rape will not change the way these men see their actions, nor will it reduce rape. If the masculine role in sex is about power and the feminine role in sex is about passivity, then rape simply follows the sexual gender norms. As Wendy Brown demonstrates with consent, “it is a more intimate act implicating relations of power; it marks the presence of power, arrangements, and actions that one does not oneself create but to which one submits” (162). As the parallel between sex and sex with force demonstrates, it seems that the crisis is about sexual gender norms, not just assault.

CONCLUSION

Rape rhetoric has historically focused on female passivity in rape narratives, and this focus only reinforces ideologies of sexual identity. I chose these particular novels for my analysis for the way in which they demonstrate persistent patterns in rape narrative. These novels build upon the historical discourse of rape in ways that both reinforce and trouble hegemonic discourse. Rape rhetoric has focused on female psychological aspects to understand rape, but I argue that we should shift our focus to the social constructs of gender and sexual identity in order to analyze rape. In a script where men act, why do we focus on women, the female script that men act upon? As these fictional rape narratives demonstrate, a cognitive system of sexual gender roles is played out in numerous situations of violent and nonviolent sex. A persistent pattern of sexual gender identity is scripted in rape, but rhetoric continues to focus on the passive victim. While I agree that it is impossible to leave historical influences behind, there are sexual scripts where women are not passive, as authors Erica Jong, M.F. Beal, and Judith Rossner demonstrate.

Women have been socially condemned for assaults based on their sexuality. Men who rape label women transgressive in order to justify their actions, and society further labels women as transgressive as a result of their assault. I chose Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye and Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina to demonstrate that the most innocent person, a child, is still socially blamed for her assault. Women in rape narratives are often infantilized and both woman and child are both condemned. As Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver explain, "rape and rapability are central to the very construction of gender identity and that our subjectivity and sense of ourselves as sexual being are inextricably enmeshed in representations" (7). Regardless of the innocence that women or children exhibit through these texts, they are socially labeled as transgressive following an assault.

If scholars are examining female psychology surrounding assault, how can their findings affect rape? Instead, if we focus on the sexual gender script we can understand what prompts rape and therefore challenge that script. Several years ago, I had the

opportunity to watch a tape of men who had been convicted of rape discuss their crime in counseling. While the degrees of violence varied, no one defined his actions as rape. Similar to the victim's dialogue feminists have encouraged, these men vocalize the same script. The men understood women as passive and therefore without agency to say no. Common confessions included "She said no, but she meant yes" or "She is my wife and I have a right to sex." In each situation the man assumed that the woman had consented, regardless of her actions or vocal denial. Feminist theory has recently focused on encouraging women to speak out about their assault as a "survivor" or "victim," but this approach only encourages the assumption that women are passive. As Katie Roiphe demonstrates, the feminist encouragement is "intended to celebrate and bolster women's strength, [but] it seems instead to celebrate their vulnerability" (44).

Martin Schwartz and Walter DeKeseredy's Sexual Assault on The College Campus: The Role of Male Peer Support offers a different solution to reducing rape and sexual assault on females. Unlike many scholars, sociologists Schwartz and DeKeseredy focus on male peer support. Advocating that media and pop-culture create images supporting beliefs of sexual violence against women, they believe talking to males in counseling groups about ideologies of female sexuality can correct violent sexual behavior. They demonstrate that prevention will not stop rape but rather a conscious awareness of ideologies, stating: "Rape will not stop because women take precautions but when men stop assaulting women. For this reason student group discussions should also address key issues such as power relations in a patriarchal society, gender role socialization, sexism in popular culture, and rape myths" (146). Schwartz and Walter believe prevention can do very little to protect women but changing the psychological aspects of sexual gender roles can make a difference. Sexual Assault on The College Campus: The Role of Male Peer Support fills a void in analysis of sexual assault.

If men who rape do not define their actions as such, how do we correct that behavior in explorations of the female role? As demonstrated through these texts, it is not an issue of rape but rather an issue of ideologies of sexual gender roles. History influences each of these texts in different ways. Ideologies are demonstrated through the cultural representation in these texts in different ways, but what remains constant is the underlining sexual gender roles. These gender roles are essential to understanding

sexuality, gender identity and preventing sexual violence. Throughout these texts there is a persistence of eighteenth-century ideologies of female purity. Chronologically, I began with Petry's text because her novel takes steps in presenting the rape narrative that challenges the norms. Only a few years prior to Petry's text in 1946, Margaret Mitchell had written rape into the wildly popular novel Gone With The Wind.

Mitchell's classic scene involved Rhett carrying Scarlett up the stairs and ends with "darkness that was soft and swirling and all enveloping" (929). After a strategic chapter switch, Scarlett informs the reader that Rhett had "humbled her, used her brutally through a wild mad night and she had gloried in it" (930). Mitchell keeps the sexually violent scene hidden from the reader, titillating the reader by having her narrator establish that Scarlett had "gloried in it," reinforcing the rape myth that women desire to be raped. I use Mitchell's text, not in order to devalue it in any way but to draw attention to the contrast between a popular text from the late 1930's and Petry's social satire in the 1940's.

Morrison's The Bluest Eye and Jong's Fear of Flying appeared in the 1970's, along with the second-wave feminist movement. As I have demonstrated, with the 1970's sexual exploration and the second-wave feminist movement, sexual violence became a major topic in discourse. Later novels, Beal's Angel Dance, Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina, and Margaret Atwood's The Blind Assassin all appeared following 1990. It is important to note the dates of these texts because each grounds its rape narrative in present history. There is a direct connection between the political movements of the 1970's and fictional representations of rape narrative. Building upon interdisciplinary work in American literary theory and the history of assault makes it much easier to understand the changing patterns in rape rhetoric.

I was originally drawn to this topic after volunteering at Bluegrass Rape Crisis, exploring the research, and finding myself dissatisfied with the feminist discourse surrounding sexual assault. I refuse to believe that rape is common. Rape is not something that happens to all women. Unlike Brownmiller, who believes that all men rape and that this makes all women naturally afraid of men (209), I'm not scared of every man I know. As Roiphe points out, Brownmiller's theory "suggests that we should subject all of our male friends to scrutiny, because, after all men want one thing and one

thing only” (65). Unlike MacKinnon, I don’t believe all heterosexual intercourse is rape (49). Moving to more contemporary feminist theory I found conservative challenges toward previous theory. Scholars like Brown and Roiphe allude to the problems with feminists’ analysis of sexual violence. Roiphe “attacks feminists working against sexual violence, and more specifically, date rape for goading women to keep their dresses down and their pants up” (Mardorossian 748). Contemporary writers like Roiphe and Brown debunk feminist theory surrounding rape but regret to fill the void with new theory.

While I recognize rape as a real problem, I found little information on what could be done to stop rape but found numerous of amounts information on how to prevent rape. The very mention of prevention suggests that women control their ability to be assaulted and focuses on the female body politic. When I began the research for this project I wanted to look at all dimensions of rape narrative to understand influences, patterns, and social factors that appear in sexual violence. Confirming my previous opinions of feminist theory, I found that a sexual gender script plays out in violent sex and occasionally nonviolent sex. I learned that ideologies of sexuality, sexual identity, and gender are a constant influence to both violent and nonviolent sex. What I found was my answer. Instead of focusing on prevention we need to focus on issues that will help stop rape, such as the sexual gender script. We need to forget the vocabulary such as victim and survivor and instead refer to these women as women who were unfortunately raped as a result of the hegemonic system society perpetuates. Avoiding labels and categories also enforces attention on the individual and her story.

As I continue with my work regarding sexual violence I will look outside the narratives of rape and into the narratives of sexuality and gender identity to understand more ways in which ideologies influencing rape can be troubled. Even after this research my interest is not satisfied. I plan to continue exploring sexual violence and the sexual gender script.

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