

THESIS

VOICES THAT RESONATE: POPULAR MUSIC SUBVERTING AND  
REINFORCING THE RAPE SCRIPT

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2010

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

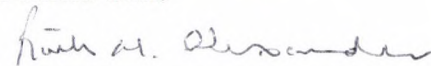
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ASHLEY MARIE DAVIES ENTITLED VOICES THAT RESONATE: POPULAR MUSIC SUBVERTING AND REINFORCING THE RAPE SCRIPT BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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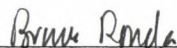
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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### VOICES THAT RESONATE: POPULAR MUSIC SUBVERTING AND REINFORCING THE RAPE SCRIPT

As case after case of rape comes before the court and different prevention policies are tried, scholars and activists are frustrated by the continual prominence of sexual violence. Many believe that if our society viewed rape as a serious offence and prosecuted it correctly, fewer people would rape. Along with the number of sexual abuse cases, representations of rape, or rape narratives as I will call them, have infiltrated mainstream media; film, television, and music all share the horrific tales of rape victims and, in some cases, seem to uphold feminist standards by giving a voice to those who have previously been silenced both by the legal system and societal gender expectations.

While scholarship has made the instances of sexual violence more visible and examined many aspects of rape (motivations, myths, the trauma of the victim, etc.), there is still much to be done to challenge the deeply entrenched rape culture we live in. In order to do so we must see how rape is constituted through discourse and how representations of rape affect those discourses. To see how rape narratives simultaneously perpetuate and question the authority that makes sexual violence possible, this work uses post-structural analysis to examine how rape is represented in popular music texts.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the help of numerous people. My committee members were invaluable to me for a wealth of information and insight. Dr. Deborah Thompson and Dr. Pamela Coke were always willing to help me work through critical problems and tirelessly read my drafts. I am also grateful for all those who helped me locate songs for this project, particularly Matthew Davies, Peter Gibbons and Mindy Harward. Mindy also spent hours talking through questions and concerns about this and many other projects. Her perspectives are always unique and influential. My amazing family and group of friends have supported and encouraged me through this project; I cannot imagine doing this without them.



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## Introduction

Modern-day society has been described by some as a “rape culture.” As case after case comes before the court and different laws and preventative policies are tried, scholars and activists are frustrated by the continual prominence of sexual violence. Many believe that if our society viewed rape as a serious offence and prosecuted it correctly, fewer people would rape. Along with the number of sexual abuse cases, representations of rape, or rape narratives as I will call them, have infiltrated main-stream media; film, television, and music all share the horrific tales of rape victims and, in some cases, seem to uphold feminist standards by giving a voice to those who have previously been silenced both by the legal system and societal gender expectations. While some people are outraged by the graphic portrayals of rape, others hope that encouraging victims to share their narratives will not only help them cope with their own pain but also prevent other rapes from occurring. On the one hand, explicit or honest portrayals of rape may desensitize us to the horror of the act (Miedzian); on the other, shocking representations of rape may show the seriousness of the crime. Both sides of this argument are caught up in how representations of rape in popular culture may be contributing to and/or challenging the rape culture. While these arguments are important, understanding how rape is constituted through discursive power will lead to a better comprehension of the rape culture and challenge it in more significant ways.

Susan Brownmiller’s seminal book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975) critically examines how society views rape and points out numerous “rape

myths.” Minimizing Brownmiller’s work feels ungrateful; however, thirty-five years have passed since its publication, and the rape myths continue to be prevalent in our society. Brownmiller’s assessment is not erroneous, but it maintains certain essentialist notions about rape. By “essentialist” I mean that they “naturalize” or “normalize” the constructed elements of the rape culture. Since its publication, there has been significant work done on the topic of rape; unfortunately, this has done little in the way of eliminating rape. While scholarship has made the instances of sexual violence more visible and examined many aspects of rape (motivations, myths, the trauma of the victim, etc.), there is still much to be done to challenge the deeply entrenched rape culture we live in. In order to do so we must see how rape is constituted through discourse and how representations of rape affect those discourses.

To see how rape narratives simultaneously perpetuate and question the authority that makes sexual violence possible, I will look at how rape is represented in popular music texts. Songs about rape seem to cross boundaries between time periods and genres. I will specifically focus on popular music after 1960. When choosing the songs for this project, I tried to select ones that are fairly well known since these would have a stronger contribution to discourse. My analysis will focus on the lyrics of the songs rather than a musicological approach because my focus is on the linguistic signifiers. There will be moments where I will bring in some musical elements like tempo, volume and tone, but only when these contribute to the how I analyze the lyrics. In some cases I will also use the music videos to further understand the songs since they often clarify some of the more ambiguous elements of the lyrics.



Popular music provides an interesting space for this type of analysis, in part because the narratives are so concise. Most popular songs are under five minutes, which limits the amount of detail and characterization provided for the rape narrative. These boiled-down texts require the authors to make choices as to what to include and what not to include, making the narratives remarkably focused. My other reason for choosing musical texts rather than literary or visual ones is that the scholarly community, outside of musicology, has not paid as much attention to them; however, these texts are consumed in mass quantities and listened to repeatedly by their audiences. Walk around any college campus and you can see a majority of students with headphones in. Not only do we listen to music, we sing along, repeating the lyrics over and over again. Concerts provide a perfect example of this active participation. Sometimes the participation produces eerie effects. In a video of Flickerstick's performance of "Chloroform the One You Love" (a narrative about a young man who chloroforms a young woman to rape her) the audience chants the chorus:

Chloroform the one, the one that you love

And take her back

Considering the subject matter of the song, the audience's affirmation of the narrator's actions is troubling to say the least. Music has a profound and ever-present place in our lives, which allows it to have a strong discursive power since we do not passively consume the texts.

The power of repetitious consumption of music connects to Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Butler's work focuses on denaturalizing gender, sex and the characteristics that are linked to them. She states that gender is constituted through

“repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (45). Butler argues that men and women do not behave a particular way because they are born male or female but because gender discourses regulate the ways they perform their assigned roles. Since these regulations are enacted through every portion of a body’s life, they become naturalized and seem self-evident. Gender is also constituted by the way we read gender. We also perform gender through reading bodies as gendered; the way we interpret other’s actions constructs discourses of gender as much as our own performances.

Sexual violence is tied up in a rhetoric based on gender difference. Since rape enacts masculine dominance and feminine weakness it reaffirms gender stereotypes of the man being superior physically and the woman being vulnerable. Rape not only genders bodies, it re-establishes power hierarchies between those bodies since those hierarchies are what legitimate rape in the first place. As much as physical actions perform gender, so do linguistic acts. Through our use of language, we create and regulate gender and tie specific attributes to it.

It would be a fallacy to see sexual violence purely as a physical act that reinscribes gender onto the bodies of the rapist and the victim. Sharon Marcus, in her article “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention,” argues that in order for that physical performance to take place there must be a script to legitimate the action. Rape is not a reality that victims must live through but a “*linguistic* fact... [that is] enabled by narratives, complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from their power to



structure our lives as imposing cultural scripts” (389). Marcus wants us to see rape as an event that is powered more through scripts than through biological difference. These scripts dictate how both the rapist and the victim act before, during and after the rape. Many may see rape as a terrible act that can only be prevented through men choosing not to rape, but when sexual violence is seen as a script, the power can be removed from masculine forces by the way we interpret and construct the event through language, opening up possibilities for resistance.

Although Marcus does view language as constitutive of rape, she warns against equating verbal threats and harassment with rape. She states that when harassment or threats come to stand in for rape itself then “rape has always already occurred.” What Marcus is concerned about is when language not only constitutes the power but stands in for physical action. Breaking these moments into separate pieces of a script allows women opportunities to “intervene, overpower and deflect the threatened action” (389). She does not want to devalue the offensiveness or seriousness of harassment but rather show how it is one step in the process towards rape in order to show that rape can be prevented once the script begins.

It is through these scripts that rape is not only legitimized but also comes to be seen as inevitable. They do not simply construct the men as physically superior; they put women in the position of being inherently vulnerable and incapable of fighting back. This puts victims in the position of the object of violence and allows them to do nothing but accept the violence; at the same time, it also enforces the idea that rape cannot be stopped once the script begins. The only thing victims can do, according to these scripts, is to fight for legal recompense. But, as Butler explains, the “feminist subject turns out to be

discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation” (3). While we tend to fight against rape scripts in political or social spheres, we are looking to the very systems that uphold gender norms which constitute rape. Marcus explains further that “[t]he gendered grammar of violence predicates men as the objects of violence and the operators of its tools, and predicates women as the objects of violence and the subjects of fear” (393). In these scripts men are always already the active perpetrators of violence and with access to weapons (i.e. guns, knives, penises, etc.), and women are always already passively receiving the violence.

Representations of victims in rape narratives show them motivated by fear and are often silenced and immobilized by the masculine violence. Marcus labels this as feminine fear. Renee Heberle agrees that “women’s pain may translate into the reality of male power” (68). The unfortunate part of narratives with victims sharing their experience is that when they attempt to speak out against rape they are, generally speaking, giving more power to the rapists. Heberle understands the motivation of victims to tell their stories because rape has often been seen as exaggerations or misunderstandings rather than violent crimes. These women are attempting to prove the “reality of sexual violence” (Heberle 67). But if these narratives are to be effective they need to do more than expose the reality of rape; they must dismantle the linguistically constituted foundation that gives rapists the power to rape.

It should be noted that rape is not a universal occurrence. In her article “‘It’s Only a Penis’: Rape, Feminism, and Difference,” Christine Helliwell discusses the effects of rape being seen as a universal. She explains that we tend to universalize rape because we see it as such a horrific act, and “while any form of violent attack may have severe



emotional consequences for its victims, the *sexualization* of violence in rape greatly intensifies those consequences for women in Western societies” (791). She goes on to explain that in some cultures rape is stripped of some of its meaning so it does not cause the victims the same type or amount of trauma. Once we are able to see that rape does not carry the same consequences for women universally, we can begin to disrupt the rape script more because there is less at stake for victims.

But with all this discussion of what is required for resistance, we must understand that speaking about it theoretically is all well and good, but accomplishing these goals is much more difficult in practice. As Michel Foucault suggests, discourses are powerful and resilient. More often than not, they are able to exploit disruptive narratives/behaviors/rhetoric to reaffirm the discourse. We can never simply assume that when there seems to be a shift in the way people speak about a topic that they are subverting the discourse. By exploring the ways in which rape narratives portray victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse, I will show how mass media texts generally constitute the rape script rather than destabilizing the rape culture. While this often leads to a hopeless feeling about any form of resistance, I do not want to get caught up in the belief that resistance is fruitless. Instead I will be looking at how there are certain instances where the narratives reaffirm discourses of rape and others that draw attention to the construct of the rape script and create fractures in the discourses that legitimate it.

For this argument I will be focusing primarily on male-on-female acts of rape. There are a few narratives that I chose that have male-on-male or female-on-male rape, but in those cases there are still normative heterosexual underpinnings to the rape. I do not want to disregard homosexual rape, but since they are acts that are constituted by

different scripts, they deserve a separate, in-depth analysis. I will also be focusing on how normative gender and sexuality are constructing the rape culture. A critique of rape based on class and race are equally important, but once again they fall outside the scope of this project.

It should be noted that I chose the label of “victim” rather than “survivor” with much deliberation. Activist groups have vigorously fought to gain victims’ power by claiming the term “survivor.” However, this feminist rhetoric is somewhat limiting and problematic. It emphasizes moving on, but if we want to prevent rape from happening, then we cannot disregard what is happening during the rape. Labeling all those who experience rape as “survivors” seems to make them survivors from the moment the rape begins. Since my focus here is to highlight how the condensation of the rape script is part of what reaffirms its power, I want to underscore that before you can be a “survivor” of rape, you are a “victim” of rape. This also allows victims to be in control of their own claim of survival rather than simply handing them another label. The other reason behind choosing the controversial term of “victim” is that my analysis will focus more on the moments surrounding the rape. There will be some discussion of the after-effects of rape, but only in how they relate to the legitimizing effect they have on the rape script. Because of this focus there will be little discussion of how these victims become “survivors;” rather I will be emphasizing what forces constitute their “victimization.”

I have chosen to organize this project based on who is in the subject position of the rape narrative. By “subject” I mean who is in control of the narrative or the main character of the narrative. The “object” of the narrative will be the person being acted upon or the minor character. It should be noted that I am using the terms “object” and



“subject” in a very different manner than Marcus. Each chapter will be devoted to a different position within the narrative: rapist as the subject, victim as the object, rapist as the object, and victim as the subject. There are some cases where there is an outside commentator who is in charge of the narrative; in these cases I placed them by deciding whether the emphasis was on the rapist or the victim. Chapters One and Two work hand-in-hand since they focus on the same group of songs with the rapist as the subject. These two chapters interrogate many of the stereotypes and rape myths and discuss how some narratives allow for possible moments of resistance. Chapters Three and Four are likewise linked through their discussion of songs with the victim as the subject. These narratives are seen as more feminist and *progressive* in nature. But as I will show, they often reaffirm many of the discourses that they are trying to undermine. While this categorization has its own set of limitations, it provides a way to closely examine how each narrative is reaffirming or challenging different elements of the rape script.



## **Chapter 1: Rapist Subjectivity and Masculinized Desire in Gendered Violence**

By seeing how rape is motivated by cultural constructs such as masculinity, we can challenge notions of biological impulses and disrupt the rape culture. bell hooks suggests that “we cannot hope to transform ‘rape culture’ without committing ourselves fully to resisting and eradicating patriarchy” (353). To fully understand how rape is constructed in our culture, it is important to look at the complexity of rape from both the victim and rapist’s point of view. In this chapter I will focus specifically on narratives with the rapist as the subject. Too often critics have focused solely on the victim’s subject position. By doing so, they have overlooked an important and enlightening element that contributes to the rape script. Without looking at how rapists are represented we are missing part of what makes rape seem inevitable. If women are always already rapable, as Marcus argues, then men are always already potential rapists. This concept of biological readiness to be raped or to rape is constructed through representations, and these representations do more than shape the way we view femininity and femaleness. Masculinity and maleness are also being recreated and reinforced through the rape culture (Helliwell). By exploring the details of the rape narrative from the rapist’s perspective, I will show how masculinity is shaped discursively/reactively through violent acts of sexuality. In the songs I will be analyzing here, men are generally the subjects, but to only look at male rapists would be to ignore the fact that gendered violence is not limited to males.

While I will be looking at these narratives with rapists as the subjects through several theoretical lenses, Lacanian analysis is particularly insightful in addition to theories of performativity and discursive power. Lacan's theories of psychology and the ways in which we integrate and survive in the social order are particularly useful. According to Lacan, we move out of the imaginary stage (preverbal, no difference) eventually to the symbolic order when we learn language, which causes us to understand ourselves as separated from others, including the Mother. When we experience trauma we encounter The Real, which exists beyond representation, meaning it defeats the attempt to fully integrate into the symbolic order. The other Lacanian theory that is particularly important in this chapter is that of the little object and big Other. The big Other functions as an imagined audience that approves or disapproves of our lives. In order to please the big Other we acquire little objects which symbolically fill up our lack. The will to mastery, the attempt to fill a lack, desire to please a big Other, and coping with the Real are all present within songs with rapists in the subject position. As a culture and individuals we may not be capable of overcoming the desire to please the Big Other or identifying a "proper" little object, but we can see how this desire is problematic and often motivates rapists.

However, Lacan's theories must be supplemented with Butler's gender criticism in order to highlight the ways in which gender performativity and discourse are motivating factors within the rape narrative. I suggest that the desire to prove that one is masculine to a big Other is one of the motivations of men to rape. Men, in other words, reduce their victims to a little object so that they can claim a phallus and establish a performance that is definitively marked masculine. The rapists in the narratives I will be



looking at are not always able to achieve their goals. In some cases they encounter incestuous activities or their victims fight back. The narratives with rapists as the subjects are not simply explanations or apologies for rape, they reinforce and /or challenge the discursive power that constructs the rape culture. While many of the songs merely form another or new way of acting within the structure, others allow for us to deconstruct some of the power elements that make rape seemingly unstoppable once the script begins.

It makes sense to start this analysis with a look at some of the more stereotypical narratives with rapists as subjects. While some of these may seem to simply condone violent behavior, the ways in which they explain the rapists' actions and sometimes excuse it can give insight to the issue at hand. I want to emphasize here that while the motivations I will be looking at in this chapter have the possibility of excusing the violence, this is obviously not my intent. Instead I will be discussing how these motivations end up making rape seem natural.

“Run for Your Life” by The Beatles functions as an example of how discourses of gender are used to legitimate gendered violence. The narrator in this song warns his lover saying:

I'd rather see you dead, little girl,

than to be with another man.

You'd better keep your head, little girl,

or I won't know where I am.

You'd better run for your life if you can, little girl,

hide your head in the sand, little girl,

catch you with another man,  
that's the end ah, little girl.

Although the narrator is not, in reality, enacting any violence, the threat of violence and control through violence represent and normalize these actions. While it is not specific to sexual violence, it aids in the understanding of how dominance and more specifically violence construct masculinity. I understand the dangers of conflating sexual violence with violence against women (Marcus, Projansky; Mason and Monckton-Smith), but the motivations behind the violence in these are predicated on a type of sexual relationship or desire for one.

It is repeated over and over again that the narrator's motivation for these threats is not simply fidelity but that he does not want her to be with anyone else. While he states:

Well you know that I'm a wicked guy  
and I was born with a jealous mind.  
And I can't spend my whole life  
tryin' just to make you toe the line,

throughout the song he explains that he cannot bear the thought of her "with another man." The audience has to assume that the woman did something to bring about these threats, but it is unclear whether she flirted with another man or if she simply spoke to one. For a woman to be unfaithful or to even appear as unfaithful, she no longer functions as a little object. Instead of helping to establish his masculinity she destabilizes it by showing him and the big Other that he cannot keep her in the *appropriate* subject position. To *properly* perform his masculinity he needs her to perform her femininity *properly*. Not only is he trying to maintain their relationship, he is also controlling her



ability to choose someone else. If he is successful at this he has even more power. To the modern listener many of these notions portrayed in this song will seem outdated.

Understanding that his narrative is from a different historical context (1965) is important; however, we cannot dismiss this type of narrative simply because it is from a different cultural moment. Power/knowledge is constructed through a history, and this narrative is part of our cultural history. Even though the roles in this narrative seem transparent, they continue to inform and reconstitute masculinity.

The narrator's explanation that he is a "wicked guy" also gives the impression that his claims are not necessarily justified. He makes it seem like he is aware of his reactive personality and recognizes the problems with his actions. Although he concedes to the baseness of his actions/threats, it seems to be a meaningless awareness. He is using this knowledge as an excuse for his actions. Instead of changing his behavior, he states it as another reason the woman should act different. Even the audience is likely to still accept the narrator as the authority with the justification for his threats based on the song's upbeat, poppy melody.

The narrator's capacity to murder the victim is never questioned. The audience is intended to believe his threats based solely on the fact that he is a man. The lack of references to his physical strength or access to weapons highlights the fact that his maleness is his weapon. The language he uses in these threats are not just a representation or proof of his masculinity but also a constitutive element of that masculinity. By using infantilizing language to describe his girlfriend, the narrator is able to gain a more powerful speech position. His mastery of the language is part of what enables his threats. He also goes so far as to say:



Let this be a sermon,  
I mean ev'rything I said.  
Baby, I'm determined  
and I'd rather see you dead

, establishing him not only as her lover but also moral/religious authority. But this power is still masculine in nature in that religious leaders have traditionally been male and directly draw on patriarchal power. This use of linguistic power reaffirms and reconstructs masculinity in ways which align it with physical violence.

To add to the narratives of men as subjects of violence, “Under My Thumb” by the Rolling Stones develops the idea of masculine dominance more explicitly. In this song the woman has been moved from being disobedient to submissive. Unlike “Run for Your Life,” the narrator of “Under My Thumb” does not threaten to kill the unruly woman, but rather gains control over her. He describes this process as:

Under my thumb  
The girl who once had me down  
Under my thumb  
The girl who once pushed me around

She has been changed to a woman that only “does just what she’s told,” “talks when she's spoken to” and does not look at other men. Her actions are always predicated on the narrator’s actions/desires. The woman has challenged the man’s power, which leads him to try to reestablish that power. In the first stanza the victim goes from resisting the narrator to submitting completely to him. It is unclear what his exact actions were to cause this change, but the ways in which she changes point towards harsh abuse whether

verbal, physical or sexual. This adds to the narrative of the disobedient women in “Run for Your Life” in that it does more to normalize this control. When it is difficult to make a person subject to your will it is easier to question the possibility and authority of that power, but when dominance is easy to establish it naturalizes the relationship.

To move into music that is more explicitly about sexual violence, Guns ‘N Roses “It’s So Easy” has a excessively narcissistic narrator who believes everything and everyone is for his own personal pleasure stating:

It's so easy, easy  
When everybody's tryin' to  
please me, baby.

Throughout the song the narrator describes what most would consider irresponsible behavior such as:

Cars are crashin' every night  
I drink n' drive  
everything's in sight  
I make the fire  
But I miss the firefight  
I hit the bull's eye every night.

However, he is able to transgress these norms for some unknown reason. At the end of the song he admits that:

I ain't got no money  
But it goes to show  
It's so easy.

One possible reason the narrator finds that society is willing to accept his deviant behavior is fame. This song seems to represent that those who society considers as holding celebrity status have the right to act outside of what is typically considered acceptable. According to this song, that includes rape.

Despite the fact that the narrator believes that “everybody’s tryin’ to please” him, he is left unsatisfied. He experiences pleasure, but is unable to find satisfaction in his deviance. Even when he is able to make others’ will bend to his own, he is not satiated. This shows the instability of little objects. While there is a certain level of machismo being used by the narrator, his motivations and authority for his actions seem more removed from masculinity. He is still trying to acquire little objects to please a big Other, he cannot fill his lack. Even though a subject of a lack can never actually fill that lack, there is usually a momentary sense of fullness when a body works to do so. Jean Baudrillard claims that “this narcissistic reinvestment, orchestrated as a mystique of liberation and accomplishment, is in fact always simultaneously an investment of an efficient, competitive, economic type” (279). The narrator is attempting to use the female body as a personal investment, but because he is feeling the need to compete with those around him, he has to continually appropriate more and more little objects. Even if he were to own bigger, better objects, there is no end to his consumption. In a capitalist society, the market requires products that must be replaced so that people continue to reinvest in the system. Whether it is masculinity or another form of power, people must obtain little objects of higher and higher symbolic significance rather than simply maintain them. It would be over-simplistic to see the rape in “It’s So Easy” as a meaningless object however. While it is being used as just one more status symbol to the



narrator, this type of disregard for gendered violence as a mere metaphor is part of what strengthens the rape culture.

Considering the how sexual violence and rape are ways of using a body as a little object to construct masculinity in the gaze of the big Other, men do not always look to women to fulfill this desire. Man-on-man rape is not typically viewed in the same ways as a man raping a woman. But in some cases the actions are motivated by similar forces. Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' song "Stagger Lee" highlights the similarities between these two different types of sexual violence. This song is on the album *Murder Ballads*, which features both original songs and remakes of older folk songs. This song has some of the same structural elements as the folk songs in that there is a sustained narrative. As the narrator describes Stagger Lee, it is clear that he is hyper-masculine. Each of his descriptions and his possessions are stereotypical emblems of normalized masculinity. The narrator begins the song saying:

It was back in '32 when times were hard

He had a Colt .45 and a deck of cards

Stagger Lee

He wore rat-drawn shoes and an old stetson hat

Had a '28 Ford, had payments on that

Stagger Lee

All these signifiers of masculinity introduce Stagger Lee's character as one who is obsessed with performing his gender to fill the lack that he does not want to experience. When he enters the bar the first thing he does is attempt to establish his ethos with the bartender:

He said, "Well bartender, it's plain to see

I'm that bad motherfucker called Stagger Lee"

Mr. Stagger Lee.

His concern is primarily with the way others perceive him. When the bartender dismisses Stagger's reputation, he explains that he "kick[s] motherfucking asses like [Stagger Lee] everyday." Stagger Lee cannot accept this denial of his own machismo and murders the bartender on the spot. Stagger Lee is wrapped up in his own perception of self and cannot cope with anyone who questions his identity.

His violent behavior towards the bartender is complicated when viewed in light of the fact that, as the narrator explains:

His woman threw him out in the ice and snow

And told him, "Never ever come back no more"

Stagger Lee.

There is no mention of his committing any violence against her or even resisting her as one would expect from a character like Stagger. Her act of removing his authority is possibly what drove him to violent behavior. Because a woman was able to challenge his masculinity, he feels he must reestablish it through whatever means necessary. His forced removal from a space that would have typically helped define his power can be seen as Stagger experiencing the Real. This trauma would force him to reintegrate himself into the symbolic order because it disrupted the identity that he is invested in. During this process he would have, at least on the unconscious level, become more aware of his lack, which he violently fights to cover up. It seem as though Stagger cannot successfully integrate the symbolic order because his actions are out of line with what is considered



acceptable, but his lack of consequences for his actions within the narrative shows that he is, in actuality, filling the gap of his lack through violence.

Nellie Brown, the bar's dancer/prostitute, further establishes Stagger's masculinity as his access to power and will to mastery. While she is initially shocked by the murder of the bartender, her emotions are quickly abated, and she propositions

Stagger:

She saw the barkeep, said, "O God, he can't be dead!"

Stag said, "Well, just count the holes in the motherfucker's head"

She said, "You ain't look like you scored in quite a time.

Why not come to my pad? It won't cost you a dime"

She equates his violent actions to unfulfilled sexual desire. She does not seem to fear him regardless of his previous violence. Her offer is essentially to become a more acceptable little object to stand in for his masculinity rather than murder. She is a willing participant in his will to mastery, but Stagger is not interested in using her. As she makes her offer, she warns him that he needs to leave before her "man Billy Dilly comes in." To Stagger, the prospect of a conflict with Billy is more enticing than a sexual encounter with Nellie. He rejects her suggestion exclaiming:

"I'll stay here till Billy comes in, till time comes to pass

And furthermore I'll fuck Billy in his motherfucking ass"

Said Stagger Lee

"I'm a bad motherfucker, don't you know

And I'll crawl over fifty good pussies just to get one fat boy's asshole"

Said Stagger Lee

Stagger is not rejecting sex with all women in preference to homosexual sex, rather his motivations for homoeroticism is based more in his desire to establish his masculine power. While he would be able to construct some dominating power by subjugating Nellie, by raping a man he is gaining what he presumes to be a more powerful signifier of his masculinity. One of the differences between Nellie and Billy is that Stagger knows that Nellie is a willing participant. Force dictates a different level of masculine power. While it is a traditional notion that men need to have a woman to fully perform their masculinity, what Stagger desires is dominance and authority, not sex. If his desire to rape was based on his desire to for sexual gratification or reproduction, Nellie would have suited this purpose. Because Stagger is fully invested in a hierarchal system based on gender, for him to assume sexual power over another man establishes him not only as masculine but a figure of power regardless of genders. This is not to say that all male-on-male rape has nothing to do with homoerotic desire, but that this representation helps to elucidate one of Susan Brownmillers's claims in *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* that "sexual appeal, as we understand it, has little to do with the act of rape" (125). Although Brownmiller's book is an older study that may seem out of date, her argument about rape is foundational to this argument. We may wish to believe that it is now common sense that rape is predicated on power rather than sex, but I believe it is important to continue representing this in order to emphasize the construction of the discourse. To challenge a discourse it is imperative to see the continual making and remaking of it.

Besides seeing representations that constitute the rape culture and define a traditional rapist, another way to disrupt the rape culture is to see some of the flaws in



scripts that seem to punish the rapist for his actions. While these may seem to be creating new values, in some cases they are simply assimilating certain tropes that do nothing more than reaffirm discourses that construct power relationships. Marcus explains that “[t]hey thus assume that men simply have the power to rape and concede this primary power to them, implying that the best men can secondarily be dissuaded from using this power by means of threatened punishment from a masculinized state or legal system” (388). This follows Butler’s statement that turning to a political system that “discursively constitutes” the very problem you are attempting to disrupt “will be clearly self-defeating” (3). This does not mean that we do not want some form of justice to be enacted on perpetrators of rape, but that justice from a system that upholds gendered power can never destabilize a rape culture let alone defeat it. When we do encounter representations of rape that punish the rapist, we must be careful to analyze where that punishment is coming from and if it does question the normalization of male biological power.

A more traditional representation of a punished rapist is Johnny Cash’s “Delia’s Gone.” There are a large number of folk songs about physical and sexual violence. In this particular song, the narrator laments the death of his love Delia. He states in the first stanza:

Delia, oh, Delia, Delia all my life  
If I hadn't have shot poor  
Delia I'd have had her for my wife  
Delia's gone, one more round Delia's gone



The end of each stanza is marked by him stating “Delia’s gone, one more round, Delia’s gone.” The narrator has conflicting desires, but his need to establish himself in the dominant speech position wins out over his desire for her love because that emotional tie made the dominant position impossible to achieve. Part of the reason behind his choice is in that to have a wife, in his point-of-view, would be to acquire a little object. She would not function as a little object simply because he married her. Her performance as a wife would not have been proper, according to the narrator, and therefore would not serve his needs. These desires are much like the narrators’ in “Run for Your Life” and “Under My Thumb.”

Some of the narrator’s motives can be seen in his description of Delia and his conflicting desire for her, but there is something more telling in the last stanza of the song. The narrator speaks directly to his audience (apparently an entirely male audience) saying:

If your woman’s devilish  
You can let her run  
Or you can bring her down  
And do her like Delia got done.

This ends the song with a call to masculinity. He sets up a binary where either women are obedient or they deserve to die. Because of this conversation with his audience, this song reconstitutes the discourse. In her discussion of the myths surrounding rape, Joanna Bourke explains that some use rape to “put [marginalized individuals] in their place lest they usurp some of the power of their (male) betters” (48). By allowing a woman to “run,” a man’s discursive power would not only be threatened but possibly assumed by

the female. Instead of letting a woman have a chance at stripping a man of this power and exposing the construct of that essentialized power, the narrator here suggests that all males use the discourse to eliminate that possibility. This highlights the ways in which masculine power is constantly reconstituted by dominating othered bodies. In order to establish a masculine performance, one must act within a hierarchal system and be on the top. But individual action is not enough to essentialize male power. The narrator does not simply suggest other men should follow his example because they may find this helpful advice, but because a discourse requires a community of followers who participate willingly in the creation of power/knowledge.

Even though the narrator appeals to other males to join in this discourse, he has been punished by the legal system. This seems like a paradox. What motivation would men have to follow this narrator when he was penalized for his actions? Even beyond the court system, the narrator experiences psychological torment. He cries out:

But jailer, oh, jailer Jailer,  
I can't sleep 'Cause all around my bedside  
I hear the patter of Delia's feet  
Delia's gone, one more round Delia's gone

These pieces of the narrative may seem to suggest that the narrator is unreliable even though he is, at times, sympathetic. We could view this narrator as an example of a change in the rape culture that is trying to dissuade men from committing gendered violence and to argue instead that they should, in fact, let their woman run if that is what she chooses to do. On the other hand, I read this conflict as a convoluted representation that shows the ineffectiveness of punishment. The narrator may be suffering from judicial



and psychological punishment for his actions, but we cannot deny the ways in which he is reinforcing the myth of biological essentialism. More than that, these types of punishment discourage us from examining the discursive power behind these actions because we believe that justice has been served.

Some representations of disciplined rapists rely solely on psychological torment rather than judicial punishment. “Dance with the Devil” by Immortal Technique gives a complete narrative of Billy. The narrator of the song, apparently one of Billy’s friends who was present the night of the rape, points out that Billy’s

...primary concern, was making a million  
being the illest hustler, that the world ever seen  
he used to fuck moviestars and sniff coke in his dreams  
a corrupted young mind, at the age of thirteen

and

he started hanging out selling bags in the projects  
checking the young chicks, looking for hit and run prospects  
he was fascinated by material objects.

By setting Billy up as a character who is not stable and is finding pleasure in fetishizing objects, the audience is prepared to see Billy fall further and further from acceptable behavior in the song. The melodic gloomy tone of the music also points to the impending tragedy of Billy. Beyond what the narrator wants the audience to believe about Billy’s lifestyle, the mention of the fascination with “objects” points out the desire of Billy to possess little objects for some unknown big Other. His aspirations to wealth and fame are to gain a reputation or improve the way others see him. One of the objects he attempts to



possess is sexual experience with women. It is mentioned in the line prior to the “material objects” that Billy was continually “looking for hit and run prospects.” Because these two lines are juxtaposed, there is a sense that he views the female body as a site to acquire little objects. His motivation is not the pleasure of sexual relationships; rather he has fetishized sex and the bodies he uses for sex to the point that they became simply signifiers of his speech position.

In order to gain the respect he needs, Billy is told that his minor acts of deviance are not enough. The higher level gang members state that:

... any motherfucking coward can sell drugs

any bitch nigga with a gun, can bust slugs...

but only a real thug can stab someone till they die

standing in front of them, starring straight into their eyes...

and they wanted to test him, before business started

suggested raping a bitch to prove he was cold hearted.

Billy accepts the advice of the gang. The sexual violence is described in gruesome detail. The narrator does not hurry through the violence like the previous songs have. This may have something to do with the rap genre in that sexual violence is a common theme in rap and hip-hop music; however, much of the main stream music of these genres is condoning rather than condemning graphically violent sexual abuse. This song is using the conventions of the genre by describing the violence in great detail, but leaving the overall message as anti-rape. The group greatly affects the way this sexual violence is carried out. Not only do they convince Billy to enact the crime, they are also active participants. This violence becomes less about individual power being established and

more about defining and integrating a group. Each group member aids in the initial attack of the rape victim, but it is Billy who is made to control the violence. He is the one who breaks her jaw and rapes her first. By forcing him to be in the position of power in the violence, the group is expecting him to show that he is capable of initiating action. The rape is not sufficient evidence of Billy's masculine power; the group requires him to be the one to kill the woman.

The gang functions on a hierarchal system that requires acting against the law to gain a higher speech position within its exclusionary symbolic order. In this way, the rape is predicated on pleasing the group. Chris O'Sullivan points out that "strong identification with a group replaces individual ethics with group ethics" (26). Billy's power is not based on his individual actions but in the collective. Before he shot the woman, "he felt strong standing along with his new brothers." Because the violence was carried out in a group, Billy's actions do not belong to him. He becomes conflated with the group. All of his actions do not lend to his personal power but rather the group's collective power. In a way he becomes like the raped woman; he simply is a place holder or little object that is supposed to stand in for a lack.

Right before Billy kills the woman he uncovers her face and discovers that she is his mother. At this moment he experiences the trauma of the Real. According to Lacanian theory the trauma of the Real often coincides with the realization that the Mother (wholeness, unregimented selfhood) is dead. All of the pride he had been reveling in up until this moment is shattered. His sense of identity is fragmented by the death of his actual mother. But the anxiety Billy feels is not about the rape. Had the woman not been his mother, it is clear that he would not react in the same way in that the narrator



participated in the rape and has a less extreme reaction. Billy's attempt at integrating the symbolic order has been defeated by his murder of his mother. Although psychoanalysis discusses incestuous desire and the oedipal complex as the desire to be one with the Mother, it would be a mistake to believe that this type of desire as something that can be successfully realized. An encounter with the mother has the potential to make the body experience life in an even more fragmented way. Billy believes that it is his duty as a son to protect his mother. His role as a man includes both asserting power over women and protecting the ones that are part of his dominion. By raping his mother he has effectively broken from a masculine performance, which causes his identity to fall apart. Unable to cope with this trauma, Billy commits suicide.

To use the perspectives of Foucault and Butler, the mother's body, in this narrative, becomes a technology of power that trains the son in the discourse of gender. Because the mother's body is off limits it successfully aids in the integration to the symbolic order in that it stands in-between the son and the imaginary. When these boundaries are transgressed the man's gender performance is no longer acceptable to the big Other, and this destabilization puts him through trauma. Even though the rapist here is punished outside of the judicial system, his consequences are still established through a discursive system that constitutes his power. Rape of the mother may be the lowest of Billy's actions, but it is used more as a trope than a significant destabilization of masculine power. What the narrator here wants the audience to understand is that masculinized power should not be misused, not that it is a construct.

I've set the next two songs aside from the others because they do not paint the rapist in a positive light in that they are using hyperbole and satire rather than



romanticizing or aestheticizing sexual violence. While they are both from the rapist's point of view, they do not encourage sympathy towards the rapist primarily. In some ways these are both parodying the more stereotypical songs with the rapist as the subject.

In Flickerstick's "Chloroform the One You Love," the narrator (assumed to be male) tells about a girl that he is obsessed with. It becomes clear that his attempts to be with her are unwanted. He says:

She sits back and ignores  
My need to adore  
Intimidations got me down again  
She's only 18 but such a beautiful dream.

It seems that part of his desire is based on the fact that she does not want him. Because of her rejection he continues to fixate on her. There is a part of him that cannot cope with being refused; in order to be content he must have what he wants regardless of the other people involved. The narrator is even aware of this problem and considers the fact that:

Maybe rejection is the high  
That keeps me coming here  
I need some compassion but she's  
Laughing at the nervousness  
I feel whenever she is around

The other issue with his desire is that he is paralyzed by it. Even though he clearly wants to develop a relationship with this girl he feels "intimidate[ed]" and "nervous" by her presence. Throughout the song the narrator continues to make references to his feeling of inability to perform the way he is supposed to in this type of situation. Between his

overwhelming desire for this girl and his failure to perform his role adequately, his motivations to go to extreme lengths to “take her back” are more motivated by his lack than by any romantic feelings towards the girl. This line can also be read as a parody of other narratives in which the rapist is sympathetic. By viewing this line as a connection with the audience, it can be seen that he is asking them to participate in the discourse that understands and forgives sexual violence when it is motivated by a deviant woman.

There is no explicit reference to rape, but it is implied. In the second verse of the song, the narrator explains that

...I can't see just how real  
Is the charm no I don't mean  
Her no harm despite my heart  
And the challenge while she's lying here

It is not entirely clear what challenge the narrator is feeling while she is unconscious; however, considering the previous analysis of his desire being linked to her rejection, I would say that he does in fact view her passive body as available to him. In this state, she is unable to reject him. Therefore, by raping her, he would be gaining what he has desired. But what is the challenge for him? She, obviously, does not pose any threat to his ability to have sex with her. Is the challenge his feelings of inadequacy; he feels that his masculinity is challenging him to rape her? Or, is it his morals kicking in and stopping him? He may feel that chloroforming her was not inappropriate but possibly that raping her would be. Whichever one is motivating him to see her passive body as a challenge, the last verse of the song confirms that he has “take[n] her back.”

The narrator proclaims at the end of the song:



I can see today is like any other day  
But it seems brighter than it was before  
I just can't believe that it's  
Not the same no it's not the same  
It will never be the same for me again.

He has succeeded in his conquest and, for the first time in the song, feels confident. His machismo comes directly after he has overcome the “challenge” that was lying before him. Because the song is set to an upbeat pop tune, this line is particularly unsettling. There is a sense of regret that comes from the narrator is the repetition in the last lines of the verse. He believes that things have changed permanently for him. While this line follows directly after his statement that the day is “brighter,” his fixation on the change he feels highlights that he is not completely comfortable with what has taken place.

His choice of weapon makes her into the same type of victim as women in many other narratives: silent and passive. The narrator claims that:

All she needs is some chloroform  
And she'll be mine  
Chloroform the one, the one that you love  
And take her back

Instead of moving on and accepting her response to him, he chooses instead to remove her ability to act negatively towards him. As noted in my other analyses, one of the first moves made in rape narratives is to silence the woman. Typically this has been a verbal demand for silence but is sometimes accompanied by a weapon as a threat. What interests me about this song's weapon of choice is that it is not used as a threat, but rather it is a



method of control. There is not the same violence involved in using chloroform as there is in using a knife or a gun. While chloroform can be life threatening, the narrator does not use the fear to make the girl comply. To ruminate on this detail for a moment, we should be aware that this weapon moves away from typical rape narratives and what this does to the masculinization of power. To a certain point the penis is seen as the weapon of sexual violence in that it is object that violates the body. What we tend to forget is that the penis itself is a delicate piece of anatomy. Because of the differentiation of male and female based on anatomy and the belief that men are biologically superior when it comes to physical strength, it is easy to reduce male power as the penis/phallus. Even if we only do so metaphorically, concepts of rape intensify these connections. One of the most powerfully challenging elements of “Chloroform the One You Love” is that the narrator’s power is removed from his masculinity and maleness. His feelings of emasculation are intensified by his reliance on a weapon with little to no phallic imagery. When rapists are represented with weapons such as knives or guns it can be easy to connect the weapons symbolically with the phallus. But the use of a chemical weapon is not imbued with the same cultural significance as other weapons in rape narratives. The reliance on a liquid weapon shows that the narrator is not accessing masculinity or male power to commit rape which, in turn, calls attention to the lack of naturalized power behind his actions. In a way, the weapon performs the construction of male power in a way that makes us aware of the construct.

The song “Please Don’t Leave Me” by Pink also makes use of a weapon to paralyze the narrator’s *object* of her affection in order to force him to remain tied to her. On the surface this narrative seems to be doing something totally different from

“Chloroform the One You Love.” This is mostly due to the fact that the narrator in this song is a female and her means to containing her lover are extremely violent. However, I suggest that the narratives are very similar in that both narrators’ goal is to force the person who has rejected them into a physical/emotional relationship. These narrators are not committing rape merely for the pleasure or power gained from having sex, but rather to achieve a relationship that either seemed impossible or was failing. This is seen in the fact that the sexual violence is downplayed in both narratives, and the physical violence used to pacify the other party is at the forefront.

In order to get another perspective on “Please Don’t Leave Me,” I will be discussing both the lyrics and the music video. While the lyrics of the song do suggest some physical violence, on their own it is not enough to show how violence is being used in this particular narrative. According to the lyrics of the song there is no particular weapon in play in this narrative. The narrator references that her lover is a “perfect little punching bag,” that she can “cut [him] into pieces,” and that they are playing a game where “the one that wins will be the one that hits the hardest.” Going by these words alone, this narrator seems to be inflicting more metaphorical pain than actual violence, or at least weaponless violence. When viewed with the music video the narrative becomes explicitly violent and disturbing.

Unlike “Chloroform the One You Love,” the narrator clearly has a relationship she is fighting to maintain through the song. Despite the fact that she has a more established relationship, her motivations for forcing him to stay are not completely clear. According to the lyrics of the song, the narrator cannot handle the thought of being alone. Each one of her pleas for him to stay comes back to her not feeling capable on her own.



The closest she comes to asking him to stay based on her desire for him as an individual is when she claims that her “heart is...broken.” Based on the way the narrator pauses before “broken” it seems that the narrator is simply saying what she feels is necessary in order to get her boyfriend to stay. This idea is confirmed by the video when the camera moves to the boyfriend’s face for his reaction. It is clear he does not believe her. Later in the song she claims that

I forgot to say out loud how beautiful you really are to me  
I can't be without, you're my perfect little punching bag  
And I need you, I'm sorry.

The first phrase in this line once again may seem sentimental on its own, but her following comment labels him as a mere object. In the video she follows up her playful punch by pushing him down the stairs while he is strapped in a wheel chair. The narrator’s sentiments throughout the song are made ridiculous in light of her actions towards her boyfriend. Neither he nor the listeners believe her empty claims of attachment. She starts the narrative saying:

I don't know if I can yell any louder  
How many time have I kicked you outta here?  
Or said something insulting?

and

How did I become so obnoxious?  
What is it with you that makes me act like this?  
I've never been this nasty  
Can't you tell that this is all just a contest?

Power play is apparently nothing new to this relationship. She seems to be keenly aware of all the reasons he would want to escape the destructive relationship, but she uses those reasons to attempt to convince him that she needs him in her life and might actually love him. When these verbal appeals fail, she resorts to violence.

Her obviously flawed reasoning and persuasion is reminiscent of narratives of domestic abuse towards women, but this particular narrative is not simply switching the gender roles, it complicates some of the typical notions about abuse. While some songs (“Under My Thumb,” “Run for Your Life,” “Delia’s Gone,” etc.) speak of women being verbally/physically abused and sometimes killed, there are few if any repercussions to the male narrator and the narrator doesn’t typically sound unreliable. Although modern listeners may acknowledge that many of these songs are wrongly violent towards women, the narratives themselves do not question the authority or the actions of the narrator. Pink’s song, however, uses the video as a means to degrade the violent narrator. After the first act of violence (the boyfriend falling down the stairs), the narrator of this song is made to look less real or sane as the song continues. It does this by the narrator’s costume. When the boyfriend wakes up from his initial fall, she is dressed in a carnivalesque nurse costume. Later in the narrative, she is wearing an even more absurd costume and her makeup is clown-like. By dressing her in this manner it put her in the position of the fool in the narrative, thereby claim her actions ridiculous and inappropriate rather than glorifying or normalizing these types of actions as other narratives do. The gender role reversal also serves to alienate the rape script and to hold it up for critique.



The rape within this song is almost invisible just like the rape in “Chloroform the One You Love.” The lyrics do not suggest any type of sexual violence, and the images of the video only hint at what has taken place. After the narrator rolls her boyfriend down a flight of stairs into an audience of dolls (possibly a commentary on the passive society that is aware of sexual/physical abuse but is not willing to do anything about it), she runs to comfort him. Because he is still tied to the wheel chair which is on its side, he does not have an opportunity to resist her kisses. The next image is her waking up close to where he landed. She is naked and shocked when she notices he is not lying next to her. Although it isn’t clear what transpired during the elapsed time, one can reasonably assume that some sort of sexual abuse was inflicted on the boyfriend. One question that can be legitimately raised is whether he was forced into sex or if he participated in order to gain the opportunity to escape her physical abuse.

In the end, the narrator’s method of using violence to obtain her own desires fails. And of all things, she is defeated by hairspray. As the boyfriend runs from her, she grabs an ax and looks more crazed than ever. He seeks shelter in the bathroom, which she begins to break into with the use of the ax. When all seems the most hopeless for the boyfriend, he notices the spray bottle on the counter and quickly acts against her. He sprays her in the face, and she ends up falling over the banister. This scene is recalling when he fell down the stairs. This time, he is left in the higher position looking down to see the route to his desire/escape. The final scene of the video has the EMTs helping both the narrator and the boyfriend. He is being removed from the house as she begs one more time for him not to leave. His reaction is hatred and disgust as he shakes his head no.

While much of this video seems to be satirizing older narratives of abusive relationships, the troubling thing for me in this one is that the boyfriend uses hairspray to regain control over the situation. It does make sense that he would find that product in the bathroom, but it is generally considered a feminine beauty product. In a certain light it seems as though her “masculine” behavior is stopped by a feminized product. Throughout the narrative he is never physically resisting her. Each of his moves are reactionary or passive. He does not fight back. Part of this may be due to the cultural belief that men cannot hit women (which is paradoxical based on the fight against domestic abuse). If he were to hit her in order to escape it may seem as though his violence was not self defense but rather promoting violence against women. So it is possible that the only “acceptable” way for him to escape her violence is to use a weapon that is associated with femininity. This correlates with “Delia’s Gone” in that one of the most threatening devises to masculinized power is female power. In this song the feminine weapon is able to disarm the rapist’s power which exposes the fragility of that power.

Pink’s song “Please Don’t Leave Me” has multiple elements in common with “Chloroform the One You Love.” However, with “Please Don’t Leave Me” there are points where the song and the video are calling attention to themselves in order to question domestic and sexual violence narratives. Neither of the songs rely on the narrator’s physical strength or gender as the primary weapon to force the victim into submission. There are many other songs that discuss the use of a weapon separated from the body to silence and pacify the victims; these two songs are different in that they emphasize obtaining or retaining a relationship rather than the pursuit of sex. This fact



makes the rapes within these narratives seem less important, as if sexual violence is not as bad if you are in a relationship with the person who rapes you. But I would argue that both of these narratives highlight the fact that rape makes the victims into objects or bodies that are meant to be consumed at the will of another regardless consent. Actions such as those seen in these two songs recall an older definition of rape that had more to do with ownership and seizure.

Through looking at the representations of rapists in popular music we can see both how power is masculinized to essentialize the male body's ability/right/motivation to rape and ways in which some representations challenge that essentialization. What we must take from these representations is that part of disrupting the rape culture requires us to fully understand how representations of normalized masculine power recreate the discourse that constitutes that power; that the consequences typically suffered by rapists are largely based on patriarchal systems that are not effective in denaturalizing the male body's ability to rape; despite the escalated violence and danger associated with weapons that aid in rape, they have the possibility of pointing to the constructed nature of power associated with the male body's anatomy.

## **Chapter 2: Postfeminism and the Role of the Victim as an Object of Violence**

Every rape narrative has at least two roles. Even when the rapist may be the subject of the narrative, there is something to learn from the victims in these narratives. By breaking down narratives into categories dependant on who is in the subject position, it is easy to disregard the position of the object. Although the rapist's descriptions of the victims are obviously skewed, they help us draw insight into stereotypical notions of gender roles. These narratives are often read as examples of how western culture does not prosecute sexual violence as a serious offence. But they become more important when considering the means by which gender is rehearsed. According to Butler and Marcus these repeated narratives are creating the reality of rape and doing so in a way that constitutes not only little or no justice but also no resistance from the victim.

While this role in the narrative is clearly devalued and maintains some of the more traditional views about sexuality and gender, delving deeper into this position allows us to understand one of the elements that constitutes the rape culture more fully. There are several reasons why it is important to take a closer look at how narratives with the victim as the object dictate the role the victim plays in the script. One of these reasons is that in some narratives the rapist justifies his or her actions based on the characteristics of the victim. These narratives attempt to naturalize or legitimize the violence so that it not only makes the rape inevitable but also understandable. It may seem that analyzing this perspective is obvious and unnecessary, but given the mainstream backlash against



feminism that is popular postfeminism, we cannot passively accept that these are widely acknowledged problems.

Analyzing the victim's role as the object of violence also elucidates how discourses of sexual violence have used ideas about feminism and sexual liberation as justification for rape. It would be a mistake to assume that this role in the narrative has remained stagnant despite cultural and historical changes. Even though discursive power tends to use acts of resistance as justification for discourse, there are times when this appropriation of resistance can cause fissures to the discourse or call attention to the system of power. In this chapter I will discuss how postfeminism is problematized by the rape script that is upheld or justified by it. Part of this discussion will focus specifically on how the victims are silenced through linguistic acts that add to the fear of resistance once the rape script has begun.

Postfeminism, as I will use the term here, claims that the goals of feminism have been accomplished. Sarah Projansky, in her book *Watching Rape*, explains that “the concept of postfeminism *perpetuates* feminism in the very process of insisting that it is now *over*” (66). According to this, postfeminism *seems* to be feminism but, in that it actually claims to be past feminism, it assumes that feminism is dead. One of the concepts of postfeminism is that women are believed to be sexually liberated. However, if we follow the implications of this belief, it quickly falls apart. Projansky even suggests

postfeminist discourses define and depend on a version of feminism that focuses on individual rights rather than, for example, a structural analysis that might suggest that unequal pay at work, the intersection of racism and sexism, and cultural assumptions about femininity make the concept of ‘free choice’ an oxymoron (79).

Does individual choice truly exist when those who make certain choices are negatively impacted by those choices? If male desire no longer dictates female sexuality, then why

is rape used as a cautionary tale of the consequences of sexual liberation. Sabine Sielke even claims that until the 1960s “female sexuality had almost exclusively become an issue when conjoined with, or framed by, incidents of sexual violence” (379). While representations of female sexuality in relation to female desire have become much more prolific, they are still “entangled with the construction of sexualities and difference” (379) as Sielke notes. This suggests that we should not assume that feminism has been successful based on the fact that there are more representations of “sexually liberated” women. Considering the influence of sexual violence on sexual discourse, it is not surprising that narratives about rape continue to comment on and take part in the (re)construction of sexual autonomy.

Butler also discusses the difficulty of obtaining any type of fulfilled resistance due to power’s ability to reappropriate these acts. She explains that

the mechanism of repression is prohibitive and generative at once and makes the problematic of “liberation” especially acute. The female body that is freed from the shackles of the paternal law may well prove to be yet another incarnation of that law, posing as subversive but operating in the service of that law’s self-amplification and proliferation (126-127).

This is the problem of postfeminism: it accepts liberation as fact rather than seeing how it reinforces the same discourse that it was trying to subvert. Discourses supporting the rape script are also, in some contexts, being supported by “sexual liberation” and (post)feminism. However, it is unexpected to see feminism in narratives with the rapist as the subject unless it is a satire of that subject position. The reason I believe so many have looked over the victim’s role as the object in these narratives is that they suspect that there is neither anything resistant about this position nor anything to suggest the integration of postfeminism into the rape script.



But as Irina Anderson and Kathy Doherty point out in their psychological study of rape, many of the old rape myths are alive and well even in the face of being *beyond* feminism. They explain that in many rape studies people still “respond to the rape incident depicted by scrutinizing and evaluating the behavior of *the victim* and not the perpetrator” and that by doing so are participating in “a pattern of reasoning about rape that is informed by patriarchal values: that women by and large play a contributory role in their own rape” (49). It is not just that rape is committed and justified in a postfeminist culture, but that even the way we talk about rape still reflects prefeminist notions about the victim’s responsibility to his or her own rape. Nicholas D. Kristof reports that there is even a certain level of ambivalence within the justice system when it comes to testing rape kits. He suggests “[f]ew people say that today, or say publicly that a woman ‘asked for it’ if she wore a short skirt. But the refusal to test rape kits seems a throwback to the same antediluvian skepticism about rape as a traumatic crime” (A27). When rape narratives, the justice system and scholarship continue to uphold a discourse that supports a patriarchal system, it is difficult to say that feminism has achieved any sense of equality or liberation. Even male victims are negatively affected by this perpetuation of essentialized gender roles. Since both female and male bodies are being used as psychological/commodified objects much of their value remains consistent with discourses of gender and sexuality.

One example of a rape narrative that uses postfeminist notions to validate the rape script is Guns ‘n Roses’ “It’s so Easy.” The song uses two women to illustrate the difference between acceptable and punishable gender performances. Neither of these women has much said about them, but they are set up in a dichotomy based on how they

interact with the narrator. The narrator's only differentiation between the two women in the song is that one is addressed as if she is the audience for the song and the other is her sister. The sister plays her part willingly:

I see your sister in her  
Sunday dress She's out to please  
She pouts her best  
She's out to take  
No need to try  
She's ready to make.

While the interaction between the sister and the narrator is sexual it is assumed that it is not violent in nature. Because the narrator has “No need to try” and “She’s ready to make,” violence is not required. In this case the sister is performing her gender role appropriately. She has acquired all of the symbols necessary, both a “Sunday dress” and a “pout,” to prove her compliant femininity and aid in the construction of the narrator’s masculinity.

The sister is in direct contrast to the unnamed audience of the song. While the actual audience for this narrative would be broad, the narrator is directing his commentary to some unnamed woman. This woman is not making her sexuality available to him so he takes it through force:

I see you standin' there  
You think you're so cool  
Why don't you just  
Fuck off



Ya get nothin' for nothin'  
If that's what you do  
Turn around bitch I got a use for you  
Besides you ain't got nothin' better to do  
And I'm bored

Her incomppliance violates his desire, which calls his masculine power into question. Butler suggests that gender and sex are “an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification” (45). In this section Butler is discussing Beauvoir’s theory in relation to women; however, it is not out of line to apply the same to the construct of man. Because this woman’s performative acts fall outside the desires of the narrator, they call attention to the narrator’s performance of his own gender. There is a disconnect between these two bodies, which makes visible the constructedness of each identity. As I showed in Chapter 1, the narrator here experiences trauma from this disruption and uses rape as an attempt to renormalize his maleness and masculinity. This refusal of the woman’s performance should be seen as a direct assault on the feminist ideal of sexual liberation. It is possible to read the woman and her sister as personifications of more traditional notions of femininity and feminism. By looking at these women not as individuals but as representative in different modes of performance, the songs signify more insidious beliefs about feminism and sexual agency.

The fact that the narrator says that this is the other woman’s sister is also worth investigation. The relationship between these two women might seem inconsequential, yet the drastic difference between their performances points to something more. If these two women are in fact sisters, then it may be assumed that they were likely to be raised

with similar ideas about gender. But if this is so, what accounts for the disparaging differences between the two? Without digressing too far, I suggest that the author is using the term “sister” instead of another name or generic title like woman or girl as another way to further denaturalize the woman’s actions. The sister’s body and performance acts as a yard stick by which the woman’s performance can be measured and shown as the one who is out of line. Not only is the sister being used as model that the woman cannot live up to, she also serves as a mechanism that divides women from each other.

Historically feminism has used the trope of “sisterhood” to bind women together in resistance. Virginia Wolfe in her essay “A Room of One’s Own” even contemplates on the fact that women throughout literature have been seen in relation to men and are rarely friends with each other (86). In “It’s So Easy,” the narrator segregates the women from each other and discursively severs the relationship between the sisters based on his relationship with each one of them.

Because the narrator not only enacts sexual violence on the woman’s body but also linguistically threatens her, his actions show how language acts as a constitutive element for rape. His violence is not only the rape but also his explanation of his identity and how she fits into it as a constructive element. The song can be read both as an enactment and as a threat. This dual function speaks both to an individualized body and a larger audience. On the individual level, he establishes his dominance by physical force and by telling her

See me hit you,  
you fall down.



By having his victim both experience the bodily pain and requiring her to also step outside the situation and view this as an audience member, he makes the violence more significant, clarifying that this is not necessarily a one-time event. He reinforces his position of power by verbalizing and providing repetition of the violence. To the broader audience, the violence becomes a caution about sexual liberation. While women may now have legal (and the perception of) social equality, the discursive powers do little to legitimate those notions of liberation/equality. Cultural markers like this song clarify that women may have the possibility of different gender performances, but these performances are not without their consequences.

Unlike other narratives with the victim as the object, in “Chloroform the One You Love” the victim is initially active. While she does not have the capability of resisting his attack, she is not, at least on the surface, an inanimate object. The narrator is hyperaware of her actions:

Would she even look me in the eye again

She sits back and ignores

My need to adore

Intimidations got me down again

She's only 18 but such a beautiful dream

and

I catch a strut and a smile

Maybe rejection is the high

That keeps me coming here

I need some compassion but she's

Laughing at the nervousness.

These actions may seem insignificant, but compared to other narratives where the victim is silenced from the beginning and is not given the possibility of acting, this woman's representation as an autonomous being is significant. Although she is not portrayed as the sympathetic character in this narrative, her ability to be sexually active and selective in her partner shows that she is an example of woman taking advantage of the possibility of sexual liberation.

What is troubling here is that her actions are causing the severe discontent in the narrator. Her active role of rejecting him becomes his rationale for raping her. If she were the passive participant in this story, the narrator would have no frustration or drive to use chloroform to make her behave in a way that suits him. In a way, her sexual autonomy increases her value as a commodified body. In this discourse her sexual liberation is not necessarily provoking him to force a desired performance but increasing her desirability to be obtained. Since she is less accessible she is viewed as all the more valuable. This should not be confused with the narrator respecting her and desiring her based on her personality but rather still seeing her as a signifier of his own subject position. The narrator himself seems to be aware of the capitalist discourse that is constructing his desire, stating

And I can't see just how real

Is the charm...

This self-doubt illustrates how he is aware, to a certain extent, of his misguided desire. Even the fact that in that line he uses the word "the" instead of "her" shows that his desire has little to do with her actuality. The "charm" does not belong to her according to him; it exists beyond her body, which further mystifies him. By assimilating notions of feminism



into the commodification of the body, postfeminism produces discourses that appear to uphold gender equality but merely use it as another signifier of commercial value.

But when the victim is not female, the questions of noncompliance and postfeminism become further complicated. In Pink's "Please Don't Leave Me" the function of female sexual autonomy is hard to distinguish between rapist and victim. The rapist here may be viewed as sexually uninhibited, but because her actions are removing the agency of the victim, it is necessary to look at how the male's sexual autonomy is being problematized. What this text does well is to call into question the ways in which rapists/victims are aligned in a dichotomy correlating with male/female. Because the victim is in this case a man, there is no thought about his agency in the relationship or sexual encounters with the narrator. This is seen in his first attempt to leave her at the beginning of the narrative. Her actions are not what impede him but marbles that are strewn on the floor by the stairs. Only after he falls down the stairs does she become violent towards him. At the same time the music video is over-the-top in the way in which it codes the rapist/narrator as masculine. There are some details that point to more feminized roles such as her playing his nurse and cooking for him, but when she cooks for him she wields a large knife and chops carelessly which interrupts the association of the image as feminine. This performance works as a type of drag which is topped off by the end scene with Pink blowing a kiss to her audience. By switching both the roles and genders of both players in this narrative, this song serves as a farce of genderized sexual autonomy.

It seems absurd to question the autonomy of the victim in this scene or sympathize with the rapist; however, in "Chloroform the One You Love" the narrator

acquires a certain amount of sympathy and the victim is almost as aloof with the audience as she is with the narrator. I'm not suggesting here that there is not an element of satire functioning in this narrative as well, but the narrator's violence is not as visibly cruel as the narrator in "Please Don't Leave Me" which affects the ways in which the audience may relate to the narrator in each. As Lindiwe Dovey reminds us, "the representation of rape from the perspective of the rapist is inevitably fraught with danger, running the risk of encouraging the reader to identify imaginatively with the rapist, or at least to occupy the position of the voyeur, and thus to become an accomplice to violence," (74) as it does in "Chloroform the One You Love." But in "Please Don't Leave Me" the audience's sympathies remain with the victim and the rapist is seen as horrifying. Because of the pathos towards the victim, he remains an active, noncompliant body and continually attempts and eventually succeeds at resisting the both physical and sexual violence of the narrator. While the victim here is never able to speak, he is not silenced.

This song may be seen as a different type of rape narrative than the previous two since the narrator here has an established relationship with the victim. However, I suggest that despite the semblance of a relationship between these two bodies, the body of the victim here acts the same way as the victim's body in "Chloroform the One You Love." The relationship here is clearly in a cycle of abuse since she questions herself "How many times have I kicked you outta here?" As the song begins he asserts his agency to leave, which motivates her to beg for him to stay, all the while physically mutilating him. The scene of her cooking also serves to show how this relationship lacks substance in that the act of chopping is prioritized over the success of the chopping process. The lines "I can cut you into pieces" and "I can't be without, you're my perfect little punching bag"



confirm that she is interested only in him as the object of her violence. In conjunction with the doll imagery used before she exerts sexual violence on his body, these scenes illuminate how even when there is a perceived relationship between bodies, there is still the possibility for one body using the other as a signifier or little object (to return to the Lacanian language used in Chapter One). Just as in “Chloroform the One You Love,” the narrator desires the victim’s body more as the victim attempts to act on his agency. The lack of actual emotion or desire towards the victims’ bodies in these two narratives show how pervasive discourses of commodification can be.

Rape undermines notions of postfeminism and female sexual liberation by punishing and/or giving fetishized value to sexually autonomous bodies. One of the ways in which it accomplishes this is by eliminating the victim’s speech position within the rape script. Since rape is validated by linguistic acts, the victim’s ability to resist is often subverted by the act of silencing. Sometimes this silence is achieved through linguistic moves and other times it is achieved through physically violent measures. While there are distinct differences between these two different modes of silencing and I don’t want to deemphasize the importance of the body, we should not assume that the linguistic mode is “naturally” less harmful than ones in which physical violence is used as a threatening tool in the moment of rape. Instead we should understand the discursive power of linguistic moves that construct the victim’s performance in rape. Therefore in rape narratives where the victim is the object of violence, both physical and verbal cues are enacting power.

“Under My Thumb” by the Rolling Stones shows how lack of personal choice and identity are silencing mechanisms. The narrator claims that the victim’s “eyes are just

kept to herself,” there is a “difference in the clothes she wears,” and “she does just what she’s told.” Each of these lines emphasize that her decisions are no longer her own even in what she wears or how she views the world. On the surface the narrator’s ability to control what she looks at may be viewed as his taking control over her view of other men. While her doing exactly what she is told is subservient, his control over her sight is much more extreme. This is another means of silencing the victim. The language here suggests that she not only does not look at other men (unlike his ability to “still look at someone else”) but also that she is unable to visually participate, which would eliminate possibilities for resistance in general. Since discourse works through different textual signs, visual texts are also able to undermine or reinforce the rape script. But here, the rapist removes the victim from a speech position both by silencing her and controlling what discourses she is able to see and participate in. Since this narrative is about what seems like a long-term relationship, the rapist’s power in both sexual violence and abuse is established *and* maintained through these modes of othering and immobilizing her speech position.

Another form of silencing is murder or fear of death. This can be seen in actual accounts of rape and in fictionalized narratives. Often the threat of death is a motivating factor in victims’ refusing to interrupt the rape script. In this way murder both silences victims in the actual rape and encourages bodies in the role of the victim to remain silent. According to Paul Mason and Jane Monckton-Smith, “sexual assaults on women are framed within a discourse of murder” (694). Based on their analysis of how rape and murders of women are reported on in journalism, Mason and Monckton-Smith, suggest that rape and murder, when the victims are women, are too often conflated. By



discussing rape in terms related to murder, we uphold the rape discourse that dissuades victims from fighting back for fear of death. Mason and Monckton-Smith also show how the murder of women is generally reported as sexual in nature. They warn against this since it reduces all violent crimes against women to sexual ones. While some of the narratives I address here are specifically about murder rather than rape, in these narratives, there was a sexual relationship between the bodies involved. I acknowledge the danger of walking this line between rape and murder; however, disassociating these two types of narratives would ignore how discourses that support the rape culture assimilate other discourses of violence. In the songs that I will discuss, there are varied motivations for silencing the victim; however, I suggest that discursively they are all accomplishing similar goals of using death or the threat of it to persuade victims not to resist and to play their part in the rape script.

In “Dance with the Devil” by Immortal Technique, the primary reason for killing the rape victim is to make her incapable of seeking revenge. Not only has the gang immobilized her physically, they also remove her capacity to speak. From the beginning of the rape they

...held her down on the ground  
Screaming shut the fuck up and stop moving around  
The shirt covered her face, but she screamed and clawed  
So Billy stomped on the bitch, until he broken her jaw.

Removing a victim’s capacity to speak effectively puts them in a passive position. In this particular narrative the victim is not simply told to stop speaking or abused emotionally into doing so, she is rendered physically incapable of speech. Killing her is

just one more level to her removal from access to impede the rapist's power. The gang did not need to silence the woman to be able to rape her. By brutally beating her, they remove her physical capacity for resistance. By silencing her, they are able to make her incapable of destroying their own power through retribution or the justice system. This reconstitutes the rape script in that it encourages victims to comply with attackers rather than risk brutal beatings and/or murder.

The trouble with this particular narrative is that while it does not glorify the act of rape and destroys the rapist, it still reproduces feminine fear as natural. It also brings up the fact that

...they saw a woman on the street walking alone

Three in the morning, coming back from work, on her way home.

This small detail tells of feminine fear of being alone, outside, at night. By validating this fear through the narrative the song is immobilizing women. While the song itself is not the origin of the fear, by bringing in the detail it is providing another text that constitutes the fear and makes it appear natural. The other factor that reduces the resistance of this narrative is that the woman raped is William's mother. This begs the question of whether or not William would have had the same emotional devastation if the woman had not been related to him. Because of the familial ties, his reaction is based more on him harming the woman he was supposed to protect rather than on his violent actions. In this way the song works within gender norms rather than breaking away from them.

"Delia's Gone" focuses specifically on the act of murder as a way to silence an in compliant woman. This narrative is traditional style folk song. It is not explicit within the song what Delia did to inspire the narrator's wrath, but he does say



She was low down and trifling  
And she was cold and mean  
Kind of evil make me want to Grab my sub machine  
Delia's gone, one more round Delia's gone.

These lines suggest something more than murder happening within the narrative. The narrator's explanation that she "make[s] [him] want to grab [his] sub machine" may be read simply as another violent attack, but there is a sexual innuendo to this statement showing that the violence is sexual in nature. Most people would not think that the characteristics the narrator assigns to the victim warrant a murder ("low down and trifling," "cold and mean," and "evil"), but because the narrator is the central figure of the song and Delia is basically passive he is constructed as the authority; therefore Delia is to blame. This is comparable to the victims in "It's so Easy" and "Chloroform the One You Love." It does not really matter what the victim did, whether it was speaking against the narrator, denying his sexual advances, or having affairs with other men; what is crucial here is that she was not performing her role in a way that the narrator felt was appropriate. Other than these minor characterizations, Delia's actions are absent, rendering her speech position dead, just as her body is. The narrator has succeeded in his desires by disabling Delia both in making her passive and killing her.

But "Delia's Gone" and "Dance with the Devil" should not be read merely as reconstituting the rape script. While neither of these texts would be seen as allowing the victims space to resist, there are elements that point towards the script breaking down. In "Dance with the Devil" the victim is resistant at first to the gang rape in that "she struggled hard" and "screamed and clawed." She does not easily submit to the rape, but

the beatings continue until she cannot move. Also when Billy discovers that he raped his mother he is destroyed by the gravity of what he has just done. The narrator explains Billy's emotional state after this discovery:

He turned away from the woman that had once given him birth  
And crying out to the sky cause he was lonely and scared  
But only the devil responded, cause god wasn't there  
And right then he knew what it was to be empty and cold  
And so he jumped off the roof and died with no soul

I'm not saying that she had a completely active role in this narrative. Her resistance is quickly subdued and is rendered inactive. While I do not want to minimize her resistance, it does reinforce the belief that women should not resist the rapist for fear of death or physical harm (I discuss this more fully in Chapter Four). This victim's performance is more resistant to the rape narrative in that her body was an unsuccessful marker for the rapist. Without overstating its importance, what this narrative accomplishes is problematizing how bodies are used for fetishized value. If certain bodies are out of play for this function, then questions are raised as to what qualifies a body for this use. Clearly in this narrative it is established that when a man has the social expectation to protect another individual, be it his mother, sister or daughter, he should not enact violence on that body. Although this is reinforcing discourses of patriarchal families, it is in a small way calling attention to itself.

"Delia's Gone" has an equally problematic ending. The narrator here complains

But jailer, oh, jailer Jailer,  
I can't sleep 'Cause all around my bedside



I hear the patter of Delia's feet

Delia's gone, one more round Delia's gone.

These lines give the feeling that even though Delia is dead, she is still enacting torment on the narrator. In addition to this, during the last stanza of the song in the music video, Delia is shown kicking dirt into an unknown grave. This may be seen as the narrator being unsuccessful in silencing the woman, although it is his own mind rather than her actions that are distressing him. What these details do accomplish is that they are subverting the narrator's advice to other men in the last stanza. While the lyrics suggest that

...if your woman's devilish

You can let her run

Or you can bring her down and do her

Like Delia got done,

it seems like the wiser choice of the two based on the continuing torment the narrator suffers would be to let her run.

Animal metaphors are also commonly used as a silencing mechanism by rapists to characterize their victims. Neel Ahuja, in his article "Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World," suggests that "[a]nimalization involves contextual comparisons between animals" and human bodies (557). Although Ahuja's analysis focuses on racialized bodies and postcolonial theory, his description of how animalization "justified colonization and extermination" (557) can be easily applied to gendered violence as well. Just as in colonization, animalization is used in rape to justify violence against a body and its identity in the name of innate superiority. Social Darwinism, in its most insidious

form, rationalizes that certain bodies mean more than other bodies, be it human or nonhuman animal. There is far less resistance to the concept differentiating between the privileges of humans and animals than there is to those segregating human bodies. If a speech position can compare a group of bodies to that of an animal, then the rights, autonomy, identity, and “real” body of that group become questionable and at greater risk for justifiable abuse. It may be argued that in these narratives, animalization is merely a metaphor rather than a belief that the victim is really non-human; however, what this language is doing is reinforcing and naturalizing the hierarchy of bodies.

This animalization can be seen in “Under My Thumb” by The Rolling Stones. This narrator uses the same infantilizing language of “girl” instead of woman as well as animal references to remove her farther from his speech position. He says that she is a “squirmin’ dog who’s just had her day” “a Siamese cat of a girl,” and “the sweetest, hmmm, pet in the world.” Each of these references connects to the overall theme of the song: domestication. The narrator has *broken* the victim, subduing her wild ways. Helen Benedict believes that this type of language aids in the constitution of rape. What she terms “a language of rape” is a “vocabulary that portrays women as sexual, subhuman, or childlike temptresses, and that perpetuates the idea of women as legitimate sexual prey” (103). Benedict’s suggestion that the rapists see women as “legitimate sexual prey” reinforces the animalization of the victim and the language of animals likewise serves to naturalize rape. This shows that the discursive power that relies on the rape script uses animal metaphors in multiple ways to other the victim’s body. To return to the song, by comparing the victim to animals, especially domesticated animals, the narrator creates another separation between them. She is not only removed from his gender but also his



species. Not only does this comparison justify his actions, but it also others her body and speech position. Since animals are generally seen as not having access to language, by animalizing the victim, the rapist is able to undermine even her linguistic resistance. She becomes nothing more than a “pet” to him to obey his will.

Comparing the rape victim to animals also connects with his statement that

It's down to me  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come,  
She's under my thumb  
Ah, take it easy babe  
Yeah.

These lines are disturbingly reminiscent of teaching a dog to “speak.” Since the first time the narrator mentions this is directly after he calls her a “pet,” it doesn’t take a stretch of the imagination to see that he views her behavior as if it he is simply training his pet. He further emphasizes this training by ending the verse with “take it easy babe” as if she still has an element of the wild in her that he has yet to tame. The line that “she talks when she’s spoken to” is repeated three times within the song. This repetition makes the line have all the more power since it emphasizes that she only has a voice when he speaks to her. These statements silence the woman. Without access to language she is not able to participate in the symbolic order, and therefore is unable to resist the reality he has created for her.

When animalization is used in relation to a male victim the discourse functions differently. In “Stagger Lee” the character of Billy “dropped down and slobbered on

[Stagger's] head." In this instant the animal language is working on two levels. First Billy is obedient to Stagger's commands. Before the rape takes place

... Billy Dilly rolls in and he says, 'You must be  
That bad motherfucker called Stagger Lee'

Even though this is the same way that Stagger describes himself in the beginning of the narrative, when Billy states it he uses a tone of mockery and disbelief about the validity of the description. Despite his initial confidence, he is immediately silenced by Stagger's threat of shooting him. There is no battle between the two to determine who the dominant one is; Billy simply submits to Stagger's will. The second way Billy is animalized is through the description of him slobbering. This brings to mind dog imagery. As I explain in Chapter One, Stagger's power is established through his ability to control other men. For him to be able to command Billy in the way that the narrator of "Under My Thumb" is able to command the woman in the narrative is read as a higher form of power based on stereotypical notions of naturalized power based on sex. This also undermines notions of postfeminism in that it highlights how sexual violence, when seen as a commodification, is valued differently based on the sex of the victim's body. Since the male body is viewed as less accessible or more difficult to enact violence against based on heteronormative ideas about sexuality, the violation and violence against that body has a higher fetishized value to it. However, if we are to believe in notions of sexual liberation and postfeminism, it would seem that all bodies would be valued the same and have the same rights to sexual autonomy regardless of genitalia. But as "Stagger Lee" shows, that is just not the case because Billy's submission does not simply emasculate him but dehumanizes him as well.



In some cases animals have been used as a means to naturalize rape. Biological anthropology studies such as *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence* and *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion* use evolution and violence between primates as explanation for human violence. While I am not qualified to critique these studies based on their scientific merit, I do have objections to their rhetoric and way they ignore how rape is culturally constructed. I can see that there is something of value in understanding how rape has been affected by evolution, but it leaves little, if any, space for resistance since it implies that rape is *natural* and that it is only possible to deter rape by appropriately punishing those that rape. By seeing both the rapist and the victim as human animals, it would seem that the two bodies are on equal levels. However, there is an oversimplification in this type of animalization in that it is assumed that the male is the predator and the female is the prey. This feeds into the discourses of sex and gender in that even when animalized, the male body is dominant, aggressive, and naturally capable of raping whereas the female body is submissive, physically diminutive, and capable of being raped. Even when the rapist is animalized it naturalizes the discourse of sexual violence, whether or not the victim is animalized.

This can be seen in Pink's "Please Don't Leave Me" when the victim attempts to escape out the front door. The scene in the music video shows the narrator once again begging for the victim to stay. As she holds a bowl and a spoon in her hand and watches him limp towards the door, she seems to be letting him go since she does nothing to impede his escape. She almost looks helpless. But the moment he opens the door, he is attacked by a large watch dog. While the dog mauls him, she stands watching. Here the dog may be seen as enacting its own violence outside of her control since she comes to

the victim's rescue. But because she is not concerned about the injuries the dog may have caused him, it seems more likely that the dog was a mechanism of her power. Ahuja also shows how animals are not simply a metaphor in colonization but are being colonized in similar ways as the native people are (558-559). I'm choosing to stick to the metaphorical reading of the dog in "Please Don't Leave Me" in order to remain focused on how the animalization of the rapist does not undermine the rapist's power unlike the animalization of the victim. The dog, metaphorically, stands in for her own body. Her aggression is animalized since it is akin to the dog's. Although there is an obviously negative view of this type of aggression, dogs are often used for their instinctual/trained aggression. By comparing the narrator to the dog, her actions are naturalized. This suggests that animalization of the bodies in the rape script is not limited to the victim, and also it serves as a means of naturalizing both the rapist and the victim's roles. However, since the rapist here is a woman, the animal metaphor is more complicated. Even though I read this narrative as a farce problematizing the rape script and the roles of the victim and the rapist, to a certain point the narrative still upholds discourses of gender. Most of the narrator's actions are carried out by weapons other than her body; some of them like the dog do not require any bodily force. Since she requires external methods for violence her body is not seen as a threatening force, reaffirming the male/female binary.

Animalization works as a method of upholding discourses surrounding sexual violence. It connects to postfeminism in that it suggests that there are natural capacities for the both the female and male bodies. Postfeminist discourse suggests that an individual woman may choose to act as she pleases; the female body has certain capacities that it cannot escape. Since the male body is capable of raping and the female



body is capable of being raped, then regardless of what individual women may choose, the male body has the ability to subvert that choice. While the narratives sometimes speak of the victim as individuals, the disregard for the victim's ability to choose or successfully resist is legitimated through animalization. More than silencing the victim, these metaphors denaturalize the possibility for successful resistance to the rape script.

Postfeminist and contemporary rape discourses are intricately intertwined. On one hand, postfeminism is problematized by the way sexual liberation is undermined by rape narratives; on the other hand, the rape script is reaffirmed by postfeminism in that postfeminism claims that feminist goals have succeeded and therefore rape is not a question of disparities between the construction of the sexes but rather a natural tendency of male bodies. Rape narratives are both supported by and undermine notions of postfeminism. The paradoxical relationship between these discourses aids in the constitution of the rape culture. However, when narratives begin to emphasize the problematic nature of these discourses, they are able to draw attention to the gaps in logic that constitute the rape culture, and in turn, cause fractures in the discourse that allow for some acts of resistance.

### **Chapter 3: Rewriting the Rapist as the Object**

Victims claim some control over the discourse of sexual violence By moving the rapist to the object position of the narrative. In Chapter Two I showed how silencing victims is a powerful tool used to discourage resistance to the extent that it looks futile. Silence marginalizes and/or eliminates the speech position of the victim. While I would not suggest that the narrators in the songs I will discuss in this chapter are any more reliable than the rapists in narratives where they are the subjects, the victims open up the opportunity to resist the rape discourse in that other speech positions are heard. Through these new narrators (both the victims and outside commentators) the speech position of the rapist is seen in a new light. No longer do the rapists get to speak for themselves and explain or justify their actions. This is not to say that all of the narratives that I will be discussing in this chapter and the next are perfect narratives of resistance. Since resistance to discourse is so difficult to achieve, it would be unforeseeable to say that any of these completely challenge the discourse of sexual violence. Rather some contribute to small fissures in the rape script. Often these narratives simultaneously reaffirm both essentialized notions of the rapist's role in the script and establish sites for resistance. Other narratives, while they change who is in the represented speech position, do little if anything to resist the discursive power of the rapist. In this chapter I will look both at the ways in which the rapist is represented from outside commentators and the victims



themselves and how these new perspectives can undermine, in small ways, the rape script.

What shifts from narrative to narrative is not just the representation of individual rapists, but how the body of the rapist is viewed as having the capacity for violence. In some of the narratives with the rapist as the object, little changes from when the rapist controlled the narrative. Although these rapists suffer more consequences from their actions, their violence is often naturalized simply because they are male. Many of the same signifiers exist in these songs as in the previous chapters such as: using the victim's body as a little object, silencing, and using discourses of gender and sex to legitimize sexual violence. Because so many similarities exist between these two groups of narratives they show that simply because there has been a paradigm shift does not mean the discourse has actually changed. In other narratives the rapist almost disappears all together. Songs with the victim as the subject tend to avoid any direct discussion of the rapist and to keep the focus on the emotions and experience of the victim. Even though the rapist's body starts to fade away in these narratives, the small seemingly insignificant references to the rapists significantly contribute to the construction and subversion of the rapist's role in the rape script.

To begin with, I will analyze songs told from an outside commentator's perspective. These give a unique view of how society may view the rapist and his actions. The general theme of these narratives is that they disapprove or warn against rape. In some cases these narratives can challenge the rape script and/or the discourses of gender, but simply because they are anti-rape does not mean they are disruptive or subversive. Although each one takes a decisively negative view on sexual violence, they typically

address the problem as an individual's actions rather than discursive power upheld by the culture of the individual rapist. Since they see the rapist as a deviant of society and worthy of severe punishment it is easy to ignore the ways in which they naturalize that deviant's behavior. They seem to assume that all men have the capacity to rape but only deviants act on that capacity. This problematic mentality does nothing to destabilize the discourse of sexual violence since it reaffirms the inevitability of rape and the futility of resistance.

One example of this is Sublime's "Date Rape." To summarize this narrative, a woman is approached by a stranger in a bar, and after several drinks she agrees to go for a ride in his car. He rapes her, she takes him to court, and he is convicted and raped in prison. The rape of the woman is not portrayed as graphically violent in the traditional sense. No weapons are mentioned and there is little description of him using physical force. The dialogue between the rapist and the victim is all the audience is told of the conflict between them:

now babe the time has come.

how'd ya like to have a little fun?

and she said.

"if we could only please be on our way

i will not run."

that's when things got out of control.

she didn't want to, he had his way.

she said."let's go" he said."no way!"



come on babe it's your lucky day.  
shut your mouth, were gonna do it my way.  
come on baby don't be afraid,  
if it wasn't for date rape i'd never get laid.

While she tries to negotiate with him and verbally resist, there is no sign of her or him asserting any physical force during the act. I do not want to diminish the value of her verbal resistance to the rape. She does not passively accept the rape simply because he tells her it is going to happen, but what I want to emphasize here is the naturalization of their bodily capacities to commit and receive sexual violence. One hint towards physical violence is that the song becomes more staccato with the narrator and the accompanying instruments emphasizing each word of the verbal struggle. The music here embodies the physical motions whereas the lyrics focus on the verbal. Although the audience is likely to fill in the gaps through the music and tone, the emphasis is put on the non-physical. This is problematic since leaves his body's capacity to enact violence and her body's inability to fend off his attacks unquestioned. The rapist's power is assumed to be established through physical dominance, but his insistence that she "shut [her] mouth" shows that part of his authority is based on his ability to silence her despite her initial opposition to his authority. As discussed in my analysis of "Under My Thumb" in Chapter Two, if the woman is successfully silenced she is unable to participate in the symbolic order and the rapist's dominance seems foundational. The rapist wants her to be compliant not only physically but verbally as well because it makes her more passive in the rape script which, in turn, constitutes his mastery.

Much of the rapist's rationale for raping the woman is based on his own arrogance. This can be compared to "It's So Easy" in that he feels he is entitled to the woman's body based on his masculinity. During his coercion, he tells her that "it's [her] lucky day" and "if it wasn't for date rape [he'd] never get laid." The difference between this rapist and the narrator of "It's So Easy" is that this one believes that his victim will enjoy the sex. In "It's So Easy," the narrator only mentions that he'll "try to please" his victim in the last stanza suggesting that he is not concerned about her pleasure. The rapist in "Date Rape," on the other hand, expects his victim to participate and enjoy, but her reactions are scripted by the rapist so they should not be confused with her own desires or experiences. The rapist's second statement about his sex life, seems more like the narrator's insertion rather than the rapist's own words since they attack the rapist's masculinity. This statement assumes that rape is a regular occurrence for the rapist. This highlights the fact that many rapists are repeat offenders especially since many rapes are never reported. In this way, rape for the rapist becomes a ritualistic or habituated practice that helps him establish his speech position of the dominant masculine man. As Butler points out gender is preformed through "repeated stylization of the body... produc[ing] the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). The rapist, at least according to the narrator, needs to reaffirm his gender. Because gender has to be continually performed, rape does not permanently establish his masculinity so he has to continue to rape in order to maintain the feeling innate masculinity.

However, since we are getting a larger story than we were given in "Under My Thumb" and "It's So Easy," we can see that the rapist was not successful in his attempt at using the victim's body as a little object to perform his masculinity. Here we see the



victim's initial resistance to his will and her retribution. While this vengeance is problematic in its own right (I will explain the implications of her revenge in Chapter Four) the fact that his attempts to naturalize his masculinity ultimately fail begins to break from discourses of gender. In fact the narrator can see through the rapist's masculine performance in that he is described as having "a plastic smile." This can be interpreted as a false identity that the rapist puts on to coerce women into sex, but even beyond this, the rapist here is parading his masculinity. While we may read this as the narrator seeing the performative nature of gender, there is a significant difference between the narrator recognizing the rapist's falsified masculinity and seeing masculinity as constructed. Instead of viewing the rapist as an example of the performative nature of gender, the narrator really just believes that the rapist uses masculinity inappropriately or is overcompensating for his lack.

Simply because the narrator questions the masculinity of the rapist, should not be a convincing reason to see "Date Rape" as subversive. The narrator's view of the rapist seems to be that of an omniscient narrator. He seems to be able to see things that the victim cannot. When the rapist comes into the bar, the victim is initially attracted to him. She refuses his initial invitation to "go for a ride" but accepts a few drinks from him. Although she is apprehensive about leaving a public place with him; she does not completely deny his request but tells him: "wait a minute i have to think." She is polite and seems to be questioning her judgment of the situation. It is as if she cannot through his façade as the narrator can. But the narrator is not alone in his view of the rapist, the judge at the trial also "knew that [the rapist] was full of shit." Since the judge, who is established as male in the song, also believes the rapist is a deviant, the narrative

perpetuates the idea that masculinity can be falsified and only those who are genuinely masculine can see the forgery. On the surface this may seem like it is questioning innate masculinity since some men have to fake it; however, the narrator and the judge are really pointing out the how some men use masculinity inappropriately rather than questioning the discourse of gender. Gender norms are also stabilized in the way the narrator states that he

well, i can't take pity on men of his kind,  
even though he now takes it in the behind

referring to the rapist being raped by a prison inmate. The rape of the rapist by another man is seen as much worse and traumatizing than the initial rape of the woman.

Assuming that male-on-male rape is more severe than male-on-female rape suggests that women are more rapable than men and that sodomizing a man emasculates him. Since the narrator considers this a proper punishment for the rapist, it suggests that the rapist deserves to be emasculated for his deviant use of his masculinity. This successfully moves the rapist from the *good guys* like the narrator and the judge who do not abuse their masculine power. Because the narrator views the rapist as other, it is hard to say that he is questioning the reality of masculinity and masculine power.

“Janie’s Got a Gun” by Aerosmith also removes the rapist from appropriate masculinity. Like “Date Rape,” this narrative is told from an outside male perspective. I do make the assumption in both of these songs that the narrator is male since they are performed by a male voice. This is problematic, but since I am viewing these narratives in relation to how they contribute to discourse, it seems likely that most listeners would assume the same. While this may seem like an arbitrary distinction, the gender of the



narrator is important to my analysis in that if the narrators are male they claim a certain amount of authority in relation to what designates an appropriate or deviant masculinity. In “Janie’s Got a Gun” Janie’s father has raped and/or sexually abused her. While the focus of the song is on Janie’s reaction to this violence, the description of the father is critical to understanding how it contributes to the discursive masculinized power.

Throughout the song the narrator asks:

“what did her daddy do?  
what did he put you through?”

These lines do not remain constant from stanza to stanza. There is a repetition of “what did her daddy do?” but it is connected with a different line each time:

Tell me now it’s untrue  
what did her daddy do?

and

What did her daddy do?  
It’s Janie’s last I.O.U.

On one hand these lines seem to be pointing to the narrator’s shock connected to Janie’s reaction. What could he have done to push her so far? On the other hand the repetition suggests that Janie’s actions are justified; the rapist father is responsible for her reaction. The narrator wants us to understand that it is a cause and effect relationship, and while it may be hard for the audience to comprehend Janie’s violence, the father is culpable. This can also be seen in the syntax of these lines since they act as a transition from the emphasis on “Janie’s got a gun” to the lines that give more specifics about the narrative like

when Janie was arrested

they found him underneath a train.

In the two lines asking “what did her daddy do” the tempo accelerates acting as a bridge from the slower first four lines of the stanza and the quicker last lines. By using these lines to pose a question and the lines that follow them as a question, the narrator emphasizes that there is no reason to be confused about Janie’s actions. The severity of Janie’s revenge may still be questionable, but the father is held accountable. Both the lyrics and the musical transition emphasize the rapist’s responsibility for the victim’s actions.

However, the other lines referring to the father’s actions give a hazier perspective on the role of the rapist. In one line it says that “he had it comin’” but in the next verse it states:

He jacked a little bitty baby

The man has got to be *insane*

They say the *spell* that he was under the lightning and the

thunder knew that someone had to stop the rain

(emphasis added). Part of the song makes a case for Janie in that she had taken too much abuse and it is understandable that she would fight back, but the fact that it is mentioned he was not in the right state of mind excuses his actions. This highlights Wendy S.

Hesford’s complaint that media often focuses on the “psychological states rather than on the sociological, political, and material forces that facilitate and sustain violence” (196).

In “Janie’s Got a Gun,” the narrator never suggests that there may be forces outside of the father’s sanity contributing to sexual violence and incest. The father is portrayed as a



deviant. While this seems to remove the rapist from a normalized position of power, it really implies that the male body has the power to commit rape but should not because it is not socially acceptable. The father's transgression of his power others him.

Psychological states vary from individual to individual, thus these are not effective ways to challenge the rape script; they do not acknowledge how cultural forces legitimate the violence, but rather focus on why an *individual* perpetrated that violence. Without looking at the broader influences, these types of narratives will not be able to destabilize the script that constitutes sexual violence.

Both "Janie's Got a Gun" and "Date Rape" effectively remove the rapist from the pool of normalcy. According to these narratives, rapists are deviants of society and should be prosecuted correctly in order to discourage rape according to these narrators. While they feel sexual violence is reprehensible, they still naturalize the ability of the male body to rape. This naturalization in turn dissuades victims from interrupting the rape script since it discursively shows that it is really only possible to fight back after the rape has occurred or seek legal help, meaning there is no resistance during the rape. In this line of reasoning, prevention or interruption of the rape script is unlikely. However, it would be excessive to say these do nothing to question the rape culture. This type of narrative does illustrate a broad reaction to rape and removes it from the victim's personal experience. But at this historical moment, recognition of the problem is not enough.

Rather than telling a story of sexual violence, Jewel's "Pieces of You" does not deal with sexual violence but hate and prejudice in general. Because the song moves through four different narratives, none of them are very detailed. The overall song seems to suggest general discomfort with non-heterosexual, masculine sexuality since three of

the four verses are about the way the audience feels about women and homosexuality. The last verse is about anti-Semitism and breaks from the rest of the song. Each of the verses attempts to reconcile prejudice by suggesting that the difference between bodies is small and that there are always connections between them. The last line of each stanza can be read in two significantly different ways. The narrator asks:

...do you hate her

'Cause she's pieces of you?

Based solely on the written lyrics it seems to suggest that she is saying the victims are part of the subject of violence. It isn't clear if the narrator is suggesting that the victim becomes part of the subject of violence after he/she commits the violence or if they always had connections or similarities between each other. For my analysis I'm going to use the more humanist form where the bodies always have more in common with each other than differences.

To speak more directly about the way "Pieces of You" deals with sexual violence, when the narrator discusses pretty girls in stanza two it is more sexualized than the discussion of ugly girls in stanza one. The narrator questions

She's a pretty girl, does she make you think nasty thoughts?

She's a pretty girl, do you want to tie her down?

She's a pretty girl, do you call her a bitch?

She's a pretty girl, did she sleep with your whole town?

Pretty girl, pretty girl, do you hate her

'Cause she's pieces of you?



By directly questioning the audience if the victim is at fault for the rapist's brutality, the text removes itself from the typical rape narrative in that the song does not focus on the horrors of a personal rape but expresses discontent with the excuses made for rape. But this is making several assumptions that are worthy of attention. First of all who is the audience for this song? It would be very easy to claim that the narrator is directly questioning rapists and individuals who are acting on hatred. Because this is song is fairly popular, there is a much larger audience for this song. Also is the violence only being perpetrated by men? The narrator's suggestion that the audience has "nasty thoughts" about her and "want[s] to tie her down" seems overtly sexual both in the sense of rape and in restraining her sexuality so she cannot "sleep with your whole town," but it seems possible that these lines could also be meant for other women. While I cannot offer a definitive answer about the audience for this song, it is integral to see this narrative as not addressing an individual rapist. Since the narrator remains ambiguous about the individual incidents of violence and the audience, it suggests that both individual rapists and society are all culpable for the violence because we do not view the victims of hate crimes as "pieces of" ourselves.

Although the song is addressing the victim's characteristics, these can tell us about the generalized rapist and, more importantly, about his/her script since these are actually his/her descriptions of the girl. This interpretation of the pretty girl's character is similar to those of "It's So Easy" and "Under My Thumb," where the women are seen as sexually deviant or incomplicant and must be tamed. Highlighting the negative portrayal of sexually active and autonomous women can be a dangerous move since it runs the risk of reinforcing discourses opposing female sexuality; however, the song does not accept

these discourses. The tone is sarcastic and the lyrics and the melody are repetitive. The first words in each line are the same for every stanza: “She’s an ugly girl,” “She’s a pretty girl,” “You say he’s a faggot,” and “You say he’s a Jew.” Also with the slow tempo and simplicity of the song, just a vocalist and a guitar, the focus is on lyrics with the music enhancing rather than overpowering them. All of these elements combine to emphasize the negative implications of these traditional views.

The last line of each stanza further removes the narration from upholding traditional views of female sexuality. By suggesting that the rapists “hate her/ ‘Cause she’s pieces of you,” the narrator implies that the previous reasons given have no validity; rather the rapist’s actions are motivated by internal identity problems. If the subject of violence reads the negative aspects of himself/herself in the performance of another, then he/she can punish the other body rather than go through the painful experience of identity reconstruction. This relates back to the concept of the little object, since “Piece of You” suggests that rapists are using their victims’ bodies as a means to make up for their own lack. The narrator insinuates that the audience has much more in common with the object of violence than he/she would like to think. To return to the broader audience that is not necessarily enacting violence but contributing to the discourse that facilitates it, the narrator is also disregarding the argument that blames the victim for the violence since it is not only the violent individuals who use these lines of reasoning to excuse violence but also those who are interpreting the violence from the outside, like the narrators in “Date Rape” and “Janie’s Got a Gun.”

“Pieces of You” differs from the other two songs in that it does not deal directly with an individualized example of rape. It addresses a larger cultural problem as Hesford



calls for. By using humanism the narrator is able to call for less hatred and violence not just from those who are committing violence but those who excuse the violence. While this type of commentary is an important move, it is not questioning the power of the rapist. All three of these songs are accomplishing anti-rape in their own rights when it comes to the representations of the rapist, but they are not subversive simply because they devalue the rapist. For the most part they suggest that this is deviant behavior, marginalizing the rapist rather than denaturalizing the discourses that give power to the rapist.

The next songs that I will discuss are from the victim's point of view. One commonality between these narratives is that the body of the rapist is either obscured or maimed. The removal of the rapist's body is a significant change in rape narratives since it works as a method of destabilizing the rapist's power by silencing the rapist. These narratives change the possibilities for how the rapist performs the rape and how the narrative may reinforce discourses of maleness by removing the rapist's capacity for action, whether through metaphorical or physical acts. This action is similar to the ways rapists silence their victims during rape as a mechanism of power which I discuss in depth in Chapter Two. At times removing the body of the rapist or its capacity for action serves as an objectifying mechanism which allows the victims to cope with the trauma they experienced, but I suggest that the effects of this disembodiment have larger ramifications outside of the individual narratives. Because of the popularity and repetitive nature of listening to songs, these narratives do not exist simply as a diary for the victims; they are cultural texts that affect both those who have suffered trauma from sexual

violence and those who have not; their discursive implications extend far beyond a single listener.

One example of a narrative that could be construed as simply a victim's confession is Fiona Apple's "Sullen Girl." This song focuses on the victim moving to a state of survival after rape. Because the song does not focus on the rape itself it says very little about the rapist. However, he is not totally removed from the narrative. His actions are few but powerfully felt by the victim. She describes the rape as:

But he washed my shore and he took my pearl

And left an empty shell of me.

Throughout the song the narrator uses water images to describe how she experiences the world. By the rapist removing her from the "deep and tranquil sea," he has taken her away from the reality that she had conceptualized for herself. While his actions may not seem significant on the surface level since he only appears in two lines of the song, her metaphor suggests that she was an object being acted upon. This is reinforced by the change in the music in these lines. The overall tone of the song is mellow but when the narrator states that the rapist "took my pearl" the melody becomes more intense and dissonant. He remains the active agent in this narrative, the point of contention and passionate emotion in an otherwise detached body. Simply because he is not the subject of the song does not eliminate the power from his dominant position in the script. Even though he is only mentioned in this stanza of the song, his actions affect the rest. This shows that even when the rapist's body seems invisible, he can still have an active position. The narrator does not give the audience any indication of how he raped her and



there is no allusion to a struggle between them. His minor role in the song mystifies his power rather than subverting it.

There is a fine line between a rapist's visibility/activity in a rape narrative subverting or reaffirming the rape script. Since, as Foucault suggests, "true" resistance is difficult, fleeting and nearly impossible, it is understandable that these narratives typically walk both sides of that line. Pearl Jam's "Alive" on one hand normalizes the rapist's capability to rape; on the other, it undercuts certain elements of the discourse. To summarize, the narrator of "Alive" tells of his experience as a teenager with his mother. The narrator explains that:

Oh, she walks slowly, across a young man's room

She said I'm ready...for you

I can't remember anything to this very day

'Cept the look, the look...

Oh, you know where, now I can't see, I just stare...

While the sexual violence here remains unseen, the mother's role in that violence frames the missing event. The pervading image for the narrator is the mother's gaze in that he claims not to remember anything "'Cept the look, the look." Here it is not the rapist's body that is emphasized as committing the violence but her gaze. Her objectification of his body moves beyond the sexual violence and to how she visually objectifies him. Although it is psychologically understandable that the narrator would repress the memory of the sexual violence between him and his mother, it is problematic that he conflates her desirous gaze with the "real" sexual violence. Marcus warns against the conflation of rape with "representations of rape, obscene remarks, threats and other forms of

harassment” because “the time and space between these two actions collapse and once again, rape has always already occurred,” which eliminates “the gap in which [victims] can try to intervene, overpower and deflect the threatened action” (389). Instead of seeing the sexual violence as a sequence of actions, this representation reaffirms the belief that rape is one event that, once started, cannot be interrupted. While it is not within the scope of this project to determine the best psychological way to cope with being a victim of sexual assault and without judging the individual narrator for his choices, this narrative supports the discourse of sexual violence in that it provides another representation of rape as a singular event.

What “Alive” is able to accomplish in resistance to the constitutive power of the rape script is to question the alignment of the rapist as a male body. Since the rapist here has a female body, it undercuts the notion that male bodies have the capacity to rape. It does this by providing an example of a female body accomplishing the same action. This is by no means a perfect subversion of discourses of masculinity and maleness since the woman is still in a position of power constituted by discourses of family; however, when a female body is capable of committing the same or similar violence as a male body, it blurs the male/female binary by showing they have similar capacities. Blurring the lines that segregate these bodies and disassociating power from the body changes how rape is legitimated. However, the mother’s ability to rape the narrator also reaffirms discourses of gender. The deemphasizing of her body implies that her power is not in her body but in her gaze. Unlike the male body that has the capacity to rape, the female body is not seen as the dangerous element. Her gaze points more towards inappropriate feminine desire



rather than physical strength. In this way the mother functions to simultaneously reinforce and question discourses of gender.

Hole's song "Asking For It" is an accusatory narrative filled with passionate anger and violent images about Courtney Love's "experience as a figurative rape, questioning why...women's aggression incites violation while male performers receive *respect*" after she was attacked while stage diving at one of her concerts (Eileraas 129). Because the song is not about a "real" rape but uses rape as a metaphor for women's experiences, there is not one specific rapist that is being addressed. This helps to remove the rapist's subjectivity from the narration because it is not aimed at a specific individual. Most of the time the narrator makes reference to the rapist it is in relation to herself. She explains saying:

Everytime that I sell myself to you  
I feel a little bit cheaper than I need to.

Here the rapist has not simply taken her body for his object; she takes an active participation in the rape script believing that she has allowed herself to be objectified and doubts that he "can make me do it again." Her doubts about his ability to enact violence against her reject the notion that he is always already capable of rape. True, he may have succeeded in the past, but she refuses to be compliant in the script in the future. By taking on personal responsibility for the rape, she denies her attacker a position of power. This move of taking responsibility for her own rape is problematic since it puts the victim at risk of being blamed for her own rape. While I can see how this could be an outcome of the narrative, it is also showing the victim's desire to disrupt the cycle of abuse she is experiencing. In Chapter Four I go into more detail about this dilemma. Because her

choices now dictate both of their performances of the script, she effectively removes him from the active position.

The other moments where the rapist shows up in the song is when the narrator is pointing out elements of gender discourse. She suggests that women are required to perform their gender in very specific ways:

Everytime that I stare into the sun  
Angel dust and my dress just comes undone  
Everytime that I stare into the sun  
Be a model or just look like one.

The narrator emphasizes normalized beauty and the expectations for femininity. These expectations are intense and possibly as painful as “star[ing] into the sun.” Karina Eileraas asserts that “Hole depicts the *gaping abyss* between female ‘beauty’ seen and felt, ideal and real” (127) suggesting that lyrics such as these function as illustrations of expectations inscribed on female bodies that have real and traumatic consequences. When this line is considered with the song as a whole, ideals about femininity and beauty are not simply rewarded but when they are rebelled against there are severe consequences that are enforced by the male body as seen in “It’s so Easy” and “Chloroform the One You Love.” The narrator confronts the rapist in the chorus inquiring:

Was she asking for it?  
Was she asking nice?  
Yeah, she was asking for it.  
Did she ask you twice?



This type of repetition forces the audience to confront the normalized belief that the victim's actions are more important than the rapist's muck like "Pieces of You" does. By devaluing the rapist's actions, it is possible to undermine the rape script. It opens up the possibility for the potential victim to take action within the script rather than passively participating in the script. Since the script relies on a patriarchal discourse with the male body as the innate site of power and dominance, placing the rapist in the position of the passive object challenges the discourse.

Unlike Hole's "Asking for It," Tori Amos' song "Me and a Gun" is about an "actual" rape. It has often been seen as a semi-autobiographical narrative of the night Amos was raped. However, I think this description is far too limiting; I will discuss the problems of viewing rape narratives as purely autobiographical in Chapter Four. If we look at narratives as a form of discourse, then, regardless of the reality of the events portrayed, they are contributing to or challenging the discursive power of the rape script. In this narrative, Amos describes her emotions and thoughts during and after her rape. She focuses on her personal struggle with the experience and spends very little time on describing the rapist. But the moments that he is brought into her narrative, he is not shown in stereotypical ways. The narrator, who I will refer to as Amos because of the autobiographical nature of the song despite the fictional elements of the narrative and admittedly problematic nature of this conflation, does not describe the rapist as having power based on his maleness.

The most direct reference to the rapist is in the lines of the chorus:

it was *me and a gun*  
*and a man on my back*

*but I haven't seen BARBADOS*

*so I must get out of this<sup>1</sup>*

The rapist's body is the last part of the scene she describes. Despite the fact that the rapist has acted against her sense of sexual autonomy, she still has more prominence in the rape. Constance L. Mui claims that "[i]n rape, the woman's body is severed and reified into an object-for-the-other" (157). But here, Amos has resisted the turning over of her body or even part of her body to the rapist. It seems more appropriate to her to give in to the gun than it is to give in to his body. Because of his secondary role, the emphasis is not on the sexual violence but on the threat of death. The man's penis is not the most dangerous weapon in the narrative. Although narratives I previously discussed used non-body weapons as a means of forcing the victim to comply, here Amos is drawing attention away from the rapist's body in different and more effective ways. Yes he is present and active in this narrative, but his maleness is not the force that constitutes his ability to enact sexual violence; the gun may be a phallic symbol, but it is not the rapist's body that poses a threat.

The other times that the man is mentioned in the song are in reference to inanimate objects like his clothing or cars which draws the attention further away from the rapist's body. In the first chorus she says:

and I sang "holy holy"

as he buttoned down his pants.

Bonnie Gordon tells how the allusion to the man only through his clothing is an act of removing his power in relation to the victim. She states "the man remains fractured through the litany of disjointed things attached to his body: pants, guns, buttons, etc. He



is never really there. In contrast to his menacing fragments, Amos becomes powerfully present” (198). Because he is primarily removed from the action, the narrator pulls herself away from being the object of the violence into the subject position. Although giving the victim a chance to be present, presence alone does not challenge the discourse of sexual violence in that the victim’s presence and voice can act as a reaffirmation of the very discourse it is attempting to undermine. For now, I would like to focus on how this scene also begins to break down the rape into smaller acts. As she sings this line there is a slowness to the description. None of the words here are rushed, which in turn slows down the rape script and violates the chaos and swift violence that is seen in other narratives. The detail of the rapist “button[ing] down his pants” effectively slows the rape script. While this is a small detail, the effect is significant. Choosing buttons rather than a zipper emphasizes a process rather than a singular motion. Obviously the rapist removing his pants does not stand in for the entire rape, but it does gesture towards the rape. Opening up the script by slowing the speed at which it is performed removes some of the intense anxiety that is felt. Rather than empowering the rapist’s role through a detailed description of the rape, by quickly alluding to the rape the narrator spends time relating her experience of the rape. What this accomplishes is the illumination of the process of the rape script.

At the end of both the fourth and fifth verses, the narrator brings in the image of a car. Both of Amos’ reference to a car reflect the actual rape rather than her psychological state and question the attacker and the constructs that give him power. The first reference is

is it my right to be on my stomach

of fred's seville

, which suggests the location of the rape. As Foucault makes clear, space is a mechanism of power. In this narrative, the rapist's car becomes the space in which his power is official and most naturalized. This is his car, his space, *his* right to enact his violence here. This is seen as well in "Date Rape" in that the rapist's location of power is a car as well. But while the victim's resistance in that narrative is to throw a rock at his car, shattering the window that functions as a boundary between his geography of power and the rest of society including the judicial system, here, Amos resists this location by telling her rapist that her body is "not a classic cadillac." The metaphor of her body as a car may seem like here merely describing the rapist's objectification of her body; however this metaphor is also undercutting his geography of power. Since his power is aligned with his own car, her statement that her body is not the same type of space acts as a resistance to his colonization of her body. While he does in fact rape her body, he is unable to transcribe his power onto her body making it a site or signifier of his power. This does not reduce the trauma of the event, but it serves as a representation of departure from the rape script by limiting the naturalization/normalization male power.

As I have shown here, the movement of the rapist from the subject position to the object is an important one but by not necessarily as powerful as it may initially seem. While being in the position of the object is fairly powerless for the victim, it is difficult to rely on this one move to strip the rapist of his/her power. The trouble with most of these representations is that they are seen as individual rapes with individual rapists who transgress positions of power without challenging the discourses that sustain that power.



More successful narratives like “Asking for It” and “Pieces of You” are able to break out of this problem by moving away from the confessional nature of other narratives. These two narratives not only move the rapist to the position of the object but objectify the rapist’s body in ways that do not mystify the male body’s power but undermine the essentialization of that power and the narrators resist becoming signifiers of that power.

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<sup>1</sup> There are discrepancies between what Amos sings and what she provides on her lyric sheet. Because of the differences, I have chosen to combine the lyrics sung and typical line breaks with the punctuation, capitalization and formatting Amos provides.

## **Chapter 4: Trauma, Survival and Revenge of the Victim**

Representations of rape in popular culture have come a long way in the past twenty, even fifty, years. While there is no denying that extensive work still needs to be done to disrupt the discourses that constitute rape, we should not forget the ground that many have fought desperately to gain. Susan Brownmiller's book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* may be outdated and contain essentialisms, but its exposure of many of the rape myths is a critical move towards resisting and hopefully dismantling the rape script. In this chapter I will be exploring how the movement of the victim into the subject position of the narrative challenges discourses of rape. As seen in Chapter Two, giving the victim a voice is imperative for resistance. When the victim is the object of the narrative, the rapist represses the victim's speech position by metaphorically/physically silencing the victim. By representing the victim's perspective, narratives with the victim as the subject provide a space for this othered speech position to be heard.

However, these narratives have their own set of problems. It would be postfeminist to believe that giving voice to the victims successfully undermines the rape culture. Since rape is obviously still pervasive in our culture, these narratives have not successfully disrupted the discourse. To some extent it appears that there is even more confusion now about what rape is. A recent article in *Cosmopolitan* claims that there is a "new" type of rape. Laura Sessions Stepp suggests that "gray rape" is like date rape but "refers to sex that falls somewhere between consent and denial and is even more



confusing than date rape because often both parties are unsure of who wanted what” (1). Most of the examples of “gray rape” provided in this article do not seem very gray to me since they use words like “push”(1) and “pinned” (2) to describe the possible rapist’s actions or imply some type of force used by the rapist. The article highlights the blurry lines between female sexual liberation in a “hook up culture” (Sessions Step 1) and sexual assault. The question of what can we call “rape” is even prevalent in the judicial system. “Putting the Term ‘Rape’ on Trial” by journalist Meg Massey explains how courts are beginning to rein in the use of the term “rape” in trials because it supposedly “seethes with enough emotion to prejudice a jury and is itself a legal conclusion” (1). Both of these articles suggest that what constitutes “rape” is as confusing as ever and to a certain point we are moving away from even the term “rape”. Although I understand the difficulty in conflating all of sexual violence into rape and the heavy meaning “rape” carries, it seems like the disruption caused by victims telling their stories has been stabilized by the rape culture through means of denying certain victims the use of the term “rape” and even making victims doubt whether or not they experienced rape. How then can we claim that awareness has been raised and the goals of these narratives have been successful? Even though these narratives attempt to challenge the rape culture and may do so in small ways, each one also contains moments that reaffirm the discursive power that they are trying to resist. To build on the analysis in Chapter Three, by looking at the songs with the victim as the subject and more specifically at the victim’s experience, we can see the many ways in which they are both challenging and reaffirming the discourses surrounding rape simultaneously.

To begin with I will look at narratives with the stereotypical rape victim. In “Sullen Girl” by Fiona Apple and “Alive” by Pearl Jam, the victims are barely able to cope with life after the attack. She/he has had a violation of space and trust that puts the world into a mode of chaos. Both of these songs are set after the rape has taken place and the victim alludes very briefly to the actual rape. These texts become part of what Sheila Whiteley, in her book Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity, calls “the continuing history of women who campaign against sexual violence and oppression, who recognize that rape is centrally involved in a woman’s sense of personal identity” (198). Whiteley, as a musicologist, views these narratives as important in that they raise awareness. However, as pointed out by Marcus, raising awareness of sexual violence is not necessarily the answer to the right question. Often these types of confessional narratives function as another representation that normalizes the victim’s actions during and after the rape, suggesting that there is an appropriate reaction which reinforces the roles played within the rape script. Instead of focusing on the reality of rape, we need to also see how rape scripts become a reality. I want to reiterate here that I am not condemning an individual victim’s reactions to or choice in how she/he copes with rape. The very real pain experienced by victims should by no means be diminished. Rather, I am focusing on the cumulative effect the reinforcement of the rape scripts by the narratives I will be discussing.

Fiona Apple’s “Sullen Girl” focuses on the effects of rape on the victim and how it has changed her or became part of her identity. The violence has removed her from experiencing a “normal life.” She blames her attacker because



...he washed my shore and he took my pearl

And left an empty shell of me.

Her description of the rape reinforces that rape takes something essential from women that is required for them to exist normally within their culture. Marcus explains that “The horror of rape is not that it steals something from us but that it makes us into things to be taken” (399). Because the rapist is able to leave “an empty shell of” he is not only capable of taking her “pearl” but also commodifies her body into something that can be stolen.

While only one line of the song mentions the rapist and his crime, the entire song exemplifies how our culture views rape differently than other abuses. Constance L. Mui explains that in rape “what is radically being altered is one’s relation to one’s body for-itself, which in turn affects other’s being-for-me” (157). Mui uses both feminism and Sartre to show how rape is able to cause trauma based on the fact that it makes the victim aware of her body (body for-itself), objectifying it to the point that it “can no longer be so inconspicuously ‘passed over’ and ‘forgotten’” (158). This is exemplified in “Sullen Girl” by the way the narrator states:

Days like this, I don’t know what to do with myself.

All day— and all night.

I wander the halls along the walls and under my breath.

I say to myself.

I need fuel— to take flight —

And there's too much going on.

But it's calm under the waves, in the blue of my oblivion.

Under the waves in the blue of my oblivion.

The narrator is in a state of paralysis. She is only able to deal with the trauma of the rape by escaping into her "oblivion." She seems to be moving through her world as if she is a ghost, which Mui would suggest is her trying to hide her body not only from the threat of those around her but also from herself. Unlike narratives with the rapist as the subject, "Sullen Girl" brings to light the victim's experience of rape.

The narrator asks if her reclusiveness is why she is called a "sullen girl." She sees beyond her own actions and understands how others are reading her. Despite her awareness of those around her, the song remains fairly personal. It is as if the audience is eaves-dropping on her during these moments. Even her question "Is that why they call me a sullen girl- sullen girl" appears to be introspective. This line is complicated by the fact that "they don't know [she] used to sail the deep and tranquil sea." Apparently she has yet to tell anyone what has happened to her. Her secrecy about the rape reinforces the solitary aspect of the song. Although this may be an understandable and "normal" reaction for a rape victim, removing it from the individualized setting will help us see how it reaffirms the rape script. Physical or emotional well-being are not the only things at stake for female victims; their very identity is wrapped up in their sexuality. Foucault suggests that sexuality constructs the identity of men and women, however female sexuality is also complicated by the cultural expectation for women to be maintain sexual purity. If sexual violence occurs, then their identity is fragmented because a major constitutive element of their identity is removed from their own power. Narratives like



“Sullen Girl” do not highlight this; they establish that women are things that can potentially be taken. This rearticulates that women should have feminine fear in that if they experience rape, not only will they lose sexual autonomy in that moment but also threatens to undermine one of the major constitutive elements of their identity. Although it is helpful to understand the trauma faced by victims as a means to help them cope in more successful ways, in order to challenge the rape script itself we must understand how these narratives about “survival” in many ways reaffirm the conditions that made the rape possible in the first place.

But if the rape script relies on discourses of femininity and sexuality that assume women are capable of being raped, then, as stated before, it is also assuming that men are capable of raping. Christine Helliwell, in her argument against the universalization of rape, states argues that “the *practice* of rape in these settings—both its possibility and its actualization—not only feminizes women but masculinizes men as well” (796). This is seen throughout the narratives in the ways in which the rapists are depicted both by themselves and from outside commentators. However, when a male body is raped or sexually violated there are complex implications.

“Alive” by Pearl Jam is an ambiguous incest narrative with a male victim. The narrator’s explanation of the events is often broken and incomplete. It is unclear what exactly transpires when the mother

... walks slowly, across a young man's room

She said I'm ready...for you

, but based on his statement:

I can't remember anything to this very day

'Cept the look, the look...

Oh, you know where, now I can't see, I just stare...

it can be assumed that she molests or rapes him. There are different issues at stake when a man becomes the victim embodying fear, especially when his mother carries out the violence. The narrator experiences paralyzing guilt and shame associated with the sexual encounter. This is seen in that he is unable to describe the events fully and his own inability to remember what actually took place other than the way she looked at him. He does not resist her; all he can do is “just stare.” Although the narrator is passive in the sexual violence, he still feels responsible. His interaction with his mother after the rape has occurred also points to his guilt:

Is something wrong, she said

Well of course there is

You're still alive, she said

Oh, and do I deserve to be

Is that the question

And if so...if so...who answers...who answers...

The narrator's discontent with being alive suggests that he feels personally responsible for not being able to fend off her advances. As a male he is expected to be in control of his own sexuality and have the physical capabilities to subvert coercion. Unlike the narrator in “Sullen Girl” who withdraws from society because her rapists stole her “pearl,” the narrator in “Alive” experiences an identity crisis because he did not perform his masculinity appropriately. Even though his body continues to function, the rape has



shattered the illusion of an autonomous subjectivity for him. It has also destabilized his masculinity, which can be a contributing force in the creation of an identity. His mother did not take something from him, rather she made it difficult for him to have a sense of masculinity.

Even though his statement in the chorus that

I, oh, I'm still alive

Hey I, oh, I'm still alive

Hey I, but, I'm still alive

Yeah I, ooh, I'm still alive

Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

may be seen as affirmation of his existence, the tone and repetition suggests that this is an empty statement. It as if he is trying to convince himself that despite the disruption of his masculine identity, he has not been damaged beyond repair. But this process does not seem to be totally successful. Since he has become an object of desire for his mother, he is finding it difficult to reintegrate into a symbolic order that requires men to be masculine and have the ability to master others. As I discussed in Chapter One, male rapists are often motivated by a subconscious desire to use their victims as little objects representing masculinity. Joanna Bourke suggests that male victims are often represented as masculine since “the depiction of older women having sex with young men under the age of consent...are not characterized as abuse narratives (‘statutory rape’) but as initiation fantasies” (217), but when the older woman is the mother, the abuse emasculates the victim.

In the first stanza the narrator's mother tells him the man he thought was his father was not. The man who was actually his father died when the boy was thirteen. This seems like a strange detail to be included in a rape narrative; however, if we consider how this affects his masculinity before the sexual encounter, it becomes clearer. Since the overall experience of the rape was emasculating, it seems understandable that this detail about his lineage would come into play. Because the narrator does not know his father, he has no birth-right. There is no one to pass down the rights of the patriarchy. Being fatherless does not simply mean only having a feminine role model, it suggest that the boy is lacking any masculinity to protect him against this type of sexual encounter. While this may seem to undermine the naturalization of masculinity since it requires some type of male presence to teach him proper masculinity, it actually reaffirms the discourse that claims nuclear families are the best for raising/protecting children which is an element of the patriarchy. Even though "Alive" may seem to be complicating the rape narrative since it shows the marginalized experience of the male victim, it still relies heavily on discourses of gender and sexuality like "Sullen Girl."

To move away from narratives that focus on the trauma that persists after rape, the next type of narrative I will discuss focuses on retaining a sense of self during and after the rape. This type of narrative has been considered more feminist reaction to rape. The song "Me and a Gun" by Tori Amos does not deny that rape is a traumatic event, it highlights the idea that while the rape may have render the victim passive in the moment, she/he is not necessarily unable to move on from the experience. "Me and a Gun" has been heralded by critics as breaking down gender stereotypes by giving voice to those who have traditionally been silenced by feminine fear. The song is admittedly



autobiographical, which motivates people to discuss it more carefully than other narratives in the media because they do not want to devalue the individual experience. Bonnie Gordon explains that “experiences happen to everyone but some use those experiences in a socially productive manner” (194). According to Gordon there are ways to use the confessional nature of these narratives to extend beyond the psychological well-being of the victim. Heberle agrees that it is important not to “engage” in critiques “about which woman did the ‘right’ thing” (72) but counters that it is not necessarily “socially productive” simply to share a personal rape narrative. While it is important to validate autobiographical narratives in order to value the victim’s willingness to share her experience and encourage others to do the same, it is necessary to remove or complicate the “confessional” label of many of these songs because it ignores the social impact they can have and the social influences that create them. In the book *Disruptive Divas*, Mélisse Lafrance refutes the notion of rape narratives being only useful for the victim’s psychological well being. She explains that the “hyperpersonalization of [Amos’s] experiences depoliticizes these experiences and prohibits a systemic understanding of the male supremacist violence associated with them” (64). Lafrance successfully challenges the confessional label of Amos’ music challenging us to look more closely at the patriarchal system that upholds the violence. To understand the forces that create the song as well as how the song upholds or rejects those forces, requires us to view the song as both autobiographical and at the same time as discursive.

One way in which Amos plays with the rape script is the way in which she avoids a linear description of the rape. Tracking the time changes within this narrative are convoluted because she jumps in and out of the narrative and the performance, the rape

and the trauma after, possible causes and the threat of the “actual” rape. Although it is tempting to view the song in its entirety as a “rape narrative” it is much more than that; it suggests the socio-political forces that lead to the rape and her experience of trauma. The narrator is reaffirming some of the elements of the rape script, but she firmly opposes the simple, stereotypical responses and requirements of rape victims. Her resistance is not complete, but it does take a distinctive move away from the expected narratives.

The narrative begins after the rape has taken place. She states that it is:

5am friday morning  
thursday night far from sleep  
I'm still up and driving  
can't go home obviously

Her unwillingness to go home may also be showing how the act of rape has disillusioned her to the difference between inner and outer places. When inner spaces are violated, “‘inside’ is no longer what it is meant to be—sheltering, separate and distinct from an unsafe, external realm” (Marcus 399). While some may see a strong distinction between the inner bodily space and the inner space of home, these two types of spaces symbolize the same feelings of security. Because the narrator has lost the feeling of separation between internal and external when it comes to her body, she is no longer able to feel safe in other inner spaces, further constraining the victim’s ability to experience the world. But there is also a sense that the narrator feels cut off from everything. This sense of segregation from the world and those around her of is emphasized by the narrator singing a cappella. Instead of the violation of spaces simply causing an overwhelming sense of no difference, it has also caused her to feel completely separated from everything.



The lyrics of “Me and a Gun” focus on the narrator’s will to live and explains that she did not fight back because she “must get out of this.” However understandable the will to live beyond a horrible event is, this type of anti-resistance sentiment perpetuates the idea that rape is unavoidable once the script starts. Feminine fear is at the center of many rape narratives. This fear has a dual purpose. First it is what puts the woman in the vulnerable position. When these songs show victims as fearful, they naturalize that fear. Second, feminine fear constitutes the ability of the attacker to commit the act of rape. If paralyzing fear were not seen as natural, women could potentially fight against their rapist, interrupt the rape script and hopefully be able to end it before rape actually occurs. Marcus argues that it is feminine fear that makes it impossible for women to fend off their attacker. Women are incapacitated by the possibility of death and therefore cannot stop the sexual assault which in and of itself is often equated to a type of death (394). Many rape narratives show that women are hesitant to fight off their attackers due to this fear.

Comparing this song to “Sullen Girl,” there are significant changes here. While “Me and a Gun” continues to perpetuate feminine fear, it does not do so in an overwhelming paralysis as “Sullen Girl” does. The narrator here experiences restraining fear during the rape and after. She feels that “she can’t go home obviously,” yet she does not let the rape stand in her way of making future plans, which shows that she is dividing the moment of the rape from her life. She does not continue to comply during the rape merely to extend her life, she has a specific plan in mind:

like I haven't seen BARBADOS

so I must get out of this

Unlike the narrators in “Sullen Girl” and “Alive” she is determined that she will not only live but carry out her own desires and take back her autonomy. She does not deny that she has experienced trauma, but there is more of a sense of survival here than in the previous narratives. The emphasis on returning to an autonomous-self challenges the way rape is constructed since it rejects the idea that it permanently damages the victim’s sense of identity.

“Me and a Gun” also challenges the interplay between the narrator and the audience. Unlike many texts that appear to have the narrator speaking to herself, this narrator speaks both to her audience and directly to her attacker. She knows that she is being heard, that her expression does not exist in a vacuum. In the second stanza she gives her audience permission to feel uncomfortable with the way she discusses the event:

you can laugh  
it’s kind of funny  
things you think  
times like these

It should also be noted that these lines do not appear in the lyric sheet of the CD. While they are clearly expressed within the song, for some reason Amos chose to leave them out of the written words. This suggests that the conversation with the audience is specific to Amos’s performance of the song emphasizing the interactive relationship between the singer and the audience. The narrator knows that her words are unexpected because they are not full of hate, guilt, fear, self-loathing, or anger. While she rejects the idea of that she is personally responsible for the violence, the focus through the entire song is on



thinking about things outside of rape. Gordon suggests that this communication between the narrator and the audience is Amos's way of connecting to the "universal trauma survivor" (195). I would disagree with Gordon's statement in that, as Helliwell points out, we should not universalize rape and I would suggest that we should not universalize a trauma survivor's experience. Also the narrator speaks to more than just specific trauma survivors. She is connecting both with people who have experienced sexual violence and those that have no personal experience. Since there are large audiences consuming these narratives, the effects of them extend beyond sympathy with a survivor but to discursively suggest certain actions by those who are viewing victims as well as those who have or may someday be victims. The narrator's involvement with the audience breaks from the typical narrative with the victim as the subject in that it is self-aware of what the narrative is supposed to do. She knows she is not keeping within the grammar that her culture has given her. Since she says that "it's kind of funny" that she was thinking about Barbados and other places she has not been she is showing that what is portrayed in many rape narratives is not always reality or needs to be reality, and this questions the naturalization of feminine fear.

The question of audience also comes up in the first stanza. Oddly enough, the narrator expresses more fear in this stanza of the song than any other. Her fear is in check throughout the actual rape, but when she should be going home to a theoretically safe place she is running away from an unknown force. She states:

I'm still up and driving  
can't go home obviously  
so I'll just change direction  
cause they'll soon know where I live

Is it her attacker or a larger audience who condemns the victim rather than the rapist that she is running from? Although Amos's music is typically seen as feminist and attracts feminist audiences, it seems like the narrator is speaking about a larger group that is willing to condemn her for wearing a "slinky red thing" and not "choos[ing] well." By directly challenging many of the standard beliefs about how women can avoid rape like dressing modestly and maintaining a conservative lifestyle, this narrative attempts to confront many rape myths head on.

Verse four is more explicitly to a broader audience in that she seems to be asking Jesus and her audience:

tell me whats right  
is it my right to be on my stomach  
of Fred's Seville

By her bringing in the religious element she is showing how society has constructed the rape script, she holds them as responsible for the as her attacker. This also exposes society's complacency when it comes to sexual violence. She tells her audience at the end of the fifth verse that she is "not a classic cadillac." Her audience shifts from just the audience of the song to telling both them and her rapist that she is not an object like a car and should not be treated as such even during the rape. This shows how she is challenging the authority society gives her attacker both in the moment of the rape and after it has occurred. If we assume the narrator is thinking these things in the moments during the rape she is disrupting the rape script. She does this by questioning her attacker and setting some of her own parameters on the situation. Wendy S. Hesford explains that even when victims are drawing on "culturally dominant discourses" they are enacting



“examples of resistance under hegemony” (201). Although it may be a small fragment of resistance, it should be acknowledged that she is not silently accepting the constitutive elements that make the rape possible or acceptable.

Revenge narratives are typically seen as a site for resistance. Because the victim is enacting violence it seems that the victim not only shares the experience of the rape but finally responds to the violence. Revenge narratives are far less common than those with that exemplify feminine fear. This particular type of narrative does allow for more possibilities to challenging the rape script, but as Heberle points out, usually these stories show a victim who “out of irrational desperation, strikes back and happens to kill her abuser” (72). Because women are typically unable to physically fight back without being portrayed as hysterical, these texts tend to uphold the gender hierarchy with men as superior physically and rationally and women as vulnerable beings who, when pushed to their limits, react out of desperation. While these songs may complicate and call the rape culture into question, they are not always successful at disrupting the rape script.

In Sublime’s “Date Rape” the victim fights back both physically and through the legal system. When the rapist drops her off at the bar,

she picked up a rock.,threw it at the car,  
hit him in the head ,now his got a big scar.

She does not passively accept the rape or feel feminine fear of being found out like the narrators do in “Me and a Gun” and “Sullen Girl”. Her initial reaction is not to run away but face her attacker. Even the rushed, staccato lyrics disrupt the melody within the song. As tempting as it is to read her revenge as destabilizing the rape narrative, it is not that simple. Her physical attack on her rapist seems small in comparison to the violence she

has experienced. True, she is successful in leaving him scarred physically, but this consequence is minimal in relation to the violence he enacted. Also, since the retribution happens after the rape she is not significantly destabilizing the rape script. While audiences may be pleased to see her fight back, she does very little to resist in the moments of the rape. The exchange between the rapist and the victim is described by the narrator as

now babe the time has come.

how'd ya like to have a little fun?

and she said.

"if we could only please be on our way

i will not run."

that's when things got out of control.

she didn't want to, he had his way.

she said."let's go" he said."no way!"

come on babe it's your lucky day.

shut your mouth, were gonna do it my way.

come on baby don't be afraid,

The only form of resistance to the rape script shown in the song is verbal. There may be an implied struggle during the process based on the swiftness and tension developed in the melody, but it is clear that anything she attempted was swiftly deflected. "He had his way" and it appears that he did so without much interference. Although this does not directly suggest that women should be completely compliant once the rape has begun, it



does reaffirm the notion of masculine physical superiority since there is never any question how the struggle will end which, in turn, makes female resistance seem futile.

Besides physical violence, the day after the rape the victim:

went to the phone and filed a police report

and then she took the guy's ass to court.

well

the day he stood in front of the judge he screamed.

"she lies that little slut!"

the judge knew that he was full of shit

and he gave him 25 yrs

Her seeking representation in the court room is justifiable, but it in no way challenges the gender discourse. Butler problematizes the notion that we should representation and gender equality through governments which are typically patriarchal systems. She explains that "an uncritical appeal to such a system for emancipation of 'women' will clearly be self-defeating" (3). This is especially seen in "Date Rape" since the rapist's punishment for his sexual violence is not the "25 years" but when he is sodomized:

one night in jail it was getting late.

he was butt-raped by a large inmate

and he screamed.

but the guards paid no attention to his cries.

The law, which may appear gender neutral, does not enact retribution on the rapist; rather the rapist's experience as a victim of a man-on-man rape is viewed as appropriate punishment. This can be seen in the fact that the narrator mentions this rape three times in

the second half of the song. The narrator even states that he “can't take pity” on the rapist. Between the multiple mentions of the rape by the narrator and the lack of sympathy from him and the guards, the “butt-rape” actually has more presence within the narrative than the initial rape of the woman. This emphasis on the male-on-male rape shows that warning of this narrative is essentially if you rape, you may be sodomized. Or as the narrator puts it:

the moral of the date rape story,  
it does not pay when your drunk and horny.  
  
but that's the way it had to be.  
they locked him up and threw away the key  
well, i can't take pity on men of his kind,  
even though he now takes it in the behind

To the narrator, the scar and the prison sentence may be tolerable punishments, but being sodomized is the worst and most just penalty. By playing into normalized gender discourse which only allows the “real” punishment to be carried out by a patriarchal system and a male body, this song is doing little more than attempting to deter potential rapists by instilling fear of emasculation.

Another narrative with the victim as the subject of violence is “Janie’s Got a Gun” by Aerosmith. Janie is a portrayal of a woman who takes retribution against her rapist through her own means. The lyrics do not make explicit the type of abuse Janie endured, but the music video clarifies this point. When the narrator brings up the actual rape and the pain caused by it there are flashes to Janie’s face in anguish during the rape. Within the context of the song, “her whole world’s come undone” is true for both Janie and the



larger society. Janie's world has changed because she no longer is living within the structure that her abuser, her father, has created. That structure did not give her the option to fight back. If the text is seen as a reflection of what is happening in the social context, women no longer feel the need to be restrained by their abuse script nor are they waiting for the legal system to provide assistance or justice; they are asserting their autonomy which was challenged by the rapists. The emphasis placed on Janie's weapon is important to her resistance in relation to her father. The line "Janie's got a gun" is repeated throughout the song and emphasized by a prominent drum beat that mimics a gun shot. Because guns have traditionally been seen as phallic images, by wielding one, Janie is able to both defend herself and to symbolically castrate her father. His penis loses power to victimize her because she acquires a more violent weapon. This connects back to the broader social concept that the narrative speaks to in that more and more women are not waiting for the patriarchal system to give them access to power but instead are taking it through their own means whether it is through literal or metaphorical violence.

However appealing it may be to create "Janie's Got a Gun" into an ideal text that defies the rape script, there are several images and linguistic moves that encourage feminine fear even if victims are using violence. Janie is portrayed as irrational or not in complete control of her actions. The song's chorus questions "What did her daddy do?/What did he put you through?" suggesting that his actions pushed her over the edge. Because those lines are repeating throughout the song the audience may believe that her revenge was not appropriate. Even though we sympathize with Janie, could she have sought legal help rather than responding violently? Did he deserve to die? These types of questions put fault on the victim rather than the attacker. As I discussed in Chapter Three

at length, the rapist is not forgiven or condoned, but the victim's actions against the rapist are called into question. Even though the end result of the narrative is that Janie's actions are understandable, the way she enacts revenge is portrayed as almost hysterical. In the music video, Janie is seen running through the streets in nothing but a white button-down shirt which corresponds with the line "run away, run away from the pain." No matter how sympathetic the narrator makes Janie's reactions, she is still rendered unstable and denied the ability to transform the discourse. "Janie's Got a Gun" is a good example of how resistance is often integrated into the discourse that it seeks to undermine.

One of the problems with "Date Rape" and "Janie's Got a Gun" is that the victim's experience and voice are not heard in the narratives. Both of these are told from an outside perspective that is limited as to what it can do. Since the narrators are unable to express the victim's voice, they are more likely to value the victim's resistance less and run the risk of labeling the resistance irrational. Hole's "Asking for It" provides an example of the revenge narrative from the victim's perspective. The song "Asking for It" belongs in the category of revenge narratives even though the narrator does not commit any violence. She has already experienced sexual violence but she does not embody feminine fear; she does threaten violence against her attacker, which makes this song fit more into the revenge narratives than narratives about feminine fear. While "Asking for It" does question the rapist directly like "Me and a Gun" does, the narrator moves beyond questioning and threatens her attacker. The chorus drives the song's purpose of rejecting the victim's responsibility in rape:

Was she asking for it  
was she asking nice



yeah, she was asking for it

did she ask you twice?

The tone of Hole's song is not polite which emphasizes the disgust the narrator has with the rape myth that victims are responsible for rape. Karina Eileraas claims that it is through Hole's angry tone and ugliness that they resist the dominant gender performances suggesting that "Contemporary girl bands deploy 'ugliness' as a resistant practice that challenges cultural representations of 'pretty' femininity" (122). She explains how the lead singer of Hole, Courtney Love, often embodies "ugliness" not only in her lyrics and album art but also in her persona. This overt use of "ugliness" when it comes to rape is effective since it demands attention and disrupts discourses of gender and rape.

In "Asking for It" the narrator not only confronts masculine violence through questions but threatens:

I will tear the petals off of you

Rose-red, I will make you tell the truth

This imagery of flowers is typically used as symbolic of female genitals. The narrator's application of a female metaphor on an assumed male body challenges the notion of difference between the bodies. For her to "tear the petals off" suggests that the narrator wants to remove his sense of innocence, but instead of using the metaphor for female virginity it is for the rapist's denial of culpability forcing him to "tell the truth." On another level, the metaphor also implies a form of castration or rape through the term "tear." To "tear" evokes violence done to the rapist's body, and since there is a clear reference to genitals, this violence strips him of his masculinity and power to control the narrator. Although her violence is vengeance rather than prevention of the rape, her

violence does not appear to be irrational or desperate like other revenge narratives. The other way this breaks from the typical story is that she does not kill but threatens to sexually immobilize him. Since men are believed to always have control over their own sexuality and be capable of controlling female sexuality, for a woman to strip a man of masculinity or sexual prowess is to undermine the discursive power that enables the rapist.

Another way this song begins to challenge the rape script is in that the sexual abuse was not a onetime event. The first two lines of the song make it seem like her violation was not as violent as other narratives because she takes some responsibility stating:

Everytime that I sell myself to you

I feel a little bit cheaper than I need to

Instead of the man commodifying her sexuality she has done it to herself by giving into his demands. As I mentioned in Chapter Three this is fraught with problems since it can reinforce the notion that the victim chooses to be raped. However, if we view these lines in relation to the chorus of the song it is clear that this rape myth is exactly what she is fighting against. So are these lines contradictory or moving towards the same conclusion? If we look at these lines closely, it becomes clearer that while the narrator understands that she has an active role in the rape script, it is not her fault. She states that she “feel[s] a little bit cheaper than [she] need [s] to.” Although she acknowledges that she feels responsible for what is happening she does not “need” to hold herself as accountable as the rapist. These two lines are followed by her threatening the rapist to get him to “tell the truth” which suggests that she want the rapist to admit to his actions and not implicate her



in them. Instead of her blaming herself for the rape, she actively refuses what society marks as a “good” female performance and tells the attacker that he will not be able to “make [her] do it again.” From the context of the song it is understood that, like the majority of rape cases, the narrator has been attacked by someone she knows. The narrator aggressively decides to break the cycle of abuse both by threatening her attacker and disregarding “appropriate” gender performance. When this is viewed in the larger social context, the text breaks from the rape script in that it gives the possibility to not only fight back but to resist the force that solicits compliant behavior from women.

The trouble with many of the narratives with the victim as the subject is that they normalize the rape script and discourses of gender and sexuality. Until these discourses are called into question, there is little hope for the diminishment of our rape culture. Since it is constituted through a discourse that makes masculine dominance not only normal but innate it places the victim, whether male or female, in a position of weakness and denies access to modes of resistance during the rape, these discourses must be called into question. Even when women acquire means to fight back through language and weapons, this aggression is set up as the only possible site for victims to establish control. This does not succeed at breaking down the rape script into a process rather than a singular event allowing for moments of interruption, resistance, and prevention as Marcus suggests we need to. Although many of the narratives that I have used throughout these chapters succeed in creating small fissures in discourses of gender and sexuality, the work is not done.

As I discussed in depth in Chapter Two, postfeminism has the possibility of making us complacent both in feminism and in preventing rape. Some representations of rape have changed, which aides the process, but there is still much to be done. We cannot assume that simply because the voice of the victim is heard that it is strong and defiant. In many examples the victim is playing out the same performance as the victims in narratives with the rapist as the subject. Being both physically and verbally compliant are still prevalent in these supposedly “progressive texts.” I am not suggesting that we should not understand feminized fear both in the larger context and in individualized experience, nor do I want to disregard or lessen an individual’s actions within a rape. It is important to emphasize the need for new, varied representations of rape. Ones in which the rape does not appear to be a singular event. Heberle suggests that

self-consciously performative narratives that represent diverse experiences of sexual violence to the social world can emerge if we take seriously the significance of the multiple sites from which women experience sexual violence and include stories of resistance which subvert the images of women as vulnerable (69).

It is only through these narratives that subvert the linguistic affirmation of the rape script that the it can be challenged. As I have discussed throughout, resistance is never perfect. With each attempt to undermine entrenched discourses, we simultaneously reaffirm them. It may be unrealistic for us to attempt to eradicate the rape script from our culture; however, striving to challenge it is not a losing battle. If by challenging discourses surrounding rape we are able to open up possibilities to stop rape from happening in the early stages, we have the potential to make rape less pervasive and less successful.



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