

## **The Economics of Fantasy**

# THE ECONOMICS OF FANTASY

RAPE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
LITERATURE

Sharon Stockton



The Ohio State University Press  
Columbus

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stockton, Sharon.

The economics of fantasy : rape in twentieth-century literature / Sharon Stockton.—1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8142-1018-X (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 0-8142-9094-9 (cd-rom) 1. American literature—20th century—History and criticism. 2. Rape in literature. 3. English literature—20th century—History and criticism. 4. Power (Social sciences) in literature. 5. Masculinity in literature. 6. Violence in literature. I. Title.

PS228.R36S76 2006

810.9'3556—dc22

2005030315

Cover design by Jeff Smith.

Type set in Adobe Garamond.

Printed by Thomson-Shore, Inc.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials. ANSI Z39.48–1992.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the several years I have spent working on this book, whether or not I knew at any given time that it was this specific book on which I was, in fact, working, I have received tremendous encouragement, help, and support from a great many people.

I first want to thank Dickinson College for its generous support of me and of this project. Thanks in particular to my tireless and brilliant research assistants, Katie Ginn and Dave Emerick. Thanks also to Provost Neil Weissman and to the English Department. I am also sincerely grateful to the Mellon Foundation for the summer study grant of 2003.

In my graduate training I was lucky in advisors, namely, Linnea Alexander and Robert Markley. Thank you both for teaching and guiding me. Thank you also to Roger Chittick, the finest professor I have ever had the good fortune to encounter. Without all of you, this book would never have been written.

For my parents, Eugene and Janice Stockton, thank you for being steadfastly proud of me.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the friends who have lent a hand or an ear during my crises and joys: Kevin Harp, Stephanie Larson, Amy Farrell and John Bloom, Sue Rose and Steve Brouwer, Judy Gill, Kelly Winters-Fazio, and Linda Chalk. A special thanks to Terry and Alistair Barber for your unwavering loyalty and support.

For my husband, Jaime Juarez, thank you for the last twenty years of love and loyalty.

Most importantly, my gratitude goes out to Eugene, Cristina, and Katherine, my best pieces of poetry.

Portions of this book have been previously published in some form. Part of chapter 2 appeared in *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 39 (1997); part of chapter 3 appeared in *American Literature* 72 (2000); parts of chapters 4 and 6 appeared in *Weber Studies* 14 (1997); part of chapter 6 appeared in *Contemporary Literature* 36 (1995). I thank all of these journals for their permission to reprint the material.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

It was twenty years ago when Alice Jardine opened her powerful study of the rhetorical use of the female body within contemporary French theory with an invocation of Roland Barthes: “The ‘feminine’ has become,” she wrote, “a metaphor without brakes” (34). Nor did the metastatic growth of that metaphor appear at that point in history to be showing any signs of slowing down. In fact to the contrary, *Gynesis* examines the acceleration of “the transformation of woman and the feminine into verbs at the interior of [narrative]”: “To designate that process, I have suggested what I hope will be a believable neologism: gynesis—the putting into discourse of ‘woman’ . . . The object produced by this process is neither a person nor a thing, but a horizon, that toward which the process is tending: a *gynema*. This *gynema* is a reading effect, a woman-in-effect that is never stable and has no identity. Its appearance in a written text is perhaps noticed only by the feminist reader” (25). The “woman-in-effect” whom Alice Jardine studies signals “a certain ‘crisis-in-narrative,’” an increasingly angst-ridden self-exploration on the part of the presumed masculine subject who is searching for a “‘space’ of some kind (over which the narrative has lost control)”; the stakes for this reconceptualization of the gynema are “survivals (of different kinds)” (25).

Luce Irigaray considers the nature of that survival, or those survivals, and writes of the preservation of the mythologized female body as the central ground for stabilizing what we have come to naturalize in the Western tradition as masculine subjectivity; in fact, ungrounded in what Jardine calls the gynema, the subject—defined generically as masculine—is unthinkable: “If there is no more ‘earth’ to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one’s own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know herself, then what pedestal remains for the existence of the ‘subject’? If the earth turned and more especially turned upon herself, the erection of the subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and penetration. For what would there be to rise up from and exercise his power over? And in? The Copernican revolution has yet to have its final effects in the male imaginary” (133). The subject

of Western history—of logical and metaphysical thought, of market, industrial, and imperial capitalism—exists in thought by virtue of the feminized other. Yet the stability of that masculine subject is also chronically at risk; anxiety accompanies the obsessive return to the gynema, and canonical representations of femininity suggest the narcissistic gesture that created them. As Mary Ann Doane puts it succinctly, “The claim to investigate an otherness is a pretense, haunted by the mirror-effect by means of which the question of the woman reflects only the man’s own ontological doubts” (“Film and the Masquerade” 177).

Thus, if Irigaray is correct in her claim that the “Copernican revolution” has yet to unseat Western man, it would also be true that the brakelessness and anxiety that distinguish the mythologizing of femininity suggest an inevitable instability at that presumably masculine center. And while the “new fictions . . . may, in fact, be satisfying a repressed desire in men (and women?) for what may turn out to be a very old, and, in any case, a very readable plot,” they also bring into narrative existence a “gynema” that is not old at all, rather, one that shifts in accordance to the survival needs of the masculine subject in its specific historical locations (Jardine 37). So while the woman in contemporary metaphor continues to be defined through the general attribution of passivity, productivity (without agency), and penetrability—qualities that reflexively delimit the nature of man as other than—this tired narrative is at the same time subject to a certain amount of variation, suggesting a metamorphosis in the masculinity that is its function to define and preserve. Indeed still dominated by “similar memories, similar allegiances, the same father, and the same laws”—what Ellen Friedman aptly summarizes as the same “backward, oedipal glance”—twentieth-century texts nonetheless reveal a significantly changed relationship of the masculine subject to the forces of politics, history, and economic formations (148). It is this tension between the “very old, and, in any case, . . . very readable plot” on the one hand and the metamorphosis that survival demands on the other which I am interested in pursuing. More specifically, I am intrigued by the persistence and the evolution of the rape narrative in twentieth-century literature—the old story of male power and violence, female passivity and penetrability. What accounts for its persistence? And how, precisely, has the story changed over the course of the twentieth century?

What is not open to debate is the sheer number of twentieth-century literary texts the plots, imagery, and thematics of which are grounded in heterosexual rape. In the introduction to their edited book on rape and representation, Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver note that among the “profoundly disturbing patterns” their volume examines, one that stands out “is an obsessive inscription—and an obsessive erasure—of sexual vio-

lence against women (and against those placed by society in the position of ‘woman’)” (2). The obsessive return to heterosexual violence suggests, as Higgins and Silver argue, that “rape and rapability are central to the very construction of gender identity” and that this (in this case aestheticized) construction shares with rape law a bias toward masculine points of view (3, 2). The masculine point of view I want to examine here—as it influences the shape of the evolving rape narrative—pertains to the situatedness of the twentieth-century white masculine subject in relation to the shifting face of capitalism. The compulsive return to the rape story, I argue, articulates—among other things—the gradual and relentless removal of Western man from the fantastical capitalist role of venturesome, industrious agency. The metamorphosis of the twentieth-century rape narrative registers a desperate attempt to preserve traditional patterns of robust, entrepreneurial masculinity in the face of economic forms that increasingly disallow illusions of individual authority.



In a psychoanalytic sense, what is at stake in the fantasy of woman is the question of masculine existence in a world haunted by absence. The enduring presence of the gynema, in other words, shines an oblique light on the gendered nature of the symbolic order of language, full accession to which founds the—inevitably, in Lacanian thought—male subject upon a void. Inducted into the symbolic through language, the subject is constituted as a function of discourse and inhabits a world similarly composed: “There is born the world of meaning of a particular language in which the world of things will come to be arranged. . . . It is the world of words that creates the world of things. . . . Man speaks, then, but it is because the symbol has made him man” (Lacan 65). In a parallel that links man with the discursive system that formulates him—with the world of words that supports itself at the level of the signified alone—the subject is “a presence made out of absence” (65). The desire that obscures that absence, that defines and motivates the subject as presence, is like that which sets into motion the movement of the signifier; in both cases desire is a function of the structure of language and not an expression of a preexisting and prelinguistic real. The “object” of desire does not precede desire but rather follows from it: “The paradox of desire is that it posits retroactively its own cause” (Iek, *Looking Awry*, 12). Through that paradoxical operation, the absence upon which man is predicated as subject of language is disavowed.

The “man” who desires is not only man in the generic sense. Jacques Lacan’s figure of the lavatory doors—the “Ladies” and “Gentlemen” that represent the “two countries toward which each of their souls will strive on

divergent wings”—insists that the discursive constitution of the subject depends upon the primary differential signs of gender (*Ecrits* 152). Entrance to the symbolic coincides with, as it depends upon, the composition of a subject framed by polarized sexual difference. The lack (and the desire) intrinsic to the newly constituted subject is figured as symptomatic of those “divergent wings” of gender. Thus, for Lacan, the question of being and the eventuality of subjectivity are inseparable from the establishment of heterosexual identity: “The subject is presented with the question of his existence . . . as an articulated question ‘What am I there?’ concerning his sex and his contingency in being, namely, that on the one hand, he is a man or a woman, and, on the other, that he might not be, the two conjugating their mystery, and binding it in the symbols of procreation and death” (*Ecrits* 194). The uncanny aura generated through the interweaving of sex and death finds its source in the coincidence of the subject’s entrance into language and sexual difference.

In the psychoanalytic tradition, the loss upon which subjectivity is founded has been figured in the traumatic discovery of the mother’s lack of phallus. Heterosexual desire thus masks even as it is compelled by the horror of castration. At another level, Lacanian thought maintains that it is the phallus itself—as opposed to female genitalia—that finally signifies the lack inaugurated through entrance into the symbolic order. Castration, in this sense, as Kaja Silverman puts it, is an “unavoidable” operation, one “which every subject must experience upon entering the order of language or signification” (*Male Subjectivity* 35). “Castration” anxiety thus layers gender identity upon subject formation, both of which contingencies are established in and through a preexistent discursive order. At several levels, then, the woman as fetish promises to “[plug] the hole of symbolic castration or lack” (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 22). She is, on the one hand, an ever-present reminder of the punishment that will follow from not, in a sense, punishing her—for not taking one’s place in the patriarchal order that has decreed her injury. A flare in the darkness, she gestures toward a subject position of power and agency. At another level, the woman fetish covers over the basic lack upon which access to language and being, as such, depends. The retroactively constituted loss of the real, “the self’s radical ex-centricity to itself”—all are disavowed in the fantasy of woman, which “translates the desire for nothing into the desire for something” (Lacan, *Ecrits*, 171; Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 4). Thus constituted as fantasy space, the gynema “functions as an empty surface, as a kind of screen for the projection of desires: the fascinating presence of its positive contents does nothing but fill out a certain emptiness” (i ek, *Looking Awry*, 8).

The extent to which that “certain emptiness” is filled through this “psy-

chotic projection of meaning into the real itself" (*Looking Awry* 35), however, is dubious; the obsessiveness with which the story of gender violence is retold suggests an ongoing instability in the project of fetishistic disavowal—a certain desperate incapacity lodged within the gesture that would establish heterosexual masculinity through the denial and outward projection of male castration. Following Freud, Silverman makes the case that sadism is the one perversion "most compatible with conventional heterosexuality" in a culture for which, "in utter disregard for western metaphysics, the 'true' or 'right' is heterosexual penetration" (*Male Subjectivity* 187; "Masochism," 21). Furthermore, according to Silverman, the conflation of heterosexual penetration with the "true" and the "right" has been naturalized within Freudian psychoanalysis; she argues of Freud that he establishes sexual violence—male aggression in particular—as normal and perhaps even biologically necessary (*Male Subjectivity* 187, 271). As sadism and dominance are thus legitimized as extensions of basic male sexuality, so too does Freudian thought pronounce female masochism "an accepted—indeed a requisite—element of 'normal' female subjectivity," a gesture that further naturalizes heterosexual violence and subordination while it eroticizes the mechanism whereby masculine lack is disavowed (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 189). Heterosexual rape would thus seemingly reify the status of man as absolute subject, foregrounding the agency of the man on one hand and the passive objectification of the woman on the other. Following Freud's logic, rape would serve, in fact, as a normative emblem for heterosexuality (itself, of course, *the* normative sexuality).

It is my contention, however, that the mastery explicitly portrayed in the spectacle of rape—and I am speaking in fact of the *spectacle* of rape, the seductively aestheticized vision staged for Western consumption—is almost inevitably undermined from within. The sadism to which it gives free rein seems in the end false to the rapturous promise of absolute subjectivity, that position which would hypothetically enable the reduction of the body of the other to object, an instrument for the satisfaction and pleasure of the self. The representations of rape I examine here, in fact, lend credence to Lacan's redefinition of sadism, in which "it is the 'sadist' himself who is in the position of the object-instrument, the executor of some radically heterogeneous will" (i.e., *Looking Awry*, 108–9). Agency resides outside the duo of violator and victim, and the rapist is himself subject to an external gaze and a preexistent script: "The pervert does not pursue his activity for his own pleasure, but for the enjoyment of the Other—he finds enjoyment precisely in this instrumentalization, in working for the enjoyment of the Other" (109). As far as the representation of rape goes, I would argue that the aestheticization finally reveals the masculine subject to be serving rather than fulfilling the dominant and dominating

paternal function, which relationship does not cease to foreground the incommensurability of penis and phallus. Paradoxically, then, the violent intimacy of rape metamorphoses into an all-too-intimate relation with the lack that constitutes subjectivity—the lack that has been displaced onto woman and her anatomical wound. If the text opens a symbolically fertile “elision” (Silver, “Periphrasis,” 116) or “psychic elsewhere” (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 271) through the oblique fashion in which it narrates rape, that interpretive space threatens the deconstitution of masculinity, even as it also repeats the story of feminine passivity and rapability.

The “radically heterogenous will” to which Lacan grants agency in sadistic fantasy gestures toward the disembodied paternal function, which is destined to remain out of reach of the individual masculine subject. It is that disembodied paternal will that establishes the tableau of violent heterosexuality, into which fantasy space males and females alike are inserted in the process of identity formation. For Lacan that paternal will has its source in the Symbolic in individual moments of inauguration into a gendered discursive order. The problem here, as is oft noted of Lacanian thought, is the seemingly random and absolutely exclusive connection between sex, gender, and the symbolic order—“there is nothing inevitable, and everything quite arbitrary, about Lacan’s conflation of linguistic difference with sexual difference”—and the originary power granted to that connection (C. Thomas 71). One factor clearly excluded from the Lacanian paradigm is the space of the social and its role in the formation of subjectivity. It is through fantasy, after all, that we inhabit a culture, a time, and a mode of production. It is arguably *because* of a particular social and productive order that specific ideological fantasies are formulated: as Louis Althusser famously points out, in ideology “the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses a will* (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary)” (234). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari go further, crediting the historical “will” with the production of the “lack” so crucial to the operation of the symbolic: “Lack (*manque*) is created, planned, and organized in and through social production” (28). Lack does not exclusively derive, in this reading, from the symbolic (or, following Freud, from anatomical difference and the Oedipal family). The subject’s relation to lack, as to the fantasy that disavows it, is primarily social and ideological in nature and obeys the “will” of the sociosymbolic order: “Thus fantasy is never individual: it is *group fantasy* [ . . . , and g]roup fantasy is plugged into and machined on the socius. . . . *There is only desire and the social, and nothing else*” (30, 62, 29).

Social fantasy, in turn, is for Deleuze and Guattari generated specifically by the “capitalist machine [ . . . , ] in all its violence” (33). The subject’s relation to that machine is lived through the ideologies of gender and sex-

uality (as well as race, ethnicity, and class), and the lived experience of both is scripted and rendered coherent through social fantasy in ways that naturalize and eroticize the conditions necessary for capitalism in its specific historical forms. Mechanisms like fetishism and sadism, for example, not only establish and position a gendered subject within the discursive order but mediate the role of individual subjects within the dominant mode of production. By the same token, as is my case here, the specific forms of violence historically associated with capitalism are echoed—and legitimized—within and through the long and kaleidoscopic history of the heterosexual rape story. Promising absolute subjectivity (and passivity), instrumentalizing the bodies involved, and finally undermining the masculine power and presence initially assured, the aestheticized rape tableau focuses one's attention on sex and power, obscuring the extent to which it also prepares and maintains the ground for a predatory and increasingly abstract mode of production. In what follows, then, I will be conceptualizing masculine subjectivity and rape fantasy in ways that take into account the determinative roles of subject formation, the symbolic order, and mode of production. I will rely on R. W. Connell's argument that "the entrepreneurial culture and workplaces of commercial capitalism institutionalized a form of masculinity, creating and legitimating new forms of gendered work and power" (247). There is much to be gained in linking the violent forms of subjectivity to the erotic and aestheticized images of capitalism; if nothing else, such an examination foregrounds the contingent nature of both. It is an intrinsically valuable exercise, similarly, to study the ease with which seemingly individual fantasies of lack, desire, and sexual dominance can be treated, as Jana Evans Braziel puts it, as "fragments functioning in social machines" (872).

In general terms, critical and theoretical analyses of the interconnections between gender and production in Western thought have concentrated on femininity and the extent to which the feminine has been represented as a function of reproductive capacity as it is managed under patriarchy—defined as passive materiality receptive to the father's will and pattern. So for Jean-Joseph Goux: "While the male is associated with the transmission of a pattern, a model, the female braves the contradiction of a material reproduction and is merged with what is *other* in relation to constant ideal form: that is, with amorphous, transitory, inessential material . . . chaos, disorder, and the abnormal but also the sensory, the concrete, the nondeductible are identified with the woman (whatever the mythical or ideological version), and . . . permanence, order, organization, and law are on the male side" (222–23). This model has adapted easily to the ideological formations of early, industrial, and imperial capitalism, and both Irigaray and Goux have studied the close fit. Goux draws a parallel

between the child produced on the material, effaced body of the mother and the surplus value produced on the material, effaced body of the worker: “The value produced (children, goods) is a lost positivity, a ‘surplus’ that becomes estranged from the producer. The relation between mother and offspring, under the father’s control, is like that between worker and product under capitalist domination. There is an *inversion of fertilities*. As Marx writes, ‘This is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as something alien and not belonging to him, activity as suffering (passivity), strength as powerlessness, *creation as emasculation*’” (233). The emasculation implicit in the alienation of labor under patriarchal capitalism is inverted in this ideological formation of gender to return value to the father. Masculinity is thus identified with ownership of the means of production and is closely connected to capital itself. Irigaray similarly remarks upon the parallel between mother and the alienated worker under capitalism—neither will be able to find a connection with the finished product. She also notes the proximity of the father to capital itself as a result of this alienation: “Woman is nothing but the receptacle that passively receives his *product*.” She is the “Matrix—womb, earth, factory, bank—to which the seed capital is entrusted so that it may germinate, produce, grow fruitful, without woman being able to lay claim to either capital or interest since she has only submitted ‘passively’ to reproduction. Herself held in receivership as a certified means of (re)production” (18). The gynema, then, is that space that allows masculinity to think of itself as not alienated, not effaced by the crushing wheels of capitalism. She is the bank that, although open to the one, will not be penetrable by any other; she will thus protect and increase the essence of his worth. And she will give physical form to that mysterious entity, capital, which the directive for circulation and the tendency toward accumulation within the hands of a very few keep otherwise hidden—like wind, visible only in its effects.

The disquiet that accompanies the reproductive, banking model for femininity is, unsurprisingly, associated with the fear that the value hidden within the material body of woman might not truly be marked with the name of the father, or might well be vulnerable to theft. Under early forms of capitalism, in cultures still managed by patrilineal descent, the father’s “function with regard to the origin of reproduction—is hence asserted as less than evident, as open to doubt. An indecision to be attenuated both by man’s ‘active’ role in intercourse and by the fact that he will mark the product of copulation with *his own name*” (Irigaray 23). Consider, for example, the violent anxiety that marks the question of chastity within Jacobean drama. Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling* in typical fashion establishes the moral horror of the unchaste woman as the central fulcrum of the dramatic plot, in this

case a plot that involves a fatherless son achieving a father-in-law along with a place at the top of the social hierarchy. The source of the horror Beatrice-Joanna evokes is distilled in her illegitimate tampering with the secret tests hidden away in her husband's library: "How to know whether a woman be with child or no' . . . 'How to know whether a woman be a maid or not'" (4.1.26). These tests for virginity, chastity, and pregnancy are designed so that external signs (sleeping, "incontinently gaping," "sudden sneezing," and "violent laughing" [4.1.49–50]) will appear as accurate and transparent signifiers of internal status. But because Beatrice-Joanna can penetrate the secret chamber and disrupt this secret language of the patriarchy, she threatens the very social fabric of the play (as she also does through her adulterous affair). Her "moral degeneration" is remarked not only by her dramatic fellows but by over 400 years of critical response (Crupi quoting T. S. Eliot 142).<sup>1</sup>

By the same token, in a culture that depends upon the female vessel for the transmission of wealth from father to son, or father to son-in-law—or in a culture that symbolically defines the female body as source for the generation and propagation of capital—the aestheticization of rape can come to articulate, whether in celebration or fear, the ability of the man of powerful agency to erupt into the sealed transaction between father and son/son-in-law, to insert himself by virtue of violence into an otherwise frozen class system. In other words, the rapability that is so much a part of feminine representation articulates not only closure but openness and potential mobility. If the woman under patrilineal descent is indeed symbolically a "hinge . . . [s]et between—at least—two, or two half, men [ , . . . ] bending according to their exchanges," she is also the access point for a third man—the entrepreneur, the up-and-coming member of the rising middle class, reinvigorating the system with new energy and the imperative to keep wealth circulating (Irigaray 22). Thus, a work like George Pettie's *A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure* returns constantly (and ambivalently) to the potential openness of the female body: the presumed audience of "gentle Gentlewoman" is beseeched by turns to consider adultery and to remain chaste, to be the active suitors in affairs of the heart and to be the passive recipients.<sup>2</sup> It is upon the fantasy of this unstable and unnerving access point—this signifier of upward mobility—that the ideology of capitalism stands or falls. At the same time, the fantastical rapist hero of early capitalism also manages to embody Marx's principle of "value in motion," "the circulation of capital restlessly and perpetually seeking new ways to garner profits" (Harvey 107).

The questions I take up here have to do with what happens to the gynema under a system of advanced capitalism. What changes does the rape narrative undergo when only the barest ideological remnants of patrilineal

descent remain intact? What becomes of the rapist hero in the literary imagination when capitalism moves into its twentieth- and twenty-first century incarnations? Certainly the rape victim continues to be defined by her penetrability; there is a small enough swerve from the “rapability” that Catharine MacKinnon has argued has come to delimit the boundaries of “woman”: “To be rapable, a position which is social, not biological, defines what a woman *is*” (651). The material conditions of female existence remain obscured by the aestheticization of rape, a mechanism Laura Tanner has compared to “Marx’s unveiling of the way in which the laborer’s suffering body is rendered invisible by the machinery of capitalism” (8). Metaphor continues to render the female victim passive, still identified with materiality and chaos. The woman continues to be, as Tanner points out, “the object rather than the subject of violence, a human being stripped of agency and mercilessly attached to a physical form that cannot be dissolved at will” (3). On the other hand, as the European/American gentry system splits and gives way to new hegemonic forms, in turn displaced by advanced or late capitalism, the woman’s body no longer has the absolute prerequisite for chastity, nor is the purity of her reproductions centrally at issue. In fact rarely is the raped woman productive—*of a child or a pregnancy, of a material product*—in twentieth-century literary fantasy. In fact, to the contrary, except within the rhetoric closely allied to the ideology of fascism, the female body is obliterated through rape, shown, in shades of horror, to be empty and perhaps even absent.

Thus, in significant ways figurations of rape increasingly reveal the distance between twentieth-century masculinity and productive power, and between masculine agency and the ownership of capital. Further, the proliferation of raped female bodies seems more and more to articulate the effaced status of man himself under a self-organizing form of capitalism that appears to function without recourse to human agency—certainly without dependence on entrepreneurial initiative. Representations of rape thus mark, among other things, what Connell terms the emergence of “an array of subordinated and marginalized masculinities” (249). The reasons for these changes are admittedly complex, and the evolution is not linear, but it makes sense to accept the three general causal factors that Connell identifies: “challenges to the gender order by women, the logic of the gendered accumulation process in industrial capitalism, and the power relations of empire” (249). These material changes central to the fabric of capitalism have served to weave a tangled pattern of gender violence in literature. Even in a feminist era, writers return to the rape story with a tenacity seemingly born of sadomasochistic compulsion: those aestheticized images preserve the dream of violent agency while repeating the contemporary message of masculine failure and loss. If, then, what Sharon Marcus

terms the “grammar” of rape does indeed “[induce] men who follow the rules set out for them to recognize their gendered selves in images and narratives of aggression in which they are agents of violence,” that semiotics of self-recognition also acts in the twentieth century to contradict itself, relentlessly pronouncing the “absolute impotence of the wage earner as well as the . . . dependence of the industrial capitalist” in that “fathomless abyss where profit and surplus value are engendered”—the “semiautonomous organization” of capital (Marcus 393; Deleuze and Guattari 238–39, 142).

If the history of European/American masculinity has been neither coherent nor linear—even as it does follow a general trajectory in literature that I hope to trace—neither can the masculine subject of any particular historical era be understood to be singular. As Connell puts it, “dominant, subordinated and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, changing the conditions for each others’ existence and transforming themselves as they do” (254). Thus, as white masculinity cannot be thought of as homogenous, neither can it be thought of, demographics aside, as necessarily or wholly dominant; although it is true that “elite” white men do in fact “control more resources and exercise more power” than others and more than elite white men of thirty years ago, the profound economic and social changes that have accompanied the evolution of global, corporate capitalism—Newton lists “corporate downsizing, the reduction of well-paid unionized jobs, the fall in men’s wages, the growing necessity of dual-income families, cuts in worker safety nets, the further racialization of poverty, and the growing division between the rich and the middle-class and poor”—have radically revised the meaning of white, heterosexual manhood (176). Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman make the easily persuasive case that “[m]any middle-class, white, middle-aged heterosexual men—among the most privileged groups in the history of the world—do not experience themselves as powerful. Ironically, although these men are everywhere in power, that aggregate power of that group does not translate into an individual sense of feeling empowered. In fact, this group feels quite powerless” (262). The white, European/American masculinity under consideration here has always, not just over the past forty years, been relational and contingent, and has always been haunted by powerlessness. In spite of, and quite possibly because of, this contingency and instability, however, white masculinity has managed generally to maintain a highly aestheticized and politicized image—if not always a felt sense—of unity. It has retained its position as natural, normative, and ideally human.

Many would maintain that the fantastical homogeneity of white masculinity has been established in large part through its portrayed relationship to racial and ethnic otherness, a point of view that many of the texts examined here will explicitly support (e.g., Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and

Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*). Just as it would be shortsighted to understand the connection between masculinity and violence to be purely personal or discursive, it would also leave too much uncovered to treat the culture of capitalism apart from its global and imperial rootedness, for, as Connell has noted, "European/American masculinities were deeply implicated in the world-wide violence through which European/American culture became dominant" (245). More famously, Homi Bhabha has called into question the originary status of the white European/American man—the hypothetical subject of capitalism—by arguing that his existence as such has been and continues to be dependent on the silent presence of the nonwhite other, who haunts the field just beyond peripheral vision: "the image of post-Enlightenment man [is] tethered to, *not* confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being" (44). The agency the violently phallic narrative promises is thus undermined not only by the woman, who confronts the masculine subject with the lack he has disavowed through and by entry into the socio-symbolic; it is also troubled by the dark other whose role it is to play the looking-glass role of masculine nonsubject, masculine being without agency, violent body without prerogative. In Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, the breakdown of Slothrop's penile quest is marked by hallucinations of being raped by black men, of having to escape by crawling down through toilet and sewers, reentering primal abjection; similarly, Blicero's sexual sadism and the firing of the rocket are shadowed by the mythical African Herero and their campaign of self-extermination. The evolving genre of rape narrative I treat here, then, is precisely a white masculinist one. Its function is to define, maintain, and legitimize the systems of relation and differentiation upon which global capitalism depends.<sup>3</sup>

It seeks to do so, moreover, in a language that would deny the political stakes involved or even their placement in history. Unlike the type of rape story told within texts like, for example, *The Women of Brewster Place* or *Native Son*, the category of narrative I study rarely attempts an explicitly political commentary on rape and/or race. Few of the texts I study focus the audience's attention on the psychological or physical reality of the victim or the impact of rape on her life. And few consider—at least centrally—the negative social and economic conditions that might tragically and/or horrifically incline individuals toward violence, sexual or otherwise. Rather, the literature here, a mere sampling of a vast humanist tradition, focuses almost exclusively on the spectacle of rape as a poignant occasion for sympathetic rumination on the status of (white) man in the face of (capitalist) existence. It is a genre given to contemplation, pathos, and

an aura of secular transcendence. It seemingly concerns itself with everything that would be opposed to politics, history, or economics.

In order to highlight the specific artificiality and political nature of the genre, consider in more detail the counterexamples above. Some contemporary writing by women, in particular by women of color, has overturned the mainstream form of the rape narrative by locating point of view within the mind of the rape victim. This is a resistant genre studied most notably by Laura Tanner, who argues, specifically here of *The Women of Brewster Place*, that this new form of the narrative “attaches the reader to the victim’s tortured body, subverting the scopophilic gaze of the reader by turning it inward to focus on the victim’s pain. By denying the reader the freedom to observe the victim of violence from behind the wall of aesthetic convention, Naylor disrupts the connection between violator and viewer. . . . The power of the reader’s imagination is not unleashed in a tumult of speculative violences but is channeled within the confines of the victim’s body” (x). This focus on the material body and experience of the rape victim undercuts the vision of woman as passive receptacle, troubles the image of pure agency distilled by the figure of rapist, and discourages speculation on the transcendent meaning of it all (Y. B. Yeats’s speaker wonders of Leda, “Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?”). Instead, one is confronted by a particularized image of the ways that constructions of race and gender intersect in the material bodies of women. In the final chapter, I discuss other forms of narrative resistance developed by women writers.

Twentieth-century literature written by African American men also returns repeatedly to the theme and image of rape, and in ways also qualitatively different from the tradition I am tracing. Texts by James Baldwin, Chester Himes, Eldridge Cleaver, George Wylie Henderson, Ishmael Reed, and, of course, James Wright foreground instances or metaphors of rape in order to explore issues of racial politics and black masculinity. A note of caution: In these texts, as in the ones I examine, the woman, white or black, is generally objectified and defined by her passivity. The difference is that in this group of works, there is a tendency for connections between public and private, sex and violence, and gender and race to be made relentlessly explicit, and there is no missing the political underpinnings of the rape story. In other words, the spectacle of rape—and it is spectacularized—is located firmly within its socioeconomic and historical context. Its explicit metaphoricity—or, as Eileen Julien puts it, of rape in some African texts, its metonymic content—tends to apply not so much opaquely to a transcendent state of man but transparently to a specifically historical subject, and that subject is always in part a function of race as it has been constructed under Western patriarchal capitalism.

A discussion of rape in African American texts, no matter how brief, must necessarily engage the ongoing and ever deepening critical discourse surrounding the vexed issue of black masculinity and the ways it has been and continues to be associated with sexual violence and/or castration. There is to contend with the historical fact of slavery, a condition of being that would run counter to any Western definition of manhood. Frederick Douglass claimed that “A man without force is without the essential dignity of humanity,” thus articulating the extent to which slavery prevented black men from experiencing a sense of manhood (as well as the extent to which ideal manhood involves force) (in Gilroy 63). At the same time, the myth of the black rapist that accompanied and followed slavery posited an animalistic hypermasculinity, to be “corrected” through castration and lynching. “Rape” is in this case necessarily associated with castration—at the level of fantasy and at the level of material experience. On a white man, thus (problematically) suggestive of the phallus, male genitalia have become for the black man “the depriving mark of a forced animality rather than a sign of masculine control and self-control,” as well as a part of the body and marker of masculinity rendered vulnerable to violent, and in fact sexual, destruction (M. Ross 319). Gender, then, in this case, cannot possibly be understood outside of the context of race and class, a fact manifestly clear to a writer like Richard Wright, for whom black male identity entailed the anomalous situation of being on the one hand fully cognizant of the idealized portrait of masculinity painted by an oppressive white patriarchal culture and on the other confronted by the subordinate social and economic position that guaranteed black men continued animalization and emasculation. Gilroy argues that the contradiction resulted in a “doubledness, what Richard Wright calls the dreadful objectivity which follows from being both inside and outside the West” (30). In *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas is caught in that double bind, quite aware of the idealized and specifically white image of masculinity, and yet constantly at risk of figurative or even literal castration. The result is escalating violence toward women, first the murder of Mary Dalton—the scene itself heavy with the suggestion of sexual violence—then the rape and murder of Bessie Mears.

There can be no doubt that Wright self-consciously figures gender violence within the novel—material, imagined, or figurative—as a function of an oppressive and violent race-class system. The point is made so explicitly as to border on didacticism, as in the following, in which scene Bigger realizes that he will be accused of raping Mary Dalton before killing her, even though he has not, because that is the only script available to a black man: “He committed rape every time he looked into a white face. He was a long, taut piece of rubber which a thousand white hands had stretched to the snapping point, and when he snapped it was rape. But it was rape

when he cried out in hate deep in his heart as he felt the strain of living day by day. That, too, was rape” (214). Not only is the novel heavily seeded with this type of self-conscious reference to the political nature of rape and of “rape,” but Wright includes a foreword that further clarifies the connection:

Any Negro who has lived in the North or the South knows that times without number he has heard of some Negro boy being picked up on the streets and carted off to jail and charged with “rape.” This thing happens so often that to my mind it had become a representative symbol of the Negro’s uncertain position in America. Never for a second was I in doubt as to what kind of social reality or dramatic situation I’d put Bigger in, what kind of test-tube life I’d set up to evoke his deepest reactions. Life had made the plot over and over again, to the extent that I knew it by heart. (xxviii)

The novel is thus an explicit challenge, a self-conscious refusal to participate in white patriarchy’s rape story. Rape here is no occasion for a meeting with the transcendent. Rather, through this refashioned rape narrative, “Wright dramatizes the parasitic nature of the class system” and draws attention to “the wealthy Daltons’ participation in the systematic exploitation and destruction of Bigger Thomas and his family” (Guttman, “What Bigger Killed For,” 170). The rebellious struggle the novel stages is a political one between white masculine oppressor and oppressed black male. The female body serves as the token over which the battle is waged, and “both Mary and Bessie—[the] two female bodies—are violently blotted out in [that] struggle between white and black men” (177). One embodies white capital, the other the obliteration of the black woman and the irrelevance of her suffering in the face of that valuable whiteness, and so it is not surprising both are “blotted out” by the overarching race-class structure and its attendant ideology—just as Bigger himself is “blotted out” in “fulfilling the role that the [rape] myth demands of him” (170, 179).

What *Native Son* and texts like it share with the white narrative tradition I treat here, of course, is that it is onto the wounded bodies of women that the problematics of masculine identity are projected. Another shared feature is that it is the raped *white* woman who comes to stand in for the abstract forces against which manhood conceptually formulates itself. The rape of the woman of color is hardly more than the occasion for the expression of excess masculine emotion. Bessie herself, for example, “is literally frozen out of the story,” as Guttman aptly puts it: “With Mary, Bigger’s actions are predetermined by the knowledge that what he does is one part of a very public play of forces. He feels ‘strange, possessed, or as if he were

acting upon a stage in front of a crowd of people.' With Bessie, however, Bigger feels no one is watching. He is free to commit rape because he knows, subconsciously at least, that those in power don't care what he does to her" ("What Bigger Killed For" 184). In fact, in a radical denial of historical veracity, given the fact, for example, that the "sexual access of white men to black women was a cornerstone of patriarchal power in the South," the rape of women of color is not often represented or even referred to in literature written by men, particularly white men (J. Hall 332). When it is, it is not invested with the symbolic heft garnered by representations of raped white women. Thus we witness a strange continuance of the logic that supported castration culture as Guttman describes it: "While the white woman was cast as the desirable and inaccessible symbol of white power and culture, the black woman occupied the place of her opposite, the easily accessible symbol of the uncivilized, animalistic, black masses" (171). It has been noted that white feminism, particularly during the 1970s when the emphasis was often on constructing a unifying image of "woman," has similarly sometimes overlooked the specific and historically driven nature of sexual violence against women of color. As with the unmarked universal man, the universal woman tends to be white, European/American, and middle- or upper-class. As Sujata Moorti puts it in *Color of Rape*, "the majority of feminist rape theories were formulated around the universal subject of Enlightenment, this time though she was female" (66).

The genre of rape story studied here presumes a white masculine subject and a white feminine object. This fantastical structure has only a tenuous relationship to local knowledge and has little to do with what a rape victim—any rape victim—might actually have experienced. Nor, I hope, does the predominance of rape fantasy suggest that all men—or all white men, or all people steeped in the idealizations of Western storytelling—imagine rape to be just the far end of the normative heterosexual continuum, although obviously one is given pause, particularly given the national numbers for stranger and acquaintance rape alike. Rather, I want to make the case that the aestheticized rape narrative is a significant part of Western fantasy, and that a study of that fantastical narrative reveals particular things about the way white masculinity represents itself. Like Laura E. Tanner (*Intimate Violence*) and Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (*Rape and Representation*), I am interested in what the story excludes, what it must elide in order to function, as I am interested in how certain retellings and revisions of the story seek to correct or at least draw attention to those exclusions. But more centrally, I am interested in what the story enables, what it generates. As does Sabine Sielke, I want to focus on "refigurations of rape as well as on rape as refiguration [, thus acknowledg-

ing] that texts do not simply reflect but rather stage and dramatize the historical contradictions by which they are overdetermined" (5). Like Sharon Marcus, I want to understand not only the language of rape, but "rape as a language," one that mediates the relationship of the subject to history. The "rape script," as Marcus puts it, takes its form from a "*gendered grammar of violence*," and that grammar positions ("predicates") white men as legitimate subjects; black men as subjects of illegitimate violence; (white) women as subjects by virtue of being (valuable and legitimate) objects of violence (392). Most specifically, for my purposes, the rape script fantasizes a believably powerful subject position in the face of historical, material evidence that would trouble it; it daydreams a potent relationship of white, mainstream men (or men identified with the white mainstream) to late capitalism. It does this by casting a "tremulous female body" opposite, in the position of "immobilized cavity" (Marcus 400).

It might seem incongruous that the choice here has been to focus upon constructions of masculinity rather than femininity in a study of rape narrative. Further, the explicit concentration on the *representation* of rape might suggest the perpetuation of a tradition that has at many levels depended upon the silencing of women. Marcus's "linguistic" approach to rape has been critiqued for related reasons; Mardorossian accuses her of "downplay[ing] the 'materiality of gender' and ignor[ing the fact] that social inscriptions—that is, our physical situatedness in time and space, in history and culture—do not simply evaporate because we are made aware of them" (755). One must acknowledge the danger of "reproduc[ing] the cycle . . . —that is, erasing women as the routine targets of rape in order to metaphorize . . . violence" (M. Ross 314). At the same time, it bears saying, again, with Sielke, that "rape narratives relate to real rape incidents in highly mediated ways only. They are first and foremost interpretations, readings of rape that, as they seem to make sense of socially deviant behavior, often-times limit our understanding of sexual violence while producing norms of sexuality in the process. As they have evolved in historically specific contexts, these narratives moreover interrelate with, produce, and subsequently reproduce a cultural symbology that employs sexual deviance for the formation of cultural identities" (2–3). The feminist project of unveiling the mechanisms of patriarchy is worth the risks it entails. It is of crucial importance for a new generation of scholars to identify the ways in which masculinity has reconstituted itself in the face of the feminist challenges of the late twentieth century, because although such a collective project might seem vulnerable to its own practice of treating rape as (just) representation, it "at least enables us to expose [the] blindness at the heart of influential Euro-American psychoanalytic, gender, sexuality, and cultural theories" (M. Ross 312). If it is true that the social script does not "evaporate because we

are made aware of” it, it is at least to be hoped that “we can locally interfere with it”: “By defining rape as a scripted performance, we enable a gap between script and actress which can allow us to rewrite the script, perhaps by refusing to take it seriously and treating it as a farce, perhaps by resisting the physical passivity which it directs us to adopt” (Marcus 392).

Equally useful is the exploration of the ways the rape script supports and is supported by specific forms of capitalism. These linkages help to destabilize in very concrete ways the common-sense notion that gender as we know it is inevitable, as well as the often-held but dangerous proposition that rape is somehow a natural consequence of anatomy. It is unfortunate that early studies of rape sometimes moved in this general direction; Susan Brownmiller’s 1975 manifesto can be taken as representative: “[I]n terms of human anatomy the possibility of forcible intercourse incontrovertibly exists. This single factor may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of a male ideology of rape. When men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it” (14). Certainly a body-centered approach can have in its favor the acknowledgment of women’s lived realities, before this time written out of the legal, medical, and criminal theorizing of rape. But a model like Brownmiller’s also conflates rape, gender, and anatomy in ways as incontrovertible as the link the rape story establishes between sexual violence and transcendent meaning. Catharine MacKinnon’s work on rape, similarly, has come under scrutiny in recent years for defining women as “inherently rapable,” “objects” whose worth is determined by virtue of their patriarchally conceived “purity” (Marcus 387, Rooney 94). Situating the rape narrative within its enabling socio-economic context, on the other hand, denies the inevitability of forcible intercourse as the natural consequence of human anatomy. Plotting violent sexual fantasy on the grid of economic concerns, moreover, locates masculine agency in relation to an explicitly contingent material system of power, value, and order. It is in this way that the violent intimacy of the rape story finally discloses the increased desperation with which the body has been made to carry ideology under systems of advanced capitalism.



The turn of the twentieth century witnessed several marked changes in the economic forms of Europe and the United States, including the evolution toward finance capitalism, rationalized corporate control, and a new politics of labor management. In chapter 2, I set out to show that representations of the divinely raped female body enabled some “high” modernist artists and writers to conscript and eroticize entrepreneurial fantasies of invasion and empire to the service of the new ideologies of controlled cap-

italism and a managed working class. The aestheticized female body thus becomes in much high modernist literature a stand-in for material chaos generally and class, labor, and gender displacement and democratization particularly. The violent invasion of this body by some transcendent and/or abstract force, furthermore, articulates the attraction that writers like Eliot and Yeats felt toward totalitarianism. For all three writers, further, the rape is often a central metaphor for the hierarchic infusion of value even as the role of the implicitly or actually masculine protagonist and/or speaker wavers and gains strength in relation to the event. Thus masculinized and individualized “productivity” comes to exist side by side with feminine and anarchic subordination to homogenous and abstracted power. The repression of man that might otherwise be implicit in the vision of divine domination is more or less neatly avoided, even in the face of capitalism’s rape story excising from its own narrative the agency of the (human) rapist.

Chapter 3 investigates the parallel constructions of the rape victim in the Fordist model of labor and production and the ideological superstructure of fascism. Both models emphasize hierarchy, concentration, and control, and both ultimately move beyond turn-of-the-century rhetoric by validating themselves in the figure of the great man, whether the fascist leader or the heroic engineer. The idealized role of the leader in some ways resolves the split between the capitalist rhetoric of entrepreneurial agency and the twentieth-century reality of controlled capitalism. Writers like Ayn Rand and Ezra Pound yoke “factive” leadership to technological mastery and validate that conjunction through the image of the raped woman. As in Eliot, Yeats, and E. M. Forster, the raped female body suggests abstract value, but her presence speaks much more forcefully to the power of the factive personality to mobilize the dissociated elements of production into a model of humming efficiency that expresses his highly individualized will. The raped women in *The Fountainhead* and *The Cantos* ultimately speak not of divinity in all of its transcendent incomprehensibility but of the force of great human personality to reenergize production, thus to control the crisis possibilities endemic to capitalism. The victims speak not of their own effacement before the absolute—although certainly they are effaced—but of their now-increased (re)productive capabilities. Thus female (re)production is not only conscripted to the symbolic and actual service of the virile hero but is crucial in ideologically legitimating the force necessary for the unification and mobilization of economic and technological enterprise.

Not all mid-century figurations of white masculinity could participate fully in the triumphant rape story told by Pound, or Rand, or even Eliot or Yeats, however; nor could man always be so easily identified with the rising productivity of capitalism, with the tremendous concentration of state

and military power in the West, or with the explosive productivity and new industrialization that accompanied and followed the world wars. In fact, I argue in chapter 4, such factors as increasing automation resulted in a mid-century reconstruction of masculinity often marked by nostalgia, or even grief. In a sense, it was technological production itself—the engine that powers capitalism—that was silently (and sometimes not so silently) coming to be understood as the force that would displace the white man. At the same time, consumable technology establishes the phallus as explicitly artificial and transferable, its power up for grabs and available to anyone with enough money to buy it. In this context, the rape narrative proposes a story of accessibility and inaccessibility in which the prerogative for violence against women has been stolen in a gesture of mechanical piracy. Rape is thus redefined as technological abduction—without human or divine antagonist. In *Tarr*, published in 1918, Wyndham Lewis crafts a machine to supplant man and usurp his prerogative for gender violence. If Lewis meets machined emasculation with bitter resignation, many of his contemporaries greet the same nightmare of technological castration with rage, and the proliferations of the machine—first embodied as phallic accompaniment, later as woman—become subject to increasingly brutal displays of violence. In the work of D. H. Lawrence, for example, rage against the machine is explicitly played out against the body of woman. What the brutalized female body finally expresses, however, is a lament, as in the case of William Faulkner, for the lost white gentleman of the past.

The anxiety articulated in the work of writers like Faulkner and Lawrence begins to investigate a masculinity explored more fully in chapter 5: one defined not in relation to production but in relation to consumption. As is often noted, after the Second World War, first-world economies turned more fully toward postindustrial structures on one hand and toward commodity production and consumerism on the other. The commitment ideologically crucial in an earlier form of capitalism to the notion of the individual who sells his labor to the market shifts more completely to a faith in the individual who freely consumes in a gesture of personal expression. The consumerist quest for what purports to be an expression of the true self is mapped onto the objectified female body (as it is onto the commodity item). A novel like Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, then, is structured by Humbert Humbert's frustration over Lolita's increasing removal and obscurity, an affective response doubled by the reader. The text is itself draped in veils that do not ultimately reveal anything other than the violent desire of the subject. Like the novel of the postmodern striptease generally, *Lolita* speaks to commodity fetishism under late capitalism and to the ways in which consumer culture relies heavily on the vic-

timized female body to create the illusion of an abstract universal essence behind the material commodity. D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* is similarly structured to bring the reader up against the blank wall of a feminine materiality which resists fetishism and the work of interpretation.

By most accounts, 1973 marked the decisive end of the postwar "boom" and initiated a new economy that would have a powerful impact on what would come to be called the postmodern subject. Chapter 6 examines masculinity as it is developed in postmodern fiction. David Savran argues that what he terms "reflexive sadomasochism" has become "the linchpin . . . to a new American white masculinity" (190). Produced in response to such factors as feminism, civil rights, gay rights, the loss of the Vietnam War, and, most importantly, "the end of the post-World War II economic boom and a resultant and steady decline in the income of white working- and lower-middle-class men," Savran's "reflexive sadomasochism" gave voice to "a new masculinity . . . that was no longer contingent either upon the production of enemies *out there* or upon nakedly imperialistic forays abroad" (191, 194). The rape narrative is not at all lost in this revised account of white masculinity. In the postmodern text, however, the prerogative for rape is often forcefully dissociated from masculine agency, and it is precisely the trauma of this dissociation that focuses the portrayal of masculinity. No longer promising subjectivity, the raped and disappearing female body shows man his relationship to the techno-economy of late capitalism, and that relationship is revealed to be one that finally nullifies him as subject, spreads that hypothetical subjectivity across the information "space" that constitutes him. In the end the new white man is an exhausted information worker, consigned to a cubicle, detached from any understanding of the larger project of which he is (apparently) a part, producing under compulsion (in the clearly ideological name of pleasure) what does not have the palpable materiality of a "product." Ultimately, the rape dreams of an older time turn traitorously, masochistically, against the soft, vulnerable body of man himself.

Thus John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* stages in 1966 the kind of masculine anxiety that accompanied the growth of the techno-economy and its colonization of information flow. The masculine protagonist in the novel is secondary, "produced as a residuum alongside the machine," doomed to a farcical reliving of the quest narrative; like the subject of late capitalism as described by Deleuze and Guattari, the hero "is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes" (20). It is the machine which rapes. Cyberpunk also stages the return of the masculine rapist hero only to consign him to the margins of an informational world. It is *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, that most relentlessly dwells on the

vulnerability of the new man. In spite of its domination by violent phallic imagery, what it stages is the disappearance of the feminine—the enabling feminine “other” whose rapability used to promise masculine agency—and the spectacular growth of male masochism. The machine, it turns out, has appropriated the traditionally masculine prerogative for sexual violence, and the true sexual event is between the lethal technological phallus and the vulnerable, rapable masculine body. It is a further disempowerment of the masculine body that even the sexual response to the violence of the rocket—a response replicated throughout the text in various scenes of sadomasochism—is a conditioned response; it reflects no desire originating in a subject per se, but is rather a subject-effect constructed through technology and transnational corporate power. The masculine subject is absorbed into the “Their” system—the “They” who manufacture the war as they manufacture gendered and sexual response—for the radical reorganization of spatial bases required for the endless circulation of capital.

Chapter 7, on the other hand, examines the ways the rape narrative is also employed within postmodern fiction to resuscitate the white male subject. There are texts that suggest—precisely through heterosexual violence—a regrouping, or a reemergence of the father amidst post-cold war consumer glut, finance capitalism, and waste management. Ironically, the white masculinity reestablished in this type of postmodern rape narrative is defined in sharp contrast to sexual violence, is actually dependent on the repeated and emphatic casting out of the desire to rape. One is tempted to claim that the essence of the shift is the emergence of compassion, an installation of the kindness so explicitly and self-consciously absent from Pynchon’s texts. There is an overarching grief in the texts of Don DeLillo and John Irving, the two writers I will take up here—grief for a lost masculinity, and grief for the raped girl or woman. That grief, however, as (massively) sympathetically rendered as it is, is predicated on the presence of a victim for whom to feel grief. Like the accumulated and recycled waste of late capitalism, the rapist is thus preserved as he is scapegoated, and he remains to haunt the borders and underground of the text; his violence necessarily continues to operate, denounced and yet crucial for masculine (anti)definition. At the same time, the rape victim herself is heavily fetishized, becomes a holy martyr in what would otherwise be an abject universe.

Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*, itself a reworking of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, achieves narrative epiphany in the saintly, post-death apparition of Esmeralda Lopez, the twelve-year-old raped and murdered in the wastelands of the Bronx. Esmeralda is the ultimate throwaway commodity—she gains value in being thrown, literally, from a building and, figurative-

ly, into the Internet; her rape is the underbelly of consumerist fetishism in an age of waste crisis, and her holy return redeems the postmodern wasteland. Similarly, John Irving's protagonists achieve mature masculinity when they acknowledge that a rape victim is "holy" (*Hotel New Hampshire* 441). The sexually victimized female body is thus defined both as vulnerable to the touch of displaced masculine violence and yet untouchable to the average man. Rape becomes the occasion to reflect on the "redemptive qualit[y]" of the flows and re-circulations of late capitalism, the miraculous fact that the compromised masculine self has been rendered invisible but has not been obliterated (*Underworld* 809). In a significant way, abstract value is thus ideologically produced in a way that nullifies and condemns the laborer (the rapist) while building up the consumer/investor—s/he who watches and witnesses and grieves. This masculine regret and disavowal, in the midst of claiming ownership, is a part of a new vision of subjectivity, a vision explicitly celebrated in the novel as "real" finally, outside the fantastical illusions of late capitalism.

The final chapter examines the struggle over the last thirty years to reclaim the rape narrative for feminist purposes. Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, A. M. Homes, Kathy Acker, Angela Carter, Christa Wolfe, Jeanette Winterson, Julia Alvarez—to name just a few—rework the sado-masochistic narrative in ways that call into question the ways the presumed feminine subject has been traditionally represented. I note above that Sharon Marcus argues that a politically efficacious approach to the study of rape begins with the explicit examination of "rape as a language": "[A] way to refuse to recognize rape as the real fact of our lives is to treat it as a *linguistic* fact: to ask how the violence of rape 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. To understand rape in this way is to understand it as subject to change" (387, 389). To understand that the physical event of sexual violence is everywhere framed by the semiotic leads to the ability "to imagine women as neither already raped nor inherently rapable" (387). The writers I take up in the concluding chapter work in tandem with Marcus in struggling to disentangle representations of women from "an identity politics which defines women by our violability" (387). Some do so by staging in self-conscious terms the enduring construction of women as rapable-by-definition. Others interfere with the rape story by focusing on what Janice Haaken describes as the "inevitable disjuncture between rape as a metaphor and rape as a concrete act of violence" (784). Laura Tanner has shown that some contemporary writers reconstruct the rape narrative by "pushing the reader into a position of discomforting proximity to the victim's vulnerable body[ , . . . ] collaps[ing]

the distance between a disembodied reader and a victim defined by embodiment” (10), and Higgins and Silver have insisted on the necessity of “taking rape literally,” “restoring rape to the literal, to the body: restoring, that is, the violence—the physical, sexual violation” (4). My concluding chapter examines a range of resistant narrative forms that include the above.



The struggle of contemporary women writers to reclaim the rape narrative calls to mind the advice we routinely give young women and men in the college orientation process. Certainly at my institution, we are careful to organize mandatory workshops during which we exhort students, among other things, not to perpetuate the “rape myths” that support a culture in which one out of four college women has been the victim of rape or attempted rape since age fourteen (Goodman et al.) and in which 91 percent of victims are female (Haws). The obvious rape myths are those which generally condemn the “victim,” to the extent that one believes there to be one, for her attire, behavior, or demeanor. Other legitimate variations include the impossibility of “rape” committed by husband or boyfriend. I would argue that the rape myth is more pervasive yet. It is a form manifestly diverse in its permutations, and like any ideological mold, it changes gracefully in response to the particular features of history and economics that benefit from it.

What the mythic variation relies upon is the extent to which in Western culture the “feminine” is, again to invoke both Alice Jardine and Roland Barthes, “a metaphor without brakes.” Endlessly shape-shifting, the rapable female body persists in highbrow literature as the precondition for the masculine subject of capitalism, the agent to whom all imperial prerogative is granted. In the grotesque repetitions to which capitalism lends itself, the raped woman continues to function as the “‘earth’ to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one’s own)” (Irigaray 133). Without the presence of this ideological object, “which in theory does not know herself,” then upon what foundation does one think the masculine subject? “If the earth turned and more especially turned upon herself, the erection of the subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and penetration. For what would there be to rise up from and exercise his power over? And in?” (133). The subject of Western history—of logical and metaphysical thought, of market, industrial, and imperial capitalism—exists in supreme metaphysical thought by virtue of the violable feminized other, rendered visible in every banal figuration and event of our lived experience. Where,

thus, to move? To invoke again the language of rape prevention at my institution:

[Question]: How do we all contribute to the problem?

[Answer]: Remaining silent. *Silence is a form of passive support. Men who harm women sexually will always view our silence as a form of approval. Women who have been assaulted will view our silence as a lack of support.* (Chalk and Checkett)

# NOTES

## Notes to Chapter 1

1. See Sharon Stockton, "The 'broken rib of mankind.'"
2. See Sharon Stockton, "Making Men."
3. Whether or not I use the terms "white," "European/American," or "Western," then, these words are always associated with my use of "masculinity."

## Notes to Chapter 2

1. See Lawrence Venuti's "The Ideology of the Individual in Anglo-American Criticism: The Example of Coleridge and Eliot." Venuti makes the case that this tension is generally present in capitalist ideology.

2. Lawrence Venuti argues that Eliot's "impersonal" theory of poetry turns back on itself in similar ways; it "quite paradoxically assumes that the poet is a free, unified consciousness who directs its cognitive acts and textual production" (175).

3. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray discusses generally distrust of and yet dependency on the woman's symbolic potential in the context of the Platonic dialogues, showing that this ambiguity is at the heart of Western idealism: "The receptacle upon which the father inscribes his will, and casts the seed of his truth, is not designated *as such* in the present of speech. . . . She is always a clean slate ready for the father's impressions, which she forgets as they are made. Unstable, inconsistent, fickle, unfaithful, she seems ready to receive all beings into herself. Keeping no trace of them. Without memory. She herself is without figure or face or proper form, for otherwise '(she) would take the impression badly because (she) would intrude (her) own shape'" (*Speculum* 307).

4. For more on male sterility in Eliot, see Burton Raffel's *T. S. Eliot* and Robert Langbaum's "New Modes of Characterization in *The Waste Land*."

5. An even more crucial excision Eliot performed on the draft of *The Waste Land* shows a deeper association of the speaker with the violated body—and reveals the extent to which rape was eroticized in Eliot's thinking. The drafts of "The Death of Saint Narcissus" narrate the saint "wish[ing] he had been a young girl / Caught in the woods by a drunken old man" in order to "taste of her own whiteness / The horror of her own smoothness" (*The Waste Land: A Facsimile* A93). This desire realizes itself in the ecstasy of his death: "Because his flesh was in love with the penetrant arrows / . . . He surrendered himself and embraced them / And his whiteness and redness satisfied him" (93). In "A Study in the Suicide of Selfhood," Paul Murphy examines the tension in the poem between "mastery over self and others" (37).

Christine Froula argues convincingly that what *The Waste Land* is ultimately about is the constant repression of such homoerotic and/or woman identified images.

6. In “Exploring the Aesthetics of Rape,” Felicia Mitchell traces the Leda myth through the work of many modern and contemporary writers, particularly women.

Nancy Hargrove provides a useful close reading of Yeats’s version, showing how the poem constantly counterpoises the material (usually female) and abstract (usually male).

7. In the *The Waste Land*, “I made no outcry” (51).

8. In the *The Waste Land*, the next line reads, “He had / I still feel the pressure of dirty hand” (53).

9. Eliot’s portrayal of Beatrice in Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling* is another example of the woman who is not only depraved but recognizes that depravity and spiritually submerges herself in her own “deflowering”: “She becomes moral only by becoming damned. . . . But what constitutes the essence of the tragedy is something which has not been sufficiently remarked; it is the *habituatio* of Beatrice to her sin; it becomes no longer merely sin but custom. . . . The tragedy of Beatrice is not that she has lost Alsemero . . . it is that she has won De Flores” (Eliot, *Selected Prose*, 191). Of this image of the consciously violated woman who has become habituated to her sin, Tony Pinkney argues that it is defined most explicitly in Sweeney’s lines, “Any man has to, needs to, wants to / once in a lifetime, do a girl in” (18).

10. Nancy K. Gish makes the argument that all female speech in *The Waste Land* is carefully “incorporated into the ultimately single perspective of the poem’s narrator” (41).

11. In another way of looking at it, as Christina Hauck points out, the abortion referred to in this scene also suggests that something is amiss in the machinery of production.

12. Robert Langbaum sees this woman as another victim of violation “in some special modern sense”: “The violation would seem to lie in his inability to communicate with her” (105).

13. Jacqueline Rose has done a fascinating study of Eliot’s estimation of Gertrude as insufficient cause. She argues that as “the aesthetic inadequacy of the play is caused by the figure of a woman, [so] the image of a woman most aptly embodies the consequences of that failure. Femininity thus becomes the stake, not only of the internal, but also of the critical, drama generated by the play” (35).

14. See Patricia Klindienst Joplin’s “The Voice of the Shuttle Is Ours” for a full discussion of the Philomela myth.

15. Laura Severin traces the story of Philomela through Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party*. This Philomel, according to Severin, is connected to another rape victim: this time, Shakespeare’s Lavinia from *Titus Andronicus*.

16. Another connection to Philomel has been unearthed by H. A. Mason, who makes the case that the Lithuanian (German) woman of the opening of *The Waste Land* is based on a character in H. G. Wells’s *The New Machiavelli*. Here is what this girl had gone through before seeking refuge in London: “She was a Lett from near Libau in Courland, and she was telling me—just as one tells something too strange for comment or emotion—how her father had been shot and her sister outraged and murdered before her eyes” (Mason 72).

17. Bush points out that “Eliot has altered the meaning of the Sanskrit term, *Damyata*, from ‘self-control’ to ‘control’” (158).

18. Eloise Knapp Hay draws a parallel between the democratized masses represented by chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* and the Kowalskis in *A Streetcar Named Desire*;

in both cases, the rootless inherit the earth (115). The difference, however, is that in Eliot the rootless masses are the one's figuratively raped and thus brought back under the wing of social and/or economic hierarchy; in Tennessee Williams, it is the democratized public, represented by Stanley Kowalski, which does the raping, thus evidencing its brutality and irrepressibility.

19. In "Eliot's Horrific Moment," Ronald Schuchard argues that Renaissance writers express generally for Eliot the "the horrific way to the beatific," which he attempted in his own writing and which I argue is promised in the recurring image of the raped female body: Eliot "believed of Shakespeare and all of his masters of horror that their artistic imaginations worked over the thin ice of profound spiritual awareness and terror" (195).

20. Another myth that is relevant here is that of Cassandra. Elsie Leach has done a remarkable job of tracing the similarities between *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, yet she concludes that Eliot's play "has in its action no characters comparable to Clytemnestra and Cassandra" (14). It seems to me that, to the contrary, Cassandra—raped by the God as well as by Agamemnon, given the gift of (incomprehensible) prophecy in order to tell (if incomprehensibly) the true fate of Troy—is clearly paralleled by the chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral*.

21. See Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran's article on Forster's revisions: "E. M. Forster's *Passage to India*: What Really Happened in the Caves."

## Notes to Chapter 3

1. Laura Frost argues, similarly, that the sexual deviance associated with fascism "can be traced to cultural preoccupations that were well in place even before the historical rise of fascism" (16).

2. See Walter Adamson's *Avant-Garde Florence* for a detailed examination of Italian fascist appropriation and secularization of the rhetoric of religion.

3. See Victoria de Grazia's *How Fascism Ruled Women* for a detailed analysis of the conscription of female bodies and labor by the Italian Corporate State. For more on the actual and imagistic use of the female body under German fascism, see Linda Mizejewski's *Divine Decadence*.

4. See John W. Robbins's *Answer to Ayn Rand* for a careful and extended discussion of Rand's stance on anarchy versus individualist achievement and right.

5. Mimi Gladstein comments opaquely of this scene that "a readership with a raised consciousness about the nature of rape might find this symbolism unpalatable" (23).

6. Douglas, interestingly enough, was an engineer, as Redman points out. Redman's *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* is crucial for an understanding of Pound's vision of economics.

7. In Canto VI, Pound quotes from a long passage that reports the outrage of the French king over the rape (and impregnation) of eight-year-old princess Alix (actually Adelaide) by Henry II (Terrell 25).

8. For a full exploration of the connections between Malatesta and Mussolini, see Robert Casillo, "Fascists of the Final Hour" and Peter d'Epiro, *A Touch of Rhetoric*.

9. In a useful biographical essay, A. D. Moody similarly shows that Pound's enthusiasm for Malatesta paralleled his own 1922 vision of a new journal and patronage scheme that he and T. S. Eliot would co-found—*Bel Esprit*—thereby drawing together all the greatest and most dynamic talent of their time. This plan was never realized.

10. See also A. D. Moody, “*Bel Esprit*.”

11. The reference to Procne and Philomela appears in Canto IV as well.

12. Christine Froula argues, to the contrary, that the references to Dafne are not about death but about the “transcendence of temporality: narrative becomes scene and temporal movement becomes spatial design” (*To Write Paradise* 29). Similarly, Froula’s larger argument works to show that Pound was in fact reaching for a mimetic art and a form that would suggest the permanent and transcendent.

13. See Robert von Hallberg’s “Ezra Pound in Paris”: “Pound’s *Malatesta Cantos* do not, I think, suggest that he was particularly enthusiastic about the antipsychological efforts of Marinetti and Tzara” (63).

## Notes to Chapter 4

1. For a discussion of castration anxiety and fetishism in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, see Carl Eby’s “Rabbit Stew and Blowing Dorothy’s Bridges: Love, Aggression, and Fetishism in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.”

2. In fact, one might go so far as to assert with Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver that “rape and rapability are central to the very construction of gender identity and that our subjectivity and sense of ourselves as sexual beings are inextricably enmeshed in representations” (3). The various essays collected in Higgins and Silver’s *Rape and Representation* begin with this premise and go on to examine the ways in which rape is nonetheless generally elided from representation, becoming a textual absence that is the source of endless anxiety.

3. See Sharon Stockton, “Aesthetics, Politics, and the Staging of the World,” for more on Lewis’s “enemy” stance and its rhetorical alliance with fascism.

4. Notwithstanding the possibility that Mellors “uses his power caringly,” the first instance of intercourse between him and Constance Chatterley is, in fact, rape. I cannot agree with Kathleen Wall that Mellors’s “caring” and his association with myth legitimate and rewrite the incident as an “initiation”—although this is clearly what Lawrence himself would claim (145). Wall is not alone in her apologia for the rape scene in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*; Swift argues that, when not looked at “superficially,” the novel is about “the democracy of touch” (165), and many other critics have claimed that the sacredness of the event excuses its violence against women, including Michael Black, Mark Spilka, Mark Schorer, and nearly every contributor (all of whom are male) to Jeffrey Meyers’s *The Legacy of D. H. Lawrence*. All of these apologies for Lawrence overlook not only the violence explicit in Lawrence’s representations of sexual relationships but in Western constructions of gender and identity generally.

5. Judith Puchner Breen has seen the connection, likening one of Lawrence’s male characters to “the demonic Pluto who rose out of darkness to claim Persephone for his bride” (65).

6. Much can be, and has been, said about these “loins” and Lawrence’s latent homosexuality; I will avoid tracing this as it would take me too far afield.

7. This is not a rape scene, of course—this female body is docile and softly open to man’s inscription. Her body willingly speaks his “meaning” from this point on—just as Ursula’s character development throughout the novel consists in her gradual acceptance and articulation of Birkin’s philosophies. And yet, as the passage above makes clear, it is his dark and electric “force” that is expressed in and through her, and her

submission to him is echoed in images of violent domination throughout the novel. One might, for example, examine the moon imagery in the novel for evidence of sexualized violence against femaleness, imaged almost always as white and/or electric light.

## Notes to Chapter 5

1. And “rape” is in fact precisely the right word to use—the word that Nabokov has both *Lolita* and Humbert use, and yet which most critics avoid. See Elizabeth Patnoe for a discussion of the gendered critical response to the novel.

2. See Elizabeth Power for a discussion of the ways that Nabokov’s (lack of) control over the screenplay for Kubrick’s film version of the novel echo Humbert’s filmic *Lolita*.

3. Dana Brand opposes Humbert’s (higher) tendency to aestheticize *Lolita* to his consumerist tendency to commodify her. I would argue that, on the contrary, the two are not only interconnected but mutually reinforcing.

4. A slippery point of view in Nabokov, subject as it is to unstable transformations to moments of fetishism or contrition, this is nonetheless the perspective adopted, to the exclusion of all others, by an astounding number of critics. Most notoriously, Lionel Trilling made this case in 1958: “In recent fiction no lover has thought of his beloved with so much tenderness, no woman has been so charmingly evoked, in such grace and delicacy, as *Lolita*” (19).

In ways more limited yet, critics have gone beyond the notion that Humbert and *Lolita* are equal partners in love to the idea that it is Humbert who is the victim of a girl who deserved what she got. Consider, for example, the conclusion reached by Thomas Molnar in 1987: “The central question the reader ought to ask of himself is whether he feels pity for the girl. Our ethical ideal would require that we look at *Lolita* as a sacrificial lamb, that we become in imagination, her knight-protector. Yet this is impossible for two reasons. One is very simple: before yielding to Humbert, the girl has had a nasty little affair with a nasty little thirteen-year-old. . . . Besides, she is a spoiled sub-teenager with a foul mouth, a self-offered target for lechers” (11–13).

See Elizabeth Patnoe and Linda Kauffman, both of whom discuss these particular traditions of (misogynist) misreading in compelling detail. The current trend is to find these earlier readings “radically, troublingly wrong” (Levine 40).

A similar misinterpretation can be argued to have been put forward by Adrian Lynn and Stephen Schiff in their 1998 film adaptation of the novel. De Reus and Womack argue, “Through their deliberate obfuscation of Humbert’s culpability as a child molester in the film, Lynn and Schiff transform *Lolita* from the precocious pre-adolescent of Nabokov’s novel into an over-sexualized temptress” (58). Along the same lines, Susan Bordo makes the damning case that “[t]he idea of Hum and Lo mutually pleasuring each other (*The Joy of Sex*, perhaps, on the bookshelf behind them) is utterly at odds with Nabokov’s depiction of the relationship, which never lets us forget that *Lolita* is a child, and that it is Humbert’s fantasy-nymphetology . . . that endows her with sexual power” (“True Obsessions” B7).

See Timothy McCracken for a discussion of fictional retellings of the *Lolita* story that return a voice and a subjectivity to the raped girl.

5. Alice Jardine has noted that Sigmund Freud compared the “self-sufficient woman”—with her “narcissistic auto-sufficiency and her indifference”—to cats (as well as to children, criminals, and humorists). See *Gynesis* 199–200.

## Notes to Chapter 6

1. See E. L. McCallum, "Mapping the Real in Cyberfiction," for a compelling discussion of the significance of this "real" geography in cyberpunk: "Examining the representation of real spaces in cyberpunk fiction not only reveals the narratives' reliance on events in 'real' space but also shows how their assumptions about organizing space and distributing power are more colonialist than futurist" (349).

2. Claudia Springer makes the solid (but for me unconvincing) argument that while "hardwired women" like Molly "clearly embody a fetishized male fantasy, . . . they also represent feminist rebellion against a brutal patriarchal system" (725).

3. In "Feminism for the Incurably Informed," Anne Balsamo argues that Cadigan thus makes a space for feminine technological mastery.

4. In the context of a discussion of *Gravity's Rainbow*, John Hamill argues that in fact this "impulse towards metaphysical transcendence . . . is a crucial stage in the development of sadomasochistic desire and is not opposed to it" (53).

5. It is a matter of conjecture whether or not Pynchon was self-consciously reworking *Lolita* when writing this novel. Certainly he would have read the novel—Pynchon had taken a course with Nabokov at Cornell University.

## Notes to Chapter 7

1. I disagree with Molly Wallace, who argues that this "Peace" is deliberately undercut, offered up by DeLillo as a "push-button word" (378).

2. "What man brings to creation is the *form* of the progeny; what woman brings is *matter*; so say all mythical discourses on creation. . . . Aristotle clearly states that matter desires form as the female desires the male. On the female side, there is no order, no principle of internal organization, no generative power" (Goux 213).

3. "Fatherly" is a modifier used repeatedly, defensively, in this scene.

## Note to Chapter 8

1. Karen Brennan argues that Acker's work "relies on both pastiche and parody" as Jameson defines these terms—"parody to subvert pastiche and pastiche to engender parody—vacillating hysterically between the two modes . . . to present a fiction of feminine subjectivity" (251–52).

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