

flags and uniforms/discoloured/war posters" or in "The Seige of Troy" (70) where Troy, World War II and the Napoleonic Wars are all seen in relation to the everyday events that continue in spite of the horrors of war. That's about it. The first poem in In Search of Eros is entitled "For P.K.P.," P.K. Page, and ironically much of Page's poetry has shown her very close involvement in contemporary social affairs. In her acknowledgements to Sunrise North Brewster especially thanks Margaret Atwood and Dorothy Livesay, again two poets who have consistently expressed their views on national and international political and social affairs in their poetry. Perhaps if one is socialized in youth to be apolitical it is difficult in maturity to change that fact. One hopes, however, that having explored her own personal world, Elizabeth Brewster can begin to look abroad. In "Lillooet" she claims to be "unable to proceed beyond the personal." But that was written a long time ago.

NOTES

1. Eli Mandel, Five Canadian Poets (Toronto, 1970), p. 39.
2. George Bowering, Points on the Grid (Toronto, 1964), p. 63.

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Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape Susan Brownmiller. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975. Pp. 472.

Susan Brownmiller's book Against Our Will is an important and long overdue study of rape. This work is much more than a piece of descriptive journalism; it is an exhaustive study in which the author's appreciation for history and her attention to detail result in a penetrating and thorough re-evaluation of the whole issue of rape.

Brownmiller's extensive research into the conditions and facts about rape-- its victims and its perpetrators-- exposes the reality of the situation and challenges the long-standing faulty assumptions which predominate the topic in our thoroughly sexist society. However, this important contribution is only half of the task the author sets out for herself. By examining the peculiar dual nature of rape; i.e., that it is at one and the same time a crime against property (possession of a woman) and a crime of assault, Brownmiller searches for the underlying societal values and attitudes towards women which are manifested in such a crime. The idea of woman as property rather than person and the equation of rape with violence and degradation rather than eroticism are themes which Brownmiller analyzes historically, in her attempt to explore the meaning of rape in contemporary North American society.

The book could be divided into four sections according to Brownmiller's analysis of the issue. Chapters one and two present the author's basic theoretical statement plus a brief consideration of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which rape came to be viewed as a crime. In this section the concept of woman as property is fully explored. Chapters three through five form the second section in which the author presents us with a history of rape under specific conditions of intense social conflict. Chapter three deals with the long association of rape and war and the underlying assumption that women are part of the spoils accrued to the victors. In chapter four the author discusses rape under the circumstances of riots, pogroms and revolutions while in chapter five she looks at the association of rape and violence in America's treatment of Indians and slaves. In this section the dominant theme is the association of violence and degradation with rape. Here, again, the idea of woman as property is clearly a part of rape in times of conflict, for the symbolic significance of rape in war is the violation of the defeated. Women can only be cast in this symbolic role if they are viewed not as individuals but as the property of the defeated.

Chapters six, seven and eight comprise what could be considered the third section of the book. It is in these chapters that Brownmiller attacks head-

on the plethora of faulty assumptions which have too long passed as facts about rape. The idea of the rapist as a pitiful sexual psychopath, the notion of males' overwhelming sexual drive, the conception of the victim as the unconscious temptress--these and many other such assumptions are traced to the sexist bias which exists in our society and are thoroughly destroyed in the light of real research and documentation.

Chapter six is the data section of Brownmiller's book. It is in this chapter that she outlines the reality of rape in contemporary North America. In this chapter we are presented with a series of dreadful but demystifying facts about the nature of rape under supposedly normal societal conditions. In chapter seven Brownmiller gives a scathing analysis of interracial rape, exposing the distortions and misconceptions which result when the issue of racism is superimposed upon sexism. The author is also concerned with other special circumstances in which rape occurs in our society. In chapter eight she looks at the occurrence of rape in institutional settings where power and authority serve to protect the rapist; she singles out prison rape, police rape and child abuse as examples of such cases.

Having thoroughly described and demystified the nature of rape in our society, Brownmiller sets out to

analyze the factors which account for its frequent occurrence, lack of serious treatment and often its glorification. Her research clearly indicates that an understanding of rape is not to be found in the study of a few sick individuals but rather the answers lie in a study of the pervasive sexist ideology of our society. It is the beginning of such a study which constitutes the last four chapters of her book.

The fact that rape seldom receives serious legal recognition is only, it seems, the tip of the iceberg. Brownmiller documents a variety of cultural themes which reduce women to the status of property and reveals a frightening undercurrent of misogyny. Her analysis of the "myth of the heroic rapist" is most revealing. The author points out numerous incidents in which rape cases are popularized through books, movies, even songs. There seems to be a rather eager market for stories of Jack the Ripper or the Boston Strangler (although cases of homosexual rape-murders are seldom if ever popularized). How can we explain this demand for tales of rape and sexual abuse; further, how can we understand the romanticization of figures like the Boston Strangler (in the Rolling Stones record "Midnight Rambler") unless we accept two basic facts about the nature of sexism in our society. First, that in a male dominant society the only definition of

sexuality that exists for both males and females is a male definition and, secondly, that in our particular culture the existing definition of sexuality is heavily influenced by dominance-submission themes frequently leading to self (male) aggrandizement through object (female) degradation.

Brownmiller points out that pornography and many current films abound with themes of dominance and submission--rape being one of the more popular cases. Again, however, the emphasis is upon men raping women; the case of homosexual rape is very rare. In the usual case, i.e., man raping woman, the incident is usually justified (she asked for it) and often eroticized and romanticized. Thus, the reader/viewer is encouraged to identify with the rapist, his needs and motives. In the unusual case of a man raping another man (as found in the recent film Deliverance), the incident is portrayed as the degrading, brutalizing experience it is with the reader/viewer being put in the position of identifying with the victim rather than the rapist.

The myth of the heroic rapist is standard fare in pornography and Brownmiller is unrelenting in her attack on the perpetuation of such an ideology. She brushes aside liberal defenders of pornography, claiming that pornography is nothing other than anti-woman hate literature which glorifies sexual abuse and is as un-

deserving of defense as is the hate literature cranked out by anti-semites or the Klu Klux Klan.

The author also views the problem of prostitution as a contributing factor to the objectification and degradation of women in our society. She states that prostitution responds to and serves to perpetuate an ideology in which women appear as commodities to which men have right of access according to their wealth, prestige or might. As Brownmiller points out it is not a long step from the discovery that you can buy sex from a woman to the discovery that you can have sex from a woman through force or intimidation.

Having analyzed critical elements in male sexual psychology, which are reflected in pornography and popular culture, Brownmiller looks at the effect of male-defined sexuality upon female sexual psychology. One of the most devastating effects is the equation of beauty and desirability with vulnerability and victimization. The author maintains that we can understand the ambivalent, often sexist attitudes women have toward the issue of rape by understanding the extent to which this equation has been internalized. Furthermore, we can understand the inevitable psychological advantage the rapist has in the ensuing struggle if women have already been socialized to believe they are the victims. Brownmiller sees the motivating force behind rape not in particular legal

codes or enforcement procedures (although they are manifestations of the problem), but rather in the sexism of our society. Thus her study, though specifically directed at the issue of rape, goes beyond that issue in order to locate the underlying causes in male and female sexual psychology.

It is obvious that I strongly recommend this book as an important contribution to women's literature, to criminology and to sociology in general. However, I am inclined to advise the reader to start reading on page 16 rather than at the beginning. The only complaint I have with this book is the first chapter where the author indulges in superficial speculations regarding the primal origins of rape. The implications of her musings are nothing short of biological determinism (have penis, will rape), and are unworthy of the tenor and analysis of the rest of her book. Thus I would advise the reader not to be discouraged by the first chapter as it is no indication of the quality of the study which follows.

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