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UNCOMFORTABLE PERFORMANCES: DISCOVERING A SUBVERSIVE SCENARIO FOR RAPE DISCOURSE

A Thesis

Submitted to the graduate faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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in

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by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS……ii

ABSTRACT……..vii

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION: REPRESENTING RAPE……1
Discursive Practices.……2
Visibility Politics……..……...…….8
The Scenario…….……16
The Artifacts……..19

2 SPEAKING OUT ON HER OWN TERMS……..24
Speak Up, Speak Out…….24
"Survivor Faces Rape Without Shame"……..31
Rape in Crisis…….37
Transgression or Recuperation?…….40

3 CLOTHESLINES OF FLIGHT……...…….…….42
Background of the Clothesline Project……..42
Strategic Invisibility…….……..46
Post-Modern Memorialization……...50
A Perfumed Historicity……..56

4 CONCLUSION: SUBVERTING THIS SCENARIO…….……...…61
Looking Back Through the Scenario……62
Situating the Scenario……...65

WORKS CITED……69

VITA……..73

ABSTRACT

Current trends in representations of rape show a new fascination with a rape scenario, a fascination that puts a normative slant on discourse surrounding rape. Normalizing the rape scenario carries various consequences for women; the first and foremost is that it turns the experience of rape into an entertainment commodity, thus causing women's voices to be appropriated into dominant discourses and the capitalist project. One possible way to circumvent this normalization is to look toward feminist performance strategies in order to subvert this rape scenario and the discourses surrounding it from within.

In this thesis, I explore ways to accomplish this subversion by examining two performance artifacts: A Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) commercial featuring a young rape survivor and the Clothesline Project, a performance installation. Chapter One theorizes the process of normalization that occurs in rape discourse as a "perform—or else" double bind. In Chapter Two, I critique both the TAASA commercial and how the media representations following its airing co-opt its transgressive potential. In Chapter Three, I analyze the Clothesline Project as a type of postmodern memorial. The Clothesline Project remains one of the only attempts at erecting any sort of memorial of rape, possibly due to the problems associated with representing rape. I argue that the Clothesline Project's strategies of representation can be a transgressive attempt not only to speak out about rape, but also to refuse the spectacle of personal narrative. Chapter Four revisits the performance artifacts and connects them to Diana Taylor's notion of the "scenario." This research demonstrates the possibilities found within these artifacts for subverting the normative pull of rape survivor discourse.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: REPRESENTING RAPE

Current trends in representations of rape show a new fascination with the rape story, a fascination that puts a normative slant on speaking out. According to Tonya Horeck, in her book *Public Rape*, "In contemporary popular culture, the silence on rape has been broken with an outburst of discourse" (3). While this thesis will not seek to undermine the power and value of speaking out about rape, I wish to demonstrate how in many cases rape discourse has been appropriated and subverted by surrounding discourses. Through various representations or performances of rape narratives, women's voices become co-opted into the mainstream, thus losing their transgressive power. No longer is the focus on personal narrative as an empowering form of feminist discourse; instead forms of media spectacle corrupt and appropriate voice and change the content of rape narratives to fit into spectacular representations of women's bodies.

This thesis examines this process by tackling certain problems of representation and articulating how they qualify the power and value of "speaking out" via rape narratives. My examination of various forms of representations of rape (both fictional representations and self-referential speaking), brings problems with these representations to light. I apply methods of analysis provided by theorists such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Jon McKenzie, Diana Taylor, third wave feminists, and conservative women in order to demonstrate how some performance contexts normalize and recuperate women as victims. Normalizing the rape scenario carries various consequences for women; the first and foremost is that it turns the experience of rape into an entertainment commodity, thus causing women's voices to be appropriated into dominant discourses and, accordingly and potentially, the capitalist project.

Feminists themselves must be careful not to fall into the traps of the dominant ideology, by not subsuming all victimhood into one category. Feminists must remember difference, as well as recognize the victimization of various groups of women around the world as well as the rarely discussed issue of male rape. One possible way to begin this project is to look towards feminism as a means of subverting from within this rape scenario and the discourses surrounding it.

Discursive Practices

In order to begin the project of analyzing performances of rape stories, I will start with the issue of self-representation, both its benefits to the women's movement and its problems. One of the major and most basic forms of self-representation regarding rape is the act of speaking out about a rape. Speaking out, also known as Consciousness Raising, can benefit a woman who chooses to tell her story because the act of giving voice to an experience can aid in the process of healing, especially when done in a woman friendly environment. Speaking out can thus be seen as a form of therapy or therapeutic performance. As Louise Woodstock notes, "publicly sharing painful personal narratives is therapeutic" (252). Speaking out publicly about rape has benefited the women's movement in the past because it brought forth awareness of rape and began to break the silence regarding women's victimization. Silence works as a method of keeping women and their experiences invisible and othered, and survivor discourse attempts to bring to light women's experience through allowing rape to be spoken about, rather than remain unspeakable. Speaking out also became a powerful force of resistance. Dana Cloud tracks the rhetoric of the Consciousness Raising movement, starting from the feminist tenet "the personal is political," which began as a means for women "to generalize outward from individual experience and to mobilize collective action" (110).

But speaking out can become a problem. When women begin to speak out about their rapes, they are doing so in an environment always already pervaded by an oppressive language system, one that automatically names. Our language seems to state that when rape occurs, a woman becomes a "victim," be it through self-naming, or naming by others, and as Deborah L. Siegel notes, "name calling is never a neutral act – politically, ontologically, or epistemologically" (67). In *Excitable Speech,* Butler declares that "to be named by another is traumatic" (38). Once the act of rape takes place, a woman is almost automatically named "rape victim." Since the brand "rape victim" stays put in the heads of most women, whether raped or not, then once a rape occurs our preconceived notions of naming go to work. This automatic naming infers that women run the risk of constantly becoming victims. Ann J. Cahill addresses this very problem with language: "If we claim that the socially produced feminine body is precisely that of a pre-victim, we may also claim that it is the body of the *guilty* pre-victim" (56) which shows the tendency to box women in. By naming women "victims" we push them into that place of passivity, a place that causes political action to dissipate.

When women seek therapy for their rape, they engage in a type of confessional discourse. These women turn to professionals in an attempt to find comfort, healing, or absolution. Here we come to a current problematic regarding speaking out: when used as a means of therapy or confession, rape discourse can make survivors take responsibility for the rape through very subtle means. In *History of Sexuality: Volume One*, Foucault problematizes confessional discourse:

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervene in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile. (61)

Confessional discourse remains a normative discursive practice that keeps women in a place without power. The power in a confessional relationship always falls on the figure of authority, and the survivor is always in a position to seek legitimacy.

Speaking out in some public arenas evokes this confessional feel, by encouraging women to tell their stories, be it on television, in books, or in magazines. These stories similarly imply that the rape survivor needs to confess, or rather perform, her story to an audience, which thus becomes the virtual authority figure Foucault describes. The confessional nature of these stories implies that the rape survivor has some sort of remaining guilt that needs to be shared in order to receive absolution.

Dana Cloud offers an excellent account of how the rhetorics of therapy and confession attempt to contain potential political discourse by shifting it to the realm of therapy, thus making it about the personal and private. She continues this line of argument in a chapter dedicated towards feminism, and problematizes Consciousness Raising as a tool of therapeutic discourse.

Cloud defines the rhetoric of therapy as "an ideological frame that bounds conceptions of political action and that works as a discourse of social control" (xxii). The idea of a confessing rape survivor shows society's predilection with sensational stories that shift the focus from the political to the personal. Questioning the long-standing feminist tenet "the personal is political" Cloud offers how moving into the personal can draw attention away from systemic social problems. By making the personal the forefront for feminist political change, we ignore the problems endemic to the capitalist social system, in which, according to Gayle Rubin, "production takes the form of turning money, things, and *people* into capital" (161, emphasis added). The rhetoric of therapy and speaking out in the mode of confessional discourse function to uphold normative constructions of rape survivors as passive, individual victims who require

healing via discourse in order to take their places as both consumers and capital in the capitalist economy, which Rubin further notes is "a long tradition in which women do not inherit" (164).

Many survivor stories told in popular magazines change the name of the woman, for her privacy and protection, reminiscent of the privacy screen in Catholic confessionals and the widespread practice of withholding the rape survivor's name in the media.[1] And occasionally, these articles are not written by the survivors themselves, but are based on interviews. Through this veil of confession, rape survivors are given an questionable contradiction: the women featured in many of these articles felt compelled to tell their stories, but felt shame enough to confess under pseudonyms. These stories protect women's identities while at the same time subtlety question their innocence. Here, one must confess guilt privately, but for an audience, creating a contradictory performance that tells the story of implied guilt. We can see that this type of discourse suggests that a woman should feel some guilt until she speaks out about her trauma, which only normalizes the act of speaking out. As Rey Chow demonstrates:

> when women and minorities think that, by representing themselves, they are liberating themselves from the powers that subordinate them, they may actually be allowing such postures to work in the most effective way – from within their hearts and souls, in the form of voluntary, intimate confessions. (46)

Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, also articulates this point: "discourse becomes oppressive when it requires the speaking subject, in order to speak, participate in the very terms of that oppression" (147). Here the speaking subject (the rape survivor) must speak in a confessional mode of discourse that puts her experience and body on display.

Myrna Blyth, author of *Spin Sisters*, seems to propose that our cultural climate pushes women to perform the role of victim, specifically within the contexts of popular women's

[1] For more information on this journalistic policy, which began roughly in the late 1970s, see Chapter Two and Hackney, Suzette. "Covering Crime and its Victims." *Covering Crime & Justice*. Criminal Justice Journalists: 2003. <http://www.justicejournalism.org/crimeguide/chapter05/chapter05_pg04.html>

magazines. Her observation suggests a growing trend, but her analysis falls apart. Instead of investigating why our culture seems so steeped in inscribing a politicized victimhood upon women, she instead puts the blame on the "liberal feminist media." She analyzes popular women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, and some of her conclusions are frighteningly accurate. For example, she points out that almost every month, the magazines run articles with titles resembling "how to pleasure him" or "make dating a sport." While almost every issue has numerous articles of this sort, each issue also has one article that Blyth calls the "victim of the month" article. She argues that these magazines convince women to behave in a more promiscuous way, which therefore causes their victimization. While she never openly makes such a bold claim, she begins to dance a bit too close to saying "those women deserve it." Her argument here falls into a conservative backlash critique of feminism. For one thing, these articles present a specific definition, or performance of woman. Blyth does not comment on the fact that this definition of woman is heteronormative. But even so, we should not blatantly disregard her observations regarding the media (whether conservative or liberal). These magazines she critiques do indeed present a problematic picture of womanhood, by encouraging women to learn how to pleasure "him" while a few pages later showing another "him" who preys on the unsuspecting innocent female.

Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray write about the potential dangers of speaking out in their *Signs* article entitled, "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" They suggest that representations of rape and rape survivor discourse have "paradoxically appeared to have empowering effects even while [they have] in some cases unwittingly facilitated the recuperation of dominant discourses" (263). This essay provides an excellent account of the process of normalizing the act of speaking out, through its analyses of rape discourse that occurs on both

television talk-shows and in the courtroom[2]. While Alcoff and Gray's work has been a primary influence on this present study, their essay does not theorize this process in terms of performance, nor does it provide adequate solutions to the problems it presents.

If current performances of rape discourse no longer transgress the system, then why do we keep re-telling the same story over and over again? Alcoff and Gray note this problem:

> When breaking the silence is taken up as the necessary route to recovery or as a political tactic, it becomes a coercive imperative on survivors to confess, to recount our assaults, to give details, and even to do so publicly. Our refusal to comply might then be read as weakness of will or reenacted as victimization. (281)

Through the inundation of survivor stories in various different media, the current tendency to equate silence automatically with shame could be a factor that causes women to engage in a type of victim rhetoric that further constitutes their oppression. And here we have a double bind that faces rape survivors: confess your detailed story, or live in shamed silence. Perform – or else.

This double bind that faces rape survivors can be better articulated if we examine it through the theory of an emerging performance stratum. Jon McKenzie, in his book, *Perform – or Else*, presents this "perform – or else" double bind as endemic of the entire social system. Using a *Forbes* magazine cover as his point of departure, McKenzie claims that as a society, we are moving from the Foucauldian notion of discipline to performance as the onto-hisotrico formation of power and knowledge, which he names "performance stratum" (18). Foucault's notion of discipline says that we moved from a society of sovereign power, in which a king enacted all punishments on the body, to a disciplinary power of institutions, wherein power worked on the person's mind and body, thus creating a self-disciplining subject. Now, however, McKenzie shows that we are moving towards a performing power, which works on a person's

[2] For more on the oppressive nature of legal discourse, see Susan Elhrich's book, *Representing Rape*. Here she articulates these similar problems within the language of the legal system that uphold the male/female perpetrator/victim binary performances of gender.

mind and body as well, but causes the person not only to self-discipline, but to perform that discipline, and perform it well. We moved from a public, sovereign policing force to disciplinary institutions instructing the subject to self-police in order to become a better person, to finally a performance stratum, which goads us to perform better. "'Perform – or else': this is the order word for the emerging performance stratum" (19).

Throughout his overarching theory of the performance stratum, McKenzie demonstrates its various levels and building blocks, all the while maintaining the order word, or catch phrase "perform – or else." I apply this double bind to the notion of victim rhetoric/confessional narrative surrounding rape survivors: perform your horrific story for our entertainment – or else get relegated to that place of shameful silence. A rape survivor's two choices: confess – or repress; get named – or get shamed. Perform – or else.

Visibility Politics

This project also throws into question the politics of visibility and invisibility specifically as questioned by Peggy Phelan. In her book, *Unmarked*, Phelan discusses the possible trap of visibility – recognizing that "the binary between the power of visibility and the impotency of invisibility is falsifying" (6). Visibility does not always lead to political efficacy and power, just as invisibility does not necessarily signify a weakened political stance. While this may not always be the case, Phelan argues that visibility can lead to a fetishization of the other. Mary Daly describes the process of fetishization of the female as a three part process, beginning with how a woman is "condensed into particular parts/organs of her mind/body. A woman thus shrunken/frozen is manipulable/manageable. Her fetishizers feel potency/power…. And exercise this negative and derivative potency to dis-place [sic] her energy further and further from her center, fragmenting her process, devouring her" (235). Speaking out can lead to voyeuristic

fetishism of the woman, specifically the violated woman. When women speak out against sexual violence, their voices and their bodies, pushed into the realm of the visible, become seen – become objects "to be looked at" rather than political agents. Phelan claims "representation is almost always on the side of the one who looks and almost never on the side of the one who is seen" (26). By suggesting that representation is always a one-sided venture, how do we escape the trap of visibility, while still retaining the political impulses that drive consciousness-raising groups and the power and value of "speaking out"?

When we begin considering the move into a society of performance, we can also see this move take us into the realm of spectacle, and here we may look to Guy Debord. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord notes, "the spectacle is the *chief product* of present-day society" (18). We can look at how this spectacle plays upon survivor speech. When considering a woman self-representing via survivor discourse, whether on television, in a book, or magazine article, we have to begin to take theories of commodity and spectacle into consideration, especially considering the negative potentialities of visibility politics outlined by Phelan. Mediated images of women engaging in confessional survivor discourse have turned into a spectacular commodity. By exposing the gory details of rape via confession, the woman's body becomes fetishized. The horror of the event become entertainment: "who can tell the most horrific rape story?" The result is mere spectacle. As Alcoff and Gray note, "the survivor speech becomes a media commodity that has a use value based on its sensationalism" (279). Rape discourse and representations of rape, including fictional representations, have become a highly profitable marketing ploy for our entertainment.

In an *Entertainment Weekly* article entitled "Femmes Fatal: Graphic Violence Against Women is Fall TV's Most Disturbing Trend," Jennifer Armstrong took the fall 2005 season to

task regarding the various portrayals of women being sexually assaulted. Many pilot shows portrayed women in various bondage scenarios wherein they were sexually assaulted or otherwise terrorized and tortured on primetime network television. This columnist pointed out that this imagery on primetime television suggests that this sort of criminal behavior worked on women's bodies has become normal viewing. Not only was Armstrong interested in interrogating these images, but she also noted that the majority of primetime viewers are women. She questioned the producers of these television shows by asking if violence against women is what they think women want to see. But according to Armstrong, we have become accustomed to seeing these images. She concludes her article with the idea that our society is so used to seeing women portrayed as targets of violence that we do not even question the images.

Many theorists have begun to articulate the problems with fictional representations of both rape as an event and the narrative of the rape. Rey Chow, in her article "Gender and Representation," discusses various problems with representation. She begins with aesthetic representation, which she views as being concerned with "mimeticism or resemblance; it is assumed that signs, which are fictive, should bear likeness to the 'reality' they represent" (39). This system of aesthetic representation is hierarchical, which positions women as passive others within the "normal" world of men. She states

> not only are women barred from taking up active positions to create the way men do…but in men's acts of representation women are often used as symbols for meanings men want to convey…Being the means with which men represent to themselves and to the world, women are made to remain, by and large, passive. (40)

Male constructions and representations of women's experience often place women in the passive role, showing the binary of men-active, women-passive, especially with regard to rape. Our representations of rape and rape discourse work to construct a normative representation of

women that upholds this binary and attempts to box women in by offering limited choices for a rape story. These possibilities for a story when a rape occurs are: (1) a woman is raped (and sometimes murdered) and her rape results in another male (a spouse, relative, or friend) carrying out a subsequent righteous spree of violence, (2) a woman is raped or almost raped, and she kills her attacker in revenge or self-defense, (3) a woman is raped and lives in shamed silence for the rest of her life. Whether a woman survived a date rape, stranger rape, gang rape, or incest, the rape in the fictional world will follow one of these possible trajectories. Let us consider each trajectory and examine how it reifies the normative ideology.

First we have the rape (and sometimes murder) that provokes a violent response from another male in a woman's life. These men exert violence upon the rapist, thus seeming to avenge the woman in question. This story very carefully asserts patriarchal ideology in that it depicts the typical male hero avenging the damsel in distress. Thus the rape of a woman acts as a justification for normative male representations. The website *Women in Refrigerators* lists various depictions of women in comics, all who have been either killed, maimed, raped, or de-powered in some way. These women are usually girlfriends or wives of male superheroes, used as a plot point to justify the male superheroes to then go on a justifiable killing spree. Here, as in the case of many fictionalized representations of violence against women, we see women serving as a shuttle between male acts of violence, again promoting a normative view of men as protectors and avengers, and women serving as those who require both protection and avenging.

The second rape story involves a woman defending or avenging herself. These stories are generally more rare, although they are gaining popularity and visibility. Many of these stories usually end badly, as in the case of the 1991 Ridley Scott movie *Thelma and Louise*, where the lead characters kill an attempted rapist. Unfortunately they both die in the end, after going on

their own law-breaking spree and being cornered by the police. They are not unlike many of these revenge-seeking women; they begin to take on male characteristics, often becoming violent and displaying macho characteristics. This representation depicts a male fantasy of women participating in heteronormative behavior that still winds up reifying the masculinist ideals of revenge. In "Wounded Attachments," Wendy Brown discusses the normative nature of revenge: "Revenge as a 'reaction,' a substitute for the capacity to act, produces identity as both bound to history that produced it and as a reproach to the present which embodies that history" (73). Seeking revenge for a rape puts the women in a position of retrograde by reacting only to the rape itself, rather than working towards and active goal with political ends.

The representation of a woman living with the silence commonly gets depicted as a dysfunctional woman with a dark past. In these representations, a flashback scene is given and we see how the rape affects the rest of the woman's life, or these women are minor characters who only seem to hint at past sexual abuse. The example that comes to mind is the character of Jenny in the movie Robert Zemeckis's 1994 movie *Forrest Gump*. The title character refers to her father as being "overly affectionate" and later we see a scene in which she, as an adult, throws rocks at her old house, which we understand as the site of the sexual abuse. This character is depicted as a highly dysfunctional woman who uses drugs, sleeps around, and eventually dies of autoimmune deficiency syndrome. Her sexual abuse is never overtly talked about; it is merely hinted at, leaving us with a reminder of the silence many women face today throughout the world.

While many scholarly essays and books consider how many of these depictions reinforce hegemonic ideologies regarding rape, there are fictional depictions of both the act of rape and the rape narrative that go against these normative reads. Tonya Horeck examines a few of these

exceptional fictional pieces, such as the rape scene in the movies *The Accused*, *Strange Days*, and *Boys Don't Cry* [3]. She provides excellent analyses of these films and specifically problematizes the concepts of looking and spectacle. Another notable fictional exception is the television series *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* which deals almost primarily with sex crimes, and various plot points dealing with sex, sexuality, and sexual violence. While some of the episodes deal with normative depictions of rape and the rape narratives, many outwardly problematize societal preconceived notions of rape. *Special Victims Unit* specifically depicts plotlines that include not only stranger and acquaintance rape, but male rape, rape of women of color, third world women, child molestation, and problematized conceptions of consent that refuse easy reconciliation with the audience. One particular episode, "Doubt" aired Tuesday November 23rd, 2004, focused on the narratives of both the rape survivor and the accused, giving both of the stories equal airtime. The accusation went to court, however, the verdict was left unsaid. The episode ended with the words, "we find the defendant…" The show not only refused any sort of closure, but also provided an online poll for viewers to vote on their verdict, thus putting the accountability onto the audience. I never looked at the outcome of the audience poll, for I also refused closure.

This overabundance of images and narratives of rape creates a sort of boomerang effect of rape discourse, which causes the voices of raped women to become homogenous through the representation of myths surrounding rape. The usual presentation of a "rape victim" albeit in popular, fictional entertainment as well as the mediated "true stories" of women's experiences is, more often than not, a representation of a "privileged" woman. The women most often represented are young (approximately ages 16-35), white, heterosexual, upper-middle class,

[3] See, *Public Rape*, chapter four for an excellent in depth examination of these films, as well as other fictional accounts of rape and the rape narrative.

American women, which suggests that the systematic victimization of women of color, lesbians, third world women, and women in war-torn countries is both invisible and unrepresentable – not to mention the under-reported and under-represented crime of male rape, which disappear completely within the system. These stories are silenced and replaced by the fetishization of the rape of white, American women, thus creating a further fallacious depiction of the complexity of sexual violence.

While it is very tempting to treat these inequities as solely antifeminist and misogynist sentiments, that is not the case. Feminism does not exist in a vacuum. Academic feminists and privileged white women are victimized; however, our hands are not clean. We still take part in the inequality that both allows for and silences the victimization of underprivileged women, women of color, third world women, and lesbians.

Another dangerous and frightening consequence of these normative representations is the fact that some theorists (specifically a new wave of conservative women, like Myrna Blyth) locate the problem of rape discourse *within* feminism. By locating the problem with feminism, the dominant discourse and dominant ideology never get questioned. It is the dominant heteronormative ideology that has caused the boomerang effect to take hold. To place the blame within feminism alone shifts responsibility and wags a finger in women's faces implying that we get what we deserve for becoming liberated.

Katie Roiphe, a self-proclaimed third wave feminist, refers to "victim feminism," and suggests that feminists name both themselves and women as "victims" through the overabundance of discourse and images of rape. Roiphe in particular coins the term "rape crisis feminism" in response to the victim rhetoric that bombards the media. The problem with her assessment does not stem from her attack of victim rhetoric and the fear it creates in women. She

critiques these points rather astutely. Where she falls short is in her articulation of the cause of the victim rhetoric, which she locates with feminists in general, stating that these feminists create "an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust" (92). Roiphe continues her admonishment of "victim feminism" by suggesting that feminists spin a new identity based on "passivity and victimhood" (172). Carolyn Sorisio calls this move "an inaccurately monolithic portrayal of what is a very complex, dynamic, and contentious field" suggesting that Roiphe "repeats the common pattern of replacing specific people and arguments with the all-encompassing category 'feminists'"(140) due to the fact that Roiphe does not name the feminist theorists she critiques.

Carolyn Sorisio continues her critique of "victim feminism" by suggesting that "the language of 'victimization,'…has been co-opted for a political agenda that goes far beyond gender. Critiques of 'victim feminism' appeal to the myth of rugged individualism…It obscures the true dynamics of power and absolves responsibility" (141). She also states that critics of "victim feminism," like Roiphe, "play all too easily into antifeminist hands" (141) and can become dangerous for feminists attempting to question the methods of oppression.

Instead of looking to feminists as the problem, we need to look to the media's appropriation of feminism's tactics. The media promotes the so-called "rape crisis" and this rhetoric of fear in order to control further the movement of women's bodies and to reify women's status as commodities within the capitalist system. Capitalism uses women's bodies and their horrific stories of rape as a means of control through representation and through fear. Roiphe notes this feeling of being controlled by the idea that women are always already the pre-victim of rape, but she points her finger at the feminist movement rather than at the dominant ideology. The fact that women are consistently represented as either victims or pre-victims stems from the ideology that seeks to control where women can move, and to prevent liberation. The

dominant heteronormative ideology tells women that liberation comes with victimization. Once women can move freely in the world, our bodies become transgressive sites that are in constant danger. Mary Russo, in *The Female Grotesque* delivers this point rather eloquently: "in the everyday indicative world, women and their bodies, certain bodies, in certain public framings, in certain public spaces, are always already transgressive – dangerous and in danger" (60). Because women have historically been sheltered from the outside world, our entrance into the world becomes a transgressive act that has to be contained through various means. The rhetoric of the "rape crisis" and the fetishization of the rape story seek to reify the system's normative control over women. By suggesting that liberated women put *themselves* in danger of victimization, the system promotes a normalizing "benevolent sexism" that suggests that women who want liberation must beware of the repercussions that arise from rejecting male protection.

The Scenario

Diana Taylor's term "scenario" can be useful in questioning our fascination with rape discourse. In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Taylor defines scenarios as "meaning making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes (28). Rather than privilege "narrative," which implies a written down or else otherwise recorded text, she prefers the term "scenario" to describe story paradigms that denote embodiment of social actors. The scenarios can have a multiplicity of forms at work, such as written, oral, or performance forms. Scenarios have no origin; they are never for the first time and their endings are subject to change. Taylor uses the example of "scenarios of discovery" that have appeared in the West for around five hundred years as the driving point of her book (28). I would like to use this term "scenario" to describe the history of our fascination with rape. This fascination is with a rape

scenario that has been consistently performed, told, or written about for centuries. It has no origin, and its end is not set.

The rape scenario takes many forms, and uses multiple modes of representation and multiple media. From the flood of graphic rape scenes in movies like *The Accused* and *Strange Days,* to *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit,* an entire television series devoted to exploring sex crimes, to the countless *Lifetime* movies that are loosely based around the "she said no" premise, to countless talk shows, news reports, and magazine articles that tell the story of a woman's victimization at the hands of a stranger, friend, lover, or relative, and to the literature of the past and present that specifically deal with rape scenes ,we have been saturated with the inevitable image of the raped female body. Throughout history, rape has been used as a political tool, a tool of war, and as a tool of violence wrought against women as a mode of control. Rape is not new; it is as old as civilization itself. What I am suggesting by calling the rape scenario "inevitable" is that due to the level of mediation in our lives today, we cannot help but come across images generated by the media every day. Such a flood of images has never before occurred in our history, thus, the overabundance or rape images we see, hear, and read about generates new effects on society and women. Rape has become inevitable in the sense that our imaginary cannot escape both the realities and fictions surrounding rape.

Yet we can see a possible solution to the rape scenario that lies in another implicit characteristic of the scenario: it is not a script; rather it is a sketch or outline of the plot. Because of this non-scripted nature of the scenario, "the body in a scenario…has space to maneuver" (55). This means that the bodies of women in the rape scenario have the possibility to escape the bonds of this story. "The irreconcilable friction between social actors and the roles allows for degrees of critical detachment and cultural agency. The scenario…can be and often has been

subverted from within" (29). Here we come to our possible solution: subvert from within the scenario. The rape scenario has invoked many problematic representations that normalize rape and recuperate dominant discourses. It may be possible to change the scenario from within and subvert the normative discursive practices surrounding our representations of rape.

I believe another possible solution that is tied to the scenario lies in Peggy Phelan's concept of "the generative possibilities of disappearance" (27), which actively attempts to work through a strategic invisibility as a means for a greater political power. This invisibility is her attempt at rethinking the false binary that exists between visibility and invisibility, both of which are inherently tied together. Phelan also states that, "performance…can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other *as* the Same is not assured" (3, original emphasis). By viewing the performance of a scenario of rape discourse, we can see that there is not an assured binary within this story any longer. The flexible notion of the scenario and the politics of invisibility can work towards subversion and political power.

In order to do this, we need to make the move away from identifying ourselves as rape victims, and move towards calling for an end to rape. Engaging in confessional discourse diminishes our political power, because the focus remains on the ontological status as passive victims rather than on an active refusing to become victimized. Wendy Brown asks a similar question with regard to identity politics that can be applied here:

> What if we sought to supplant the language of "I am" – with its defensive closure on identity, its insistence on the fixity of position, its equation of social with moral positioning – with the language of "I want this for us"? (75)

Her move to "I want this for us" puts women in the active position with a political end. When we move out of the "I am," we move from categorizing ourselves as a certain form to a

collective working towards the long-term goal of ending rape. If we begin moving within the rape scenario that seeks to make a commodity out of our bodies, we can begin to subvert from within. We can create performances and representations that begin to transgress normative boundaries by refusing the sentiment of the spectacle of rape and attempting to work towards a goal of change, rather than focusing on the current ontological status of rape victim.

The Artifacts

The ultimate aim of this project is to examine in particular how non-fictional performances of the rape story can be re-formulated in a transgressive manner. Problems are inherent in this project, like the always-present possibility of cooptation. I limit my research to include instances of non-fictional self-representation, looking at two particular artifacts/events as a means to theorize a "minor performance with transgressive possibilities." John McKenzie distinguishes between two types of performances: major and minor. Major performances work within structures or systems to keep the normative forces of society in control, while minor performances work within and against major performances. "The direction [minor performances] take it iterant, flighty…Forms, structures, and systems disintegrate, normative forces mutate" (225-226). However, problems have presented themselves within these artifacts that cannot be ignored, and they point toward far-reaching problems that specifically deal with visibility politics and the problems of representation in general. The ultimate question is: can a minor performance that subverts the rape scenario exist without becoming immediately reappropriated?

In Chapter Two, I examine a Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TASSA) commercial and the subsequent news stories surrounding the commercial's airing. In the commercial, a young woman named Bridget Kelly returns to the field in which she was raped, and identifies herself as a survivor. After the airing of the commercial, the rape crisis hotline in

Texas received a record number of calls from survivors looking for a place to talk about their experiences. Following the commercial, Bridget Kelly appeared on numerous news shows, including *CBS News, Good Morning America,* and *ABC Primetime Live,* as well as in an interview published in *Glamour* magazine. As I examine the original commercial and the subsequent contexts of Kelly's narrative, I am especially interested in how the TASSA commercial broke the mold of typical rape stories. This young woman did not give the typical performance of spectaularized rape victim. She inverted the "silence = shame" equation by merely stating her experience matter-of-factly. However, what I am most interested in are the reports on her story, both of which reappropriated her experience in order to fit with the normative representations of rape survivor discourse. The representations of the commercial are especially worth critiquing because here is where we see survivor discourse become problematic. Is it our representations of rape that signal a turn to the normative? Or is the act of speaking out always already normative simply because the discourse remains within the masculine construct of language? Much research exists in the realm of rape, survivor discourse, and representation, including some research in normative trends within rape discourse. I believe that through a rhetorical criticism of the commercial and its representations we can see an example of transgressive rape discourse and how it can become appropriated through media spectacle. Ultimately I am interested in how these artifacts speak to feminist theory and whether or not it is inevitable that survivor discourse will be reappropriated within the normative discursive sphere.

Chapter Three explores the Clothesline Project phenomenon and its various transgressive potentials. Drawing from Carole Blair's article on the Vietnam War Memorial, I characterize the Clothesline Project as a type of postmodern memorial. The idea of the project is to let each woman tell her story using words and/or artwork to decorate her shirt. Once finished, she would

hang her shirt on the publicly displayed clothesline. This very action serves many purposes. It acts as an educational tool for those who come to view the clothesline; it becomes a healing tool for anyone who make a shirt - by hanging the shirt on the line, survivors, friends and family can literally turn their back on some of that pain of their experience and walk away; finally it allows those who still suffer in silence to understand that they are not alone. Participants can choose to draw a picture, write a story, or sign their name on the shirt; whatever they feel comfortable sharing. These clothes do not tell a graphic story of each woman's experience. The shirt simply hangs on a clothesline. This performance leaves something tangible behind, something the observers can see, touch, and smell. Inspired by the AIDS quilt project, the Clothesline Project has toured around the country, and many places have started up their own Clothesline Project. This memorial is not linear, it features only inanimate objects, and it attempts to resignify silence, by using silence as its main performance tool.

The Clothesline Project remains one of the only attempts at erecting any sort of memorial towards rape, possibly due to the problems associated with representing rape. I will argue that this type of representation can be a transgressive attempt not only to speak out about rape, but also to refuse the spectacle of both personal narrative and dominant fictional representations.

I am specifically choosing to limit this project to non-fictional performances of the rape narrative, due in part, to the fact that there is already extensive literature dealing with fictional representations of rape scenes and the telling of a rape after the fact.[4] I have chosen these two particular performance artifacts because of their stakes in survivor speech. The first artifact and its subsequent representations speak to an instance of subversion that was appropriated back into the system of dominant discourses. The second artifact, the Clothesline Project, had a great store

[4] See Horeck's *Public Rape*, Cuklanz's *Rape on Prime Time*, and Higgins and Silver's *Rape and Representation* for examples of studies done on rape in literature, television, and film.

of subversive potential that refuses co-optation. By looking at the similarities and differences between these two artifacts, we can begin to see how a scenario of political and tactical invisibility may be a greater tool in creating performances of transgressive survivor discourse than merely "speaking out." In sum, I argue that there are methods for performing rape narratives that avoid the problems with representation I have described above.

The final chapter will consider a possible mad, or fragmented concept of Diana Taylor's scenario for rape discourse. By describing my own attempt at a fragmented performance of feminism, I will attempt to draw parallels between the fragmentation of identity and the possible libratory potentials inherent in this fragmentation of the rape narrative/scenario.

Feminists actively need to fight representations of our experiences that cause women's voices to be made homogenous. We have just seen how representations can create false pictures of women's experience as well as cause women to take responsibility for their victimization via confessional discourse. We need to ask ourselves who benefits from these representations and correctly point the finger at the dominant patriarchal system rather than place the blame in the laps of fellow feminists. We need to work to break through the capitalist agenda that generates large profits from the appropriation of our voices and bodies. And ultimately, we as academic feminists need to begin this project in a place that does not further objectify and silence the experiences of other women, by subsuming all victimization under one umbrella. We also cannot forget our status as women, how society views us as being able to be victimized, and as well we need to continue the project of questioning sex and gender binaries. I look to Wendy Brown for help in beginning this project:

> For if I am right about the problematic of pain installed at the heart of many contemporary contradictory demands for political recognition, all that such pain may long for – more than revenge – is the chance to be heard into a certain release, recognized into self-overcoming, incited into

> possibilities for triumphing over, and hence losing, itself. Our challenge, then, would be to configure a radically democratic political culture that can sustain such a project in its midst without being overtaken by it, a challenge that includes guarding against abetting the steady slide of political into therapeutic discourse, even as we acknowledge the elements of suffering and healing we might be negotiating. (75)

Women's pain needs to be both registered and recognized, however, we cannot let our political goals become consumed with the discourse of identity. Where Deborah L. Siegel strives "to reclaim the term 'victim'" (76) I would argue that the more appropriate term would be "victimization." To view rape as a systematic victimization of women, rather than naming ourselves as victims would be, as Siegel suggests, "to give name to the injustices that continue to oppress is to adamantly refuse victim status" (76). By refusing victim status, we can begin making that move from "I am" to "I want this for us," because we refuse to let "victim" becoming a marker of our identity that shuts out all other possibilities. We need to use the term "victimization" as a political act, ripe with action, rather than as a passive construct. We must actively fight spectacular representations of rape that commodify both our bodies and our experiences, and thus subvert from within the rape scenario. We also need to fight the tendency to promote women as being unrepresentable and try harder to open up spaces that allow for the abusive experiences of women of color, lesbians, and third world women to be heard in a way that does not fetishized their bodies. Instead, we should focus our energies towards problematizing representation itself, and working towards a political subversion of such representations, in order to generate modes of resistance. While the exact face of this subverted scenario is elusive, I do believe that we imagine ways to begin this project.

CHAPTER 2

SPEAKING OUT ON HER OWN TERMS

The telling of a rape narrative may offer a means to transgress societal norms, or, conversely, it can become a means for the dominant discourses to recuperate survivor discourse as normative. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how one particular rape narrative artifact, a commercial for Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), and the multiple media contexts of its representation after its airing complicate the discursive practices surrounding the rape narrative. I will start this project by examining the TAASA commercial itself, and how it functions within the context of rape discourse. I will then look at the various news shows that picked up the story and their role in the process of speaking out. Also, I will examine another commercial for the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LFASA) that further complicates the concepts and ideas of speaking out. Throughout my analysis, I will also investigate the existing research on rape discourse in order to determine both the benefits and possible dangers of speaking out in these various contexts. Finally, I would like to examine what I see as a double bind facing rape survivors: the push to tell their story or else remain silent and thus, in shame. Using John McKenzie's concept of "perform—or else" discussed in Chapter One to illuminate my claims, I will show that this double bind is a false binary given to rape survivors to keep rape discourse both normalized and contained.

Speak Up, Speak Out

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault began their "Speak Up, Speak Out" campaign as a means to promote awareness of sexual assault in Texas. One of its major tactics was to join up with survivors of sexual assault and promote their personal stories as a means to help other survivors begin the process of healing. In April of 2003, the following commercial

aired, and only hours after its airing, the rape crisis hotline received a record number of incoming calls from survivors:

A young woman stands in a field looking at the camera:

> "My name is Bridget. I was raped and shot in this field. I would give anything for it not to have happened, but it has and that's my reality. The first step of becoming a survivor is to talk about it. You find out that there's this little secret club that you never wanted to be a part of, but once you're there, you're glad that you're not alone." (www.taasa.org)

The camera slowly pans away, revealing a toll-free number, (800) 656-HOPE, for a national sexual assault hotline and the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's website, www.taasa.org. Kelly is dressed in a purple turtleneck, and is only shown in a mid-shot from the waist up or in a close-up of her face. The commercial aired in February of 2003, eight months after Bridget Kelly's attack in June of 2002.

Following the airing, news shows began to pick up the commercial during the next few months, and soon they were picking up this young woman's story as well. *CBS News*, *ABC Primetime live*, *Good Morning America*, and *Glamour* magazine all ran her story: from a description of her ordeal, how she survived, the news articles published by her journalist father, and finally, to the airing of this commercial and her subsequent work as a spokeswoman for TAASA. I am interested in how this commercial, as well as the media representations surrounding it, work to complicate our ideas of survivor discourse. I believe that through these artifacts, we can glean insight into the discourse surrounding rape, the overall construction of gender, and the construction of victimhood put forth by both the commercial and the media representations surrounding the artifact.

Before the airing of this commercial, Bridget Kelly's name was already out publicly in newspapers. She was not only raped, but shot and left for dead. Her story made news headlines,

due to her unlikely survival. While still in the hospital, Kelly told her father that the word "rape" could be used in the reports about her story. She already felt no shame about her experience, asking why it was more shameful to have been raped rather than just shot. The word "rape" was finally used, not only because of her insistence, but because her father worked for a newspaper, *The Omaha (Nebraksa) World-Herald*. Her father complied with his daughter's wishes, discussing his daughter's rape openly in his columns, pleading for more openness about rape. Her honesty about her experience drew the TAASA organization to her story and led her to be one of the spokeswomen of their "Speak Up, Speak Out" campaign.

Starting with a construction of victimhood, the commercial attempts a transgressive reading of the status of women as victims. The commercial actually never utilizes the word "victim," and opts instead to use the word "survivor." Rather than suggesting confession and victimhood, the commercial seeks counseling and healing. By keeping the performance simple, and recontextualizing a space of violence, this commercial co-opted the discourse of victimhood. There was no crying confessional and no detailed story, but neither was there silence. Kelly showed her face on public television and stated what happened. Also, the commercial was shot in the same field where Kelly was raped. She purposefully returned to that location as a means to transform the space, and thus to attempt a transgressive read of the status of women as victims.

In speaking out from the space of the field, Bridget Kelly attempted to resignify the space itself. Judith Butler, in *Excitable Speech*, offers a way to transgress the trappings and violence of language itself. Although, as stated earlier in Chapter One, naming can constitute the body in abjection, there is room for transgression through language. Resignification can allow for resistance. Bridget Kelly resignified a space in which that speech can be uttered by performing her commercial in the same field where she was raped. She stands there, in the space,

taking to the camera. What was once an empty space became a traumatic, dangerous space for Kelly. By filming the commercial there, she transformed it yet again into a different space, a space of rectification. In *Shadowed Ground*, Kenneth E. Foote writes about the actual physical sites of violence in the American landscape. He observes patterns in the sites of violence and how they are remembered. One such pattern, rectification, works in the case of this artifact. "Rectification involves removing the signs of violence and tragedy and returning a site to use, implying not lasting positive or negative meaning" (8). I think rectification works in this example because there is no official marking on the field itself; rather the field was marked through a mediated performance. While rectification usually denotes some sort of permanent marking of a space, such as a plaque or physical memorial, we cannot disregard a mediated memorial in this case. The commercial itself becomes a permanent memorial, albeit one that is ephemeral in nature.

While such performance critics as Peggy Phelan would argue that the mediated nature of the commercial denies the ephemerality offered with live performance, I would suggest that this commercial defies this liveness/mediated binary. Philip Auslander, in his book *Liveness*, argues that the delineation between live and mediated texts is a "reductive binary opposition of the live and the mediatized" (3). The "liveness" of this commercial comes in Bridget Kelly's return to the field: for her, the *filming* was probably a very live and charged event. The reproduction of the commercial does not negate the initial "liveness" of the performance; simply because the live event has come and gone does not negate the event of her initial return to the field. Auslander further argues that "both live performance and the performance of mediatization are predicated on disappearance" (45). Once the camera crew and Bridget Kelly left the field, their memorial

performance disappeared. While there is a mediatized memorial and rectification recorded, there remains no permanent, physical memorial at the site of the violence.

The field itself did not undergo any sort of transformation; no attempt to construct a memorial regarding the violence of rape was made. Rectification is the most common outcome according to Foote, and it implies that the site gains temporary notice. Here we have a commercial filmed at the site of violence, giving a temporary notoriety to the place and act itself. This rectification occurred through a performative memorial. The commercial was made a year after the incident and ran for a few months, but still brought forth some sort of closure for Bridget and her family.

When we think about places that usually get such recognition, we usually think that an extremely violent act or tragic accident must happen at the site for it to be recognized. The examples Foote gives are such tragedies as massive fires, crashes, sites of mass murder, or the homes of serial killers. Foote does not provide one example of rape, unless it was in conjunction with a serial murder. Is the implication that rape alone is not important enough to warrant a mark in our landscape? Or is it the fact that it happens too often to even conceive of trying to mark the sites where it happens? Or is it finally that rape happens everywhere, public and private? I think the answer lies in all three. Bridget Kelly's case is an exceptional one. Her mark on the landscape of violence is an ephemeral one: a videotaped, mediated performance. Although she has her mark, it remains intangible; no marks of permanence can be found anywhere in the field.

She gives a simple message to rape survivors, one that suggests discourse as a means of healing. This urge to talk about the experience of rape is not in itself an urge towards confession, therapy, or publicly speaking out, rather it is simply an urge to talk. The specificity of when or where to talk is not given: this type of speech can occur to an intimate friend or family member,

to an anonymous person at a hotline, or the public at large, if needed. Engaging in discourse about rape experiences can be a very powerful step in the direction of finding comfort; however, the pull for rape survivors to *perform* their story, to tell it on a large scale to a public audience is where the problems with survivor discourse lie.

The artifact of her performance shows the precarious position survivor speech finds itself it. What prompted her to perform? Did she feel the coercion to engage in a publicly shared therapeutic rhetoric? Was she trying to help other women reduce the stigma and shame of rape by placing herself in a position of empowerment? The answer she would give is that she went public "not to pressure others to do the same, but to show other survivors they are not alone" (Smith, *CBS News)*. She does not suggest that everyone speak out, just that the option is available. Bridget Kelly felt comfortable and safe enough to speak out, and she did so on her own terms, for she stated right after her rape that reporters could use both her name and that uncomfortable word. Her case is unique, and she wished to encourage other women to find a comfortable way to deal with their experiences as well.

I believe that Bridget Kelly's TAASA commercial attempted a transgressive performance, that particularly dealt with breaking the silence and shame that still surrounds rape, even now in the twenty-first century. Bridget Kelly's commercial attempted to subvert her rape scenario from within the system: she used a commercial as her platform. By utilizing a commercial, she reappropriated the medium of capitalism and spectacle into a forum for consciousness-raising. The medium of commercial could be said to be a major performance, defined by John McKenzie as performances that "occur within structures or systems, where they are directed by determinable goals, such as the survival of the system" (225). Since the commercial as a form is generally a vehicle for marketing; it can be said that commercials are

major performances that seek to uphold the survival of capitalism. Kelly's use of the medium as a means of transforming a space of violence, and producing an ephemeral memorial, I think, denotes an attempt at a minor performance. McKenzie describes the effects of minor performances as ways that "forms, structures, and systems disintegrate, [and] normative forces mutate" (226). The normative forces of the commercial as a form of marketing mutates into a means of subversion, a way of turning the confessional nature of rape discourse on its head, thus offering a performance of rape discourse that subverts the typical speaking out scenario. She worked within and against the system of mediatization, thus creating a minor performance that attempts to subvert the rape scenario discussed in Chapter One.

Kelly's commercial, while using the form of a television commercial, sought to work against the mode of therapeutic discourse by refusing to give us the whole story. David Terry's unpublished thesis discusses the confessional nature of human beings, suggesting that "we create and use a complicated network of both utterances and silences in strategic relation with each other…To be silent on any given subject, one must be aware of it and choose not to discuss it" (58). Bridget Kelly only left us with part of the story, using a similarly strategic network of silence and utterance. In this manner, the commercial functioned as an enthymeme, allowing us to provide our own constructions of her experience. Although encompassed among an overabundance of survivor discourse perpetuated by the media, this commercial serves as a counterpoint, simply because Kelly managed to speak out on her own terms. She fought for the word "rape" to be used in her father's columns, and she made a conscious effort to return to the very same spot where she was raped in order to film the commercial. Her act of resignification leaves room for a transgressive approach to rape discourse.

However, anything that is transgressive can, and usually is, recuperated by dominant discourses in order to remain contained and controlled. When the newscasts begin to take up Kelly's story, they begin to pull the discourse toward a narrative of Kelly's personal experience, using probing questions from the interviewers in order to turn trauma into a spectacle.

"Survivor Faces Rape Without Shame"

While the commercial itself did not participate in the excess of the normative survivor discourse, the media stories that eventually took the reins did. The problems begin when the message and attempt to help rape survivors heal become subsumed by the details of the personal narrative that seek to make a spectacle out of the experience.

While it initially avoided the trap of personal narrative, the news shows seemed to require Kelly to tell her story to the public. Her story aired on various news shows including a report from *ABC Primetime Live* and *CBS News*. I will examine these two news shows in chronological order, starting with the *ABC Primetime Live* report.

The *ABC Primetime Live* report, which aired in March of 2004, begins with her story of the rape itself, moving though the events chronologically. The broadcast includes black and white simulations of someone kicking in a door, the sound of gunshots, and a simulation of someone running in first person camera perspectives. These various additions to the interview suggest flashbacks, as if the audience can gain access to the raw experience of Kelly's trauma in order to heighten the entertainment value of the story. Charles Gibson interviews her personally and retells how she survived being raped, and shot numerous times. This interview shifts her story through the camera angles employed in order to fetishize Kelly as an object. In the TAASA commercial, there were no tears, merely a simple statement of previous trauma. However, in the interviews she gave the various new programs, the details were told. The camera zoomed in on

her face, and on her tears, almost coercing her story and her emotions. Gibson also interviewed the man who found her and notified the police, the policewoman who worked her case, and Kelly's father. As they move through her story, we also hear of her father and his attempt to write his daughter's whole story. At first the newspaper where he worked, *Omaha (Nebraska) World Herald*, would not allow him to include the word "rape" in his article. Mike Kelly's original story, "Family Tragedy Becomes a Miracle," ran with only the information that Bridget had been shot and left for dead. After a month of fighting to include the word "rape," Mike Kelly was allowed to print the story, entitled, "A Plea for More Openness About Rape," with the first words of the article: "Now you don't have to read between the lines and wonder: My daughter was raped." He notes his daughter's wishes to use the word "rape" in the article and quotes her as saying, "Why is it more shameful to be a rape victim than a gunshot victim?"

Kelly's newspaper article goes against the long-standing tradition for newspapers not to print the name of rape survivors. According to Suzzette Hackney, the business of not revealing the names of survivors has been in place since the late 1970s. Although this tradition is widely accepted, it is also widely debated. Bridget Kelly's story is unusual, because it was her father who printed her name with her permission. Her story may not have run in the *Omaha (Nebraska) World Herald* had her father not worked there and insisted on telling his daughter's full story.

Following this simple newspaper report, Bridget Kelly received an outpouring of letters and cards from other survivors. Due to the immense response, she decided to make the commercial discussed above as a public service announcement. The news show concludes with a brief shot of the commercial, and her continued work as a spokeswoman sharing her message that surviving rape should not be a shameful experience.

The *ABC Primetime Live* report attempts to demonstrate the liberating effects of speaking out. This report particularly focuses on her survival and her subsequent activist work to bring more openness about the subject of rape. What I find telling about this particular report is that it focuses on what they call the "secret" of rape, and how no one usually talks about it. I find myself torn here – for this report seems to suggest that women's voices are not heard with regard to rape, although there is an abundance of representations of rape, from news reports and magazine articles focusing on the story, to talk shows that depict sensational stories of women dealing with sexual violence.[5] So why is this story packaged as a unique, sensational story of breaking the silence, considering that speaking out has been around for decades? I believe that it is in part due to Kelly's insistence that her story should not remain a secret, and how she found that telling her story was a liberating experience for her. She also marked her narrative in her way – the story was told on her own terms: she first said that "rape" could be used in her story, and she returned to the field where to rape took place to film the commercial. She told her story boldly on this particular news show, and the bulk of the show focused on her story of survival and retelling.

While *ABC Primetime Live* depicts many liberating aspects of Kelly's story, it still contributes toward a normalizing read of her story. For one, it depicts her story as unusual, one that defies custom because she chose to come forward, completely ignoring the history of speaking out within the women's movement. While the overall read of this story shows a liberating experience for a woman sharing her story, this liberating experience does not occur with everyone. The news show ends on a hopeful note, with Kelly actively participating in transgressive discourse that attempts to reach out to other women, via traveling and giving talks

[5] For a detailed look at how the talk show format has created a spectacle out of the rape story that recuperates dominant discourses surrounding rape, see Alcoff and Gray.

at schools in order to raise awareness among young people. Regardless of these positive aspects of this report, we must recognize that speaking out is not always a libratory practice. Not only does the news show ignore the history of speaking out, it also tacitly suggests that publicly speaking out is the most desirable mode of healing that should occur.

A complicating move occurs when the *CBS News* report runs her story. This report contributes more heavily to a normalizing discourse, especially when it compares Bridget Kelly's story to the news flurry surrounding the Kobe Bryant rape trial. The news show, which aired on November 24, 2003, makes the link in the very first line of the report. The case of Bryant, a well-known professional basketball player accused of rape in June of 2003 (only a few months after the February airing of the TAASA commercial) created a storm of news reports that not only questioned his guilt or innocence, but also began to bring up general questions regarding the privacy of the accuser. Various news reports questioned the validity of the accusation, and rumors regarding not only the identity, but also the sexual history of the accuser began to surface. At the time of the *CBS News* report featuring Bridget Kelly, the Bryant case, which lasted until the following summer, was well underway. The Bryant case became a matter of extreme interest to the nation as issues concerning the sexual history of an accuser gained national attention. Many courts began to question the validity of rape cases that did not question a woman's sexual history, and the defense attorney made requests to release Bryant's accuser's medical records to the court as well as to question her sexual history as part of the trial. By the end of July, Bryant's accuser had been publicly named on the Internet, in various newspapers, and over the radio. The court case as well as the media battle regarding the privacy lasted well into the following year, coming to an end when the accuser dropped the case in September of 2004.

At the same time as women's privacy issues regarding rape begin to resurface, the news media begins to pick up the story of Bridget Kelly, a rape survivor who identifies herself rather than the perpetrator.[6] I believe that the sudden interest in her story at the same time as women's privacy issues are under fire works to perpetuate the normative judgment of rape discourse. By comparing Kelly's story to the controversy surrounding the Bryant case, the news media seem to position Kelly as the alternative to rape privacy. Showing a rape survivor who specifically chooses to name herself publicly as a survivor suggests that other rape survivors should seek identification. What the news story does not mention is that the accuser in Bryant's case was identified against her wishes by others: her consent was ignored. The news show featuring Kelly's story not only makes a fetish out of her story, but also posits her actions as the preferred way of dealing with rape discourse, i.e. suggesting that in order to achieve healing, a rape survivor is pulled to share her story publicly and identify herself as a rape survivor. The *CBS News* report does not tell the details surrounding Kelly's subsequent work as a spokeswoman for rape consciousness-raising; rather it ends the report with a question of identification and naming.

A further complication with regard to survivor speech comes in the differences between the Kelly and Bryant cases. Bridget Kelly survived a violent stranger rape and attempted murder, whereas the Kobe Bryant case dealt with date rape.[7] While the TAASA commercial does not go into the details of her story, the idea that this was a very violent experience are imbedded within the commercial. Kelly herself states that she was raped and shot in the field, and the news reports share her story and identify this as a stranger rape. Generally speaking, stranger rape is usually considered the most believable account of rape discourse. In Kelly's story, told in detail in the

[6] Kelly specifically chose not to identify her attacker because she did not want him to gain "fame and notoriety" for the attack. ("Bridget Kelly, Rape Survivor." *Primetime Live*. ABC. WBRZ Baton Rouge. 4 March 2004.)

[7] Due to the news controversy surrounding the forceful outing of Bryant's accuser, I am specifically choosing to not name the woman, and thus, not to participate in the identification that occurred against her will.

two news reports, there is never a question regarding her consent: a man kicked in her door, robbed, raped, and shot her. The Bryant case, on the other hand, is consistently reported as an alleged rape, questioning whether a rape even occurred. This move complicates the "Speak Up, Speak Out" campaign, considering that Bridget Kelly felt safe enough to speak out about a stranger rape. The complexity surrounding date or acquaintance rape causes the move to engage in rape discourse to become more problematic. Many survivors of date or acquaintance rape never even report the crime, for various reasons, one of which is that they themselves question the believability of their experiences. The Bryant case is one example of an alleged date rape with many people adamantly refusing to believe the accuser. The double bind of "perform –or else," seems to have particularly damaging effects with regard to believability on the part of the accuser. Specifically in the Bryant case, the accuser's name was publicly shared, and her act of speaking out led to a dangerous situation for her, due to the number of death threats she received as a result of her accusation. When she did not perform publicly, she was ousted as a liar and false accuser, and then further victimized by the flood of discourse questioning her experience. When society questions the experience of women's sexual assault, speaking out may not be the best tactic for subversion.

The news broadcasts began a shift from a political message seeking to dispel rumors of shame to a spectacle of Kelly's story. Not only did they air the commercial for a wider audience, but told they the story of her rape, including all of the gory details, complete with a black and white simulation of some images. Kelly shifts from being in a subject position to being the object of a media spectacle, wherein normative discourse takes over in an attempt to tell a sensational story.

Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble,* also articulates this point: "discourse becomes oppressive when it requires the speaking subject, in order to speak, participate in the very terms of that oppression" (147). Here the speaking subject (the rape survivor) must speak in a confessional mode of discourse that puts her experience and body on display. Bridget Kelly's story then becomes a spectacle to be consumed by the television audience of America, instead of a subject speaking for political change.

Rape in Crisis

In the months following Hurricane Katrina, a commercial similar to the TAASA ad appeared on television throughout Louisiana. It featured Charmaine Neville, sister to the singing group the Neville Brothers, speaking out about her experience during the initial days following the hurricane for the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LAFSA). The commercial features a mid-shot of Neville, wearing a modest long sleeved shirt, seated in a nicely painted room, with a plant placed behind her. She looks directly at the camera and addresses her audience:

> "Hi, my name is Charmaine Neville. I was in New Orleans at a school after Hurricane Katrina, and I was raped. I know that many other women were raped and are afraid to talk about it. You know you don't have to be afraid. Call 1-800-656-HOPE. Find the rape crisis center in your area. It's free and it's confidential. You don't have to do through this alone, and you didn't deserve what happened to you – it's not your fault. Call the number now. Get someone to talk to." (www.lafsa.org)

The commercial fades out on Neville and fades up on ads for Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LAFSA), Rape, Abuse, and Incest Nation Network (RAINN), National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), and the Relief Fund for Sexual Assault Victims.

This commercial has some striking similarities to Bridget Kelly's commercial appearance. For one, Neville speaks out about her rape during the hurricane, and secondly, she

also chooses to use the word “survivor” rather that “victim.” The staging of the commercials is also similar: it features a mid-shot of both women looking directly at the camera and stating their message. While these commercials both include women speaking out as a means to break the silence surrounding their experiences, there remain some important differences between these two commercials. For one, Neville does not return to the site of the rape, as did Bridget Kelly. This could be due to the fact that the Neville’s rape took place in New Orleans, and accessibility could have been limited by the rebuilding project.

Another difference is that there was not a similar news flurry following the Charmaine Neville commercial. While multiple news reports are found online regarding Neville’s experience, there is no national news story such as *ABC Primetime Live, Dateline,* or other primetime spots that feature Neville’s story. Charmaine Neville already existed as a popular singer/songwriter in New Orleans, so why was there a noticeable lack of media attention surrounding her experience? From here I can only speculate, but I believe that not only race, but also the politics surrounding the governmental debacle of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina contribute to the lack of media representation. The lack of news with regard to Neville’s story could be an instance of denial on the part of the public. Immediately following the hurricane, there was a noticeable and egregious lack of rescue efforts from the federal government. Neville was attacked in those days following the hurricane, while she and many other citizens of New Orleans were waiting for aid. That her attack happened during a shameful response from the federal government may be a reason why a national news source has not run her story. CNN and Anderson Cooper were on site during the days following Katrina, and although they have reported about the numerous rapes that were reported during that time, an account of Neville’s story and the making of her commercial has not surfaced.

Another possible for the lack of media attention is that the commercial for the Louisiana sexual assault hotline is not the first instance of Charmaine Neville publicly speaking out about her ordeal during the days of Hurricane Katrina. Immediately following her rescue, Neville appeared on the local news giving an interview with Archbishop Alfred Hughes in the newsroom of WAFB, the Baton Rouge CBS affiliate, in which she details her account of the experience. She does not describe her own rape, but her story of survival during the hurricane. This interview is a raw event: emotional and harrowing. She describes seeing alligators in the water surrounding her location on a rooftop of a school in the Ninth Ward. She states that many women were raped and tells of her experience of driving a stolen bus filled with people to safety. Although the event was seen as a real-life reaction to her experience, many people began to question the validity of Neville's story. The media began speculating that she was exaggerating or just flat out lying due to the spectacular nature of this narrative. Many of the details in her story have been questioned or ridiculed by the media and individuals on the Internet. A few months later, the LAFSA commercial aired around Louisiana, and can now be found on the LAFSA website (www.lafsa.org).

Another important difference between these commercials is the race of the two women: Bridget Kelly is a Caucasian woman, while Charmaine Neville is an African American woman. Typically, as discussed in Chapter One, the "rape victim" with the most representation is the white, heterosexual, upper-class woman who becomes a victim of stranger rape. Bridget Kelly exemplifies that representation. Charmaine Neville, on the other hand, does not. She is an African American woman who was raped during a national crisis, and whose experience is underrepresented in the mainstream media. Tonya Horeck, in *Public Rape*, analyses the Big Dan's rape case of 1984 and the filmic representation of that story, *The Accused*. She notes that

the major difference between the real-life event and the representation involves the erasure of the issue of race. The woman in the Big Dan's rape case and the accused rapists were of Portuguese decent, while Caucasian actors portrayed both the rapists and the rape victim in the film.

Horeck discusses how the erasure of race in the movie version was the Hollywood studio's attempt to construct the story as a universal story of women's victimization. I believe that the media attention given to Bridget Kelly works in a similar way, as a means of showing her story as a universal experience of rape. Charmaine Neville's experience, however, does not conform to this universality. For one, she is not constructed as the universal rape victim, as shown in many representations of rape. Secondly, her experience occurred during a very spectacular situation: a massive natural disaster and extremely deficient recovery efforts. A possible explanation for both the lack of coverage and the tacit suggestion of untruthfulness on the part of Charmaine Neville is that her experience butts up against the universal construction of victimization. If we cannot contain survivor speech within the context of dominant discourses or even the universal construction of victimization, then we must push it towards the margins, by either silencing it or questioning its validity. In the case of Charmaine Neville, the dominant discourses recategorized her experience: "if survivor speech is not silenced before it is uttered, it is categorized within the mad, the untrue, or the incredible" (Alcoff and Gray 267). This construction of Neville's story as incredible suggests a readiness to forget about the tragedies and atrocities that occur in a crisis.

Transgression or Recuperation?

These two commercials attempted a minor performance that contains subversive potential. However, the commercials are both recuperated into dominant discourses; the TAASA commercial via spectacle and the LAFSA commercial via dismissal. What the Bridget Kelly

commercial and the subsequent news reports tell us is that the personal can be used to counteract the political, via spectacle. Focusing solely on individual stories of victimization keeps rape survivor discourse in the realm of the normative, upholding the hegemonic constructions that portray women as passive victims and men as active aggressors. “As a result, the dominant discourse has shifted its emphasis from strategies of silencing to the development of strategies of recuperation” (Alcoff and Gray 268). The Charmaine Neville commercial while not co-opted into the realm of spectacle like the Bridget Kelly commercial, was recuperated by the questions of her validity and truthfulness. She is an African American woman whose story takes place during a crisis, and her experience is met with skepticism. Yet, she speaks out publicly despite the dominant discourses construction of her as mad or untruthful. The recuperation of these two women’s experiences shows how the dominant discourses work tacitly to “channel [survivor speech] into nonthreatening outlets” (Alcoff and Gray 268). One is compelled to recount her story by means of confession and spectacle; the other is marginalized as mad.

Instead of recuperating patriarchal discourse, we need to focus our energies toward problematizing representation itself and work toward a political subversion of such representations, in order to generate modes of resistance.

These two commercials attempted to create a space in-between the double bind of “perform--or else,” where other options can come to life and destroy the passive-female/active-male binary. While I think that Bridget Kelly’s original intention was to find this space of in-betweenness, I think she finally got sucked back into the dominant construction of female victimization. And the Charmaine Neville commercial aired among questions of validity regarding her experience. For a moment, I believe that space of in-betweenness existed in these two commercials. Each woman was able, in thirty seconds, to speak out on her own terms.

CHAPTER 3

CLOTHESLINES OF FLIGHT

The Clothesline Project is a vehicle for women to share their experiences with violence. "The concept [is] simple - let each woman tell her story in her own unique way, using words and/or artwork to decorate a t-shirt. Once finished, the woman hangs her shirt on a clothesline" (www.clotheslineproject.org).

As I have addressed in the previous chapters, the ultimate problem with some attempts at rape discourse lies in the danger of its being co-opted back into the mainstream. However, as Alcoff and Gray suggest, there are transgressive performances that resist these possible normative functions. They explore possibilities to "give witness to sexual violence in ways that cannot be contained, recuperated, or ignored" (288). The Clothesline Project is one example of a minor performance that has subversive potential to give witness in this manner, and its tactics suggest possibilities for avoiding the double bind, "perform – or else."

In order to describe this potential, in this chapter, I explore how Peggy Phelan's concepts of visibility and invisibility operate in the Clothesline Project. Further, working from Carol Blair et al's reading of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's concept of "invitational rhetoric," I view the Clothesline Project as a post-modern memorial, actively engaging in an invitational form of rhetoric and performance.

Background of the Clothesline Project

Inspired by the AIDS quilt project, the Clothesline Project began in 1990 on Hyannis, Massachusetts, the brain-child of Rachel Carey-Harper, originally part of Cape Cod's "Take Back the Night March" (http://www.clotheslineproject.org). Since then, the Clothesline Project has toured around the country, with many places starting up their own versions of the project.

Patricia Hipple, in her unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled, "Hegemonic Disguise in Resistance to Domination: The Clothesline Project's Response to Male Violence Against Women," describes the Clothesline Project as an event that "uses art, ritual, and folklore practices to resist gender domination. As an example of women's expressive folk culture, the Clothesline Project constitutes and conveys the political discourse of women subjugated by sexism and gendered violence" (7). The Clothesline Project works to generate discourse regarding violence against women (not limited to rape) via the trope of hanging laundry.[8] This action serves many purposes. It acts as an educational tool for those who come to view the Clothesline; it becomes a healing tool for anyone who wants to make a shirt – by hanging the shirt on the line, survivors, friends and family can literally turn their backs on some of that pain of their experience and walk away; and finally, it allows those who still suffer in silence to understand that they are not alone. Participants can choose to draw a picture, write a story, or sign their names on the shirts, whatever they feel comfortable sharing. These clothes do not tell a graphic story of each woman's experience; there is simply not enough room on a shirt for the whole story. The t-shirts, like the TAASA and LAFSA commercials examined in Chapter Two, work enthmematically, refusing the closure of a whole story. The shirt simply hangs on a clothesline. Since the graphic stories of lived experience are not always told on the t-shirts, the Clothesline Project created a code – wherein each t-shirt represents a specific type of violence:

> White represents women who died because of violence;
> Yellow or beige represents battered or assaulted women;
> Red, pink, and orange are for survivors of rape and sexual assault;
> Blue and green t-shirts represent survivors of incest and sexual abuse;
> Purple or lavender represents women attacked because of their sexual orientation;
> Black is for women attacked for political reasons. (www.clotheslineproject.org)

[8] See Patricia Hipple for a more in depth study on the history of the Clothesline Project. She provides close readings of the metaphors of hanging laundry, women's work with textiles and clothing, and other clothesline metaphors.

This color code is not definitive. The website describes how many Clothesline Project events have used different color schemes, such as a color designated for handicapped women or for gang rape. Some sites have also bought a bulk of one color t-shirt, for economic reasons, using the same color shirt to denote all of the above experiences.

The Clothesline Project website encourages the use of t-shirts only, and ask that participants do not place pants or underwear on the clothesline. This may be because more intimate apparel could have an adverse effect for survivors who attend a Clothesline Project event. Also, t-shirts are inexpensive, light, and easy to transport, so there are pragmatic and functional reasons behind using t-shirts. Another possible reason for a t-shirt is that this piece of clothing can be considered a commercialized space. Many t-shirts have slogans, advertisements, or other maxims emblazoned across the front and back. This space can be seen as another marker of our identities, for many people wear advertisements for their favorite music, movies, activities, sports teams, etc. We identify ourselves by our choices in apparel, and t-shirt design is no exception. Instead of using the t-shirt as a marker of pop culture identity, the Clothesline Project employs the t-shirt as a political identity, giving space for identification of sexual violence.

The t-shirt and clothesline also provide a synecdoche of the domestic sphere of women's work, usually relegated to the private sphere. By forcing this trope out into the open as a canvas used to tell stories of violence, "it physically breaches the divide between the private and public spheres" (Hipple 159). Hanging laundry is domestic activity, usually associated with the quotidian activities of women in the domestic sphere. The Clothesline Project enacts a parodic performance of domesticity as a means of disruption. Ruth Laurion Bowman suggests that "the rhetorical construction of the domestic sphere as a private and 'sacred' compliment to what became the 'profane' public sphere" (117). Since the Clothesline Project brings the once secret and private concerns of violence against

women into the public, profane space, the performance enacts a parodic breach between these two spheres by airing society's "dirty laundry." Not only is this move an act of parody, but it is also a disruptive act, one that grabs attention, and literally brings the private into the public and political eye.

The Clothesline Project is not only politically disrupting, it is also visually so; the colorful displays arrest the eye and draw the attention of passersby. I attended a Clothesline Project at Mississippi State University in September of 2006. Walking by the clotheslines, I could not help but be drawn into the event. About two dozen shirts hung on four separate clotheslines each, marking the space as a three dimensional safe space for women to participate in the construction of survivor discourse. The clotheslines fluttered in the wind, one after another, creating a literal multidimensional space to walk through, around, and among a multiplicity of shirts and messages. The clotheslines, positioned in the Drill Field, an open space in the middle of campus, stood out against the backdrop of the campus. The event took place in late September on a beautiful sunny day, with just enough wind to make the t-shirts dance. There was nothing else immediately surrounding the clotheslines – the image of multiple t-shirts of various colors protruded into my field of vision. I had to squint in order to block out the sun and the bright colors of the t-shirts.

This disruption provides a visual counterpoint for the silence, and brings violence against women, something that is considered very private, to the forefront. Patricia Hipple further examines this breach, stating that, "The Clothesline…takes images associated with the private, the domestic, and the compliant and thrusts them into the public forum. It juxtaposes soft fabric and sensual images with scenes of rape, domestic violence, battery, assault, and murder to condemn male aggression and domination" (160). Through this juxtaposition, the Clothesline Project brings the private out into the public, showing and telling the invisible stories of women to a public that is further invited to

participate in this sort of shared storytelling. However, while the invisible stories are made visible, this project throws into question the politics of visibility and invisibility specifically questioned by Peggy Phelan, and especially with regard to women's bodies.

Strategic Invisibility

Phelan articulates her answer to the problems of visibility politics as "the generative possibilities of disappearance" (27), which actively attempts to work through a strategic invisibility as a means for a greater political power. This invisibility is Phelan's means of rethinking the false binary that exists between "the power of visibility and impotence of invisibility," both of which are inherently tied together (6). The Clothesline Project, by using shirts as stand-ins for women's bodies, attempts this invisibility. Because the bodies of women themselves remain absent, this project instead draws on objects as metonyms for bodies. While the substitution of the woman's body with a shirt might seem to suggest objectification, this act seems rather to bring that question into focus, highlighting the problems inherent in the telling of sexual violence and calling in to question the processes through which women become objectified within the narrative structure of rape discourse. The shirt "not only suggests the body of the woman for whom it was made, it also represents her; the shirt acts as a surrogate for the survivor of violence, suggesting her presence despite her physical absence, providing her agency despite constraints on her physical body" (Hipple 133). The Clothesline Project, by highlighting the literal absence of women, attempts to problematize the visibility/invisibility binary.

Phelan calls for a "different relation between the looking subject and the image of the other" (26), one that avoids the trap of visibility and representation that "produces the Other as the Same" (3). As I have noted earlier, many of the more commodified media representations of raped women tend to work towards universalizing the rape victim, depicting only one version of

a rape survivor. Most attempts at difference still seem to be recuperated into normative representations, a potential that is inherent within most forms of rape discourse. The Clothesline Project attempts to highlight this difference, and avoids the traps of recuperation through its work with metonymy. Phelan continues, "performance…can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other *as* the Same is not assured" (3, original emphasis). The multivalent nature of the Clothesline Project rejects the assurance of sameness by interrupting attempts to universalize the rape story, in the context of this event.

The Clothesline Project also engages Phelan's concept of the ontology of performance. Phelan argues that "performance's being….becomes itself through disappearance" (146). Live performance exists in order to disappear, and the actions of live performers can never be repeated. The live event, for Phelan, is constituted by live bodies performing actions in a finite period of time. She posits this concept of liveness and performance against mediated images, and many critics have argued that she sets up a false binary between the live and mediated images[9]. The Clothesline Project both engages and critiques this false binary by its own liveness and its simultaneous reliance on mediated documentation. The Clothesline Project exists in two forms: the live event that occurs around the country and the website.

The Clothesline Project website adds to the multi-layered nature of the event itself. By providing history, codes, photos, information about starting a Clothesline Project, information about domestic and sexual violence, and a calendar of events tracking upcoming Clothesline Projects throughout the country.

[9] See Chapter Two, where I discuss Auslander's critique of the binary between liveness and mediatized performance.

The history of the Clothesline Project, detailed on the website, is brief, stating its beginnings and its current standings. According to the website, there are approximately "five hundred projects nationally and internationally with an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 shirts, [with] projects in forty one states and five countries." The website also gives links to other important documents for survivors of violence such as: "Dating Bill of Rights," "Love is…Love Isn't," "Teen Dating Violence – Myth Versus Fact," "Men's Pledge to End Rape," "No Means No," "Questions to Ask about a Dating Partner," and "Supporting Survivors" (www.clotheslineproject.org). This website also provides detailed information and suggestions for starting a Clothesline Project, complete with step-by-step instructions and fundraising ideas. The creators invite other people to add their experiences and stories to the overall collection. There is not an official Clothesline Project; anyone can bring it to life, anywhere in the world.

In addition to providing the color code for the shirts, the website also offers its own interpretation of the meanings of "survivor" versus" victim," challenging the normative discourses that construct violated women as victims. It states: "Survivor = a woman who has survived intimate personal violence such at rape, battering, incest, child sexual abuse. Victim = a woman who has died at the hands of her abuser" (www.clotheslineproject.org). The project honors both victims and survivors, inviting survivors to share their own stories as well as urging friends and family of victims to hang a shirt in memorial.

The website also uses its own trope of a clothesline as a site map. It uses simple line drawing icons of t-shirts hung on clotheslines as the links for each section of the website, with a blue and white backdrop that appears to represent a blue sky. The website's performance shows a dedication to the issues central to the Clothesline Project by utilizing the trope of the shirts as its

main communicative inage. The website offers a context for the event itself, for it is the only long-term feature of the event.

The Clothesline Project further problematizes Phelan's notion of performance due to the fact that the performance is itself a memorial installation. The live bodies are not quite present, but not quite absent. The live performers are also audience members. People come and go, they make and hang their t-shirts, while others wander through the clotheslines, experiencing and reading the performance. While this performance denies permanence, it also denies the visibility of live bodies, since the agents who tell or perform their experiences via the t-shirts, are not present, in the literal sense.

Because of these above factors, it can be said that the Clothesline Project's closest performance relative is installation art. Installation art practices of the twentieth century deal with "a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer" (Reiss xiii). The Clothesline Project similarly situates the viewers as co-participants in the meaning making of the performance and in the site specificity of the space. In *Blurring Boundaries: Installation Art1969-1996*, Ronald J. Onorato states that "installation artists ask viewers to relate to the artwork…often by asking them to participate in the completion of the piece" (14), suggesting that installation art practice purposefully "addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space" (Bishop 6). The viewers in the Clothesline Project similarly become active participants in the event. Claire Bishop suggests of installation art practices that instead of "imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer whose senses of touch, smell, and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. This insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art" (6). It is this key

element of participation that marks the Clothesline Project as a communal effort to create a way for people to come together collectively to engage the rape scenario in a transgressive manner. Julie H. Reiss states that installation art practices deal with issues of "site specificity, institutional critique, temporality, and ephemerality" (xiii). These issues also define the Clothesline Project: it moves from sites chosen for high visibility, it critiques the institutional discourses of co-optation and silence surrounding the rape narratives, and its location and meaning change and disappear over time. The Clothesline Project installation performance thus creates sort of movable, disappearing memorial existing in a temporary time and space, constantly evolving.

Post-Modern Memorialization

The temporary nature of Clothesline Project performances characterizes the project as a postmodern memorial. In their article, "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity," Carole Blair, et al. conceptualize the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. as a postmodern memorial site. Using postmodern architectural theory, they examine the structure of the memorial and discuss how it problematizes metanarratives and utilizes a multivocal rhetoric. Because the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's construction is split among three structures (the wall, the flagpole, and the statue of three American soldiers), it exemplifies postmodern architecture's refusal of a universal metanarrative. Blair et al. discuss the role of metanarratives, stating, "because of their status as legitimating discourses, metanarratives rigidify norms and patterns of thoughts, and they 'terrorize' the non-normalized" (264). The Clothesline Project similarly embodies this postmodern "disruption of the 'normalized'" (265) by allowing multiple creators to contribute to its design and by its temporary and movable nature. It defies the monolithic construction of the rape story. The event is very disruptive; it engages the eye and stands out, invoking spectator curiosity.

Walking through the clotheslines, I read a multiplicity of stories that reject a modernist, universal story of sexual violence. The words and pictures on the various shirts of various colors show me that this story will never be confined to a metanarrative or a universal story. One shirt, which my eyes are immediately drawn to and held by, says in black letters, "I am a man and I was raped." And yet its creator is nowhere to be found, at least nowhere in my line of sight. His story is present in this performance, but his body is absent. Other such shirts stick out for me. One used the picture and word-game of Hangman, in order to spell out a story of survival using the phrase "He almost killed me." Again, absent creator, present story. This performance has become "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings….blend and clash" (Barthes 146).

The multi-authorial additions of the individual t-shirts highlight both the problem of rape as a unified concept, but they also break apart this notion of unity. Sexual violence is a multivalent concept, taking a multiplicity of forms. Due to the project's use of individual shirts, the stories show this multiplicity and alter the concept of violence as a unified concept, as is the case with the artifacts left at the Vietnam memorial. "Each addition alters the text, for it focuses on a different individual…or a different meaning attached to [the] experience" (Blair 272).

Not only does the meaning change with each added t-shirt, but the project as a whole changes with each location. Since the Clothesline Project is not a permanent memorial stationed in one specific location, the meaning is fluid. There is a collection of t-shirts that have been gathered by the founders, which can be requested in order to have a starting point for the project, instead of starting with no t-shirts on the line. The website and founders also provide brochures containing facts and statistics regarding violence and victimization. Event organizers are encouraged to send the t-shirts made at their particular performance to the archive, although this

is requested for documentation purposes, not required. There can be multiple Clothesline Project events happening at the same time around the country, which adds another level to the event. Literally, the same performance will not ever be repeated, for each shirt is different, individual, and tied to a specific event context. However, this context can move and shift, altering the meaning as it moves across time and across the world, adding new shirts at each performance.

Rebecca Kennerly, in her unpublished dissertation "Cultural Performance of Roadside Shrines: A Poststructural Postmodern Ethnography," discusses similar memorial practices found in the roadside shrines that populate our cultural landscape. She examines the process of memorialization and the impetus to erect non-sanctioned shrines that transgress societal norms. She states, "when institutionally-sanctioned meaning-making practices…do not adequately address basic existential questions…[an] emergence of seemingly uncontained behavior" occurs (247). The Clothesline Project itself is uncontained; it creates a disruption between the normalizing trap of speaking out and the silence that surrounds narratives of violence and violation. It "offers alternatives to traditional, mainstream and institutionalized public forums such as legislative bodies which have historically been reluctant to address the issue of violence against women and its cultural bases" (Gregory, et al 437).

Kennerly continues: "[I]t is this exposure – this lifting of the veil – that creates the 'gap' in time, in place, and in meaning, and is a fertile and dangerous 'crack between the worlds' that is always already present" (247). This "crack between worlds," the literal (clothes)line in between the "perform – or else" double bind provides us with the fertile ground for a means to transgress the rape scenario. This line moves, shifts, and spreads itself out across time and space, becoming rhizomatic, staying out of reach of normalization.

The in-between nature and mobility of the Clothesline Project suggests that it can be viewed as a rhizome that spreads and alters its overall meaning through personal narrative. Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as "an anti-genealogy" (11). It is a multiplicity, it happens in the here and now, spreading out along a map, cutting across multiple sites. Because of its temporary nature, it is a "short-term memory, or antimemory" (21) thus refusing the permanence of a memorial site.

The Clothesline Project thus works rhizomatically – the event is not concerned with permanently marking a specific site for a memorial; it is rather concerned with live bodies creating a multidimensional space. Analogously, women's victimization knows no permanent place or space; it exists all around us. Since there is not one specific site to mark for a memorial, the Clothesline Project uses the shirts as a method of evocation. Patricia Hipple notes this effect: "The shirts draw attention to the absence of the women they represent…and they draw attention to the many losses suffered as the result of violence. Their psychic charge is achieved by evoking spirits, or more specifically, the immaterial bodies of victims, survivors, perpetrators, and viewers" (198). This evocation of the ghosts of women promotes Alcoff and Gray's call to "bear witness." While their bodies are not present, a tactile, tangible object remains behind, acting as a reminder. At the Mississippi State University Clothesline Project, the shirts flapped and danced in the wind, coming alive, evoking the spirits of the shirt makers.

The t-shirts hang out on a line, disrupt vision, and travel across space and time, marking their own lines of flight. And the themes or subject matters of the t-shirts are not necessarily linked: some deal with battered women, some with women who were murdered, others with incest and with rape survivors. A battered wife and a man who has survived incest are each invited to place their shirts on the clothesline. "The rhizome connects any point to any other

point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature" (21). The Clothesline Project, like a rhizome, is ultimately an assemblage, collecting personal narratives that bring forth a multiplicity of experience, with potent political power.

The project invites passersby to create their own shirts and to participate in the construction of this performance. In this way, the Clothesline Project can be said to embody Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's concept of invitational rhetoric. They seek to offer an alternative to the masculinist notion of rhetoric as persuasion. They examine the discipline of rhetoric, and how it has been historically defined as persuasion. Foss and Griffin state that the rhetoric of persuasion is a violent act, a monologic attempt to convert a person or persons over to a certain point of view and ultimately to exert control. Their critique suggests that the western model of rhetoric remains inherently violent and requires change from within. They suggest invitational rhetoric, which stresses inclusion, dialogue, and the willingness to see the world from another's point of view.

Foss and Griffin only apply these ideas towards rhetoric, a discipline historically associated with persuasion, which presents a number of problematic associations. First, their analysis of traditional rhetoric seems overly simplistic, and ignores nuance within the discipline. Second, to dismiss the entire concept of persuasion as violent dismisses a powerful political tool that many feminists can employ. Even if we accept their notion of persuasion as violence, sometimes we need to use the master's tools as a means to destroy the master's house. Third, their conception of invitational rhetoric seems to slip into essentialism, suggesting that different forms of discourse are endemic to certain sexes.

Despite the problems in Foss and Griffin's work, we can make use of it as yet another tool in rethinking transgressive performances of the rape narrative. I believe that invitational

rhetoric can be employed as a tool for performance, and not only limited to oration. Their concept can be applied to The Clothesline Project, for it actively invites its audience, or viewers, to participate in meaning making. This is not to say the Clothesline Project does not have any persuasive value, rather, I am suggesting that its persuasiveness lies in activism in order to raise awareness and incite change. Invitational rhetoric seeks to "create an environment that facilitates understanding, accords value and respect to others' perspectives, and contributes to the development of relationships of equality " (Foss and Griffin 17). I believe that the Clothesline Project attempts this purpose by creating a site of safety and freedom of expression, wherein anonymity and strategic invisibility give participants a means to share their stories without danger of bodily objectification.

The invitation to "enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (Foss and Griffin 5) is open to all at the site of the Clothesline Project. While "rhetor" usually denotes a speaker engaging in rhetorical discourse, such as a speech, I feel that the word can still apply here. While the shirt makers are absent, and their canvases are shirts, the rhetorical nature of the story is not negated. Since our conception of a rhetorical text has exploded, I would offer that these t-shirts are rhetorical artifacts, with specific intent to disrupt the dominant ideological construction of victimhood. By arguing against persuasion as a necessary tactic for rhetorical discourse, Foss and Griffin are offering a way to include those historically left out of rhetoric. "Within the communicative context created by the Clothesline Project, a collective actor is created, and collective political action made possible…creating a collective actor magnifies the power held by individuals" (Gregory, et. al. 442). Foss and Griffin's conception of invitational rhetoric harkens back to Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of polyphony. Bakhtin describes the modern novel, particularly the work of Dostoyevsky, as a higher literary form that epitomizes his notion

of polyphony, which he roughly describes in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, as a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness" (6). While polyphony is not inherent in all novels, it can be a workable form in many novels, if only authors would open themselves up to the emergent and multiple voices of the characters.

David Charles, in his unpublished dissertation on Improvisational Theater, asks the question of Bakhtin, "How can an single author enable free will amongst his/her artistic creations?" (196). Charles begins to ask a popular question theorists encounter with Bakhtin's notion of polyphony, i.e. how can one author employ multiple voices unproblematically? Charles offers up improvisational theater as a genre or medium for true dialogic discourse as well as Bakhtin's more complex idea of polyphony.

While Charles discusses how improvisational theater embodies polyphony, we can see how that same idea applies to Foss and Griffin's conception of invitational rhetoric and the Clothesline Project. In *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl describe a polyphonic text as "a work in which several consciousness meet as equals and engage in a dialogue" (238). This description of polyphony is not unlike the purpose of invitational rhetoric, which is "to provide the basis for the creation and maintenance of relationships of equality" (Foss and Griffin 13). Multiple creators are invited to participate in the Clothesline Project, as equals, in order to create a multi-vocal patchwork, or clothesline of a polyphonic text that can generate dialogue.

A Perfumed Historicity

Set up alongside the clotheslines at the Mississippi State University's Clothesline Project are large signs with the explanations of the colors and long tables with provided t-shirts,

clothespins, and various art supplies such as puff paint, markers, and glitter glue. The invitation is open and available for passersby to add their own stories and shirts to the clothesline.

Passersby can literally enter a three-dimensional space of multiple clotheslines, and walk through them, entering a world that speaks to a multiplicity of violence. The "clothesline shirts resist the isolation that is a hallmark of gendered violence" (Hipple 140). Upon entering this space, one can see the shirts of multiple women, suggesting that survivors of violence are not alone, for there these shirts show us a tangible and tactile number, even though we know there are more survivors out there. This space creates a community, a safe environment for anyone to share their experience. Hipple comments on this sense of community: "Rather than accentuating differences, the uniformity of shirts stresses women's commonalities….Despite this uniformity of shirts, however, there is no denial of the individuality of each victim or survivor" (140-141). While the Clothesline Project only features t-shirts, a very homogeneous move, the specific shirt colors and individual stories, words, and art on each shirt exemplifies the expression of individual self-representation.

Not only does this performance invite participation, it also attempts to avoid the sometimes-objectifying trap of speaking for others. Many critics have argued that self-representation allows only people to speak who already possess certain privileges that others do not. However, the trap of speaking for others seems to remove agency from the Other, the one who is not allowed to speak. This no-win situation has been a discussion point of many scholars,[10] who try to represent those who cannot speak for themselves. Issues of representation are not removed from The Clothesline Project; however, the use of personal narrative via the t-shirts complicates the notion of speakability. Since the Clothesline Project has a certain level of

[10] See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as well as Rey Chow's essay "Gender and Representation for more on the issue of speaking for others.

anonymity, those who may not normally be allowed to speak on the subject of sexual violence, are given the opportunity to share their experience. Through the vehicle of self-representation, a multiplicity of stories and experiences is created. Since the postmodern condition denies metanarratives, it can also be argued that self-representation enacts a sort of metanarrative itself. However, due to the multifarious, disappearing nature of The Clothesline Project, we can see that the self-representation enacted here opens up space for a post-modern denial of a metanarratives, for the project lends itself to many stories, that are only fragments and represent a wide range of experiences with violence. While many experiences are not shared at this event, the invitation remains.

As a rhizomatic memorial performance, this event exemplifies Jon McKenzie's notion of a "minor performance": it is flighty, nomadic, and it takes a "random walk in the circuits of citational networking" (225). McKenzie offers a new term for minor performance: perfumance. "***Perfumance:*** the becoming-mutational of normative forces…***Perfumance***: the odor of things and words, the sweat of bodies, the perfume of discourse" (203, original emphasis). Perfumance, like minor performance, is meant to be flippant, re-appropriating, and problematic. As a forum for women to perfume their experiences, the Clothesline Project is simple, flippant, disconnected, protest that does not necessarily involve logical language and discourse. Instead of recuperating survivor discourse back into the ever-present rape scenario, we can perform (perfume) instead. The Clothesline Project contains a layer of perfumance, while walking through the clotheslines we can literally smell the cotton, the odor of puff paint. "Perfumance haunts…with odors emitted by certain incorporated remains…of an errant cast of challengers (McKenzie 203). These challengers are the storytellers and shirt-makers invited to participate. They are the ghosts of the women who refuse silencing and recuperation. They tell their history

from below, instead of looking to a universalized notion of experience. The Clothesline Project enacts this process of perfumance, by "mapping domains of transgression where place, body, group identity, and subjectivity interconnect" (Stallybrass and White, 25). The Clothesline Project ultimately takes these maps and weaves "a somewhat humbler quilt of many voices and local hopes" (Pollack 18).

Della Pollack, in her introduction to *Exceptional Spaces*, delineates a new mode of enacting history, what she terms "historicity." She explains that "in historicity, the body practices history. It incarnates, mediates, and resists the metahistories with which it is impressed. It wrestles with the totalizing and legitimizing power…Historicity is, in effect, where history works itself out, in and through and sometimes against material subjects" (4). While working rhizomatically, the Clothesline Project also creates a historicity of sexual violence and violence against women through its performance (perfumance). It resists the metahistory of rape, instead looking to a more fluid historicity of the rape narrative. Using the material subjects of women's stories, and the tangible objects of t-shirts as metonyms for the women's bodies, the Clothesline Project works itself out as a reaction against the totalizing and universalizing effects of the master narrative of history. Performing from within this very rhizomatic historicity, the Clothesline Project creates the room to subvert the rape scenario.

The image of the t-shirt highlights the problems in representing rape without making a fetish out of the speaking women's bodies. The t-shirt thus becomes a canvas upon which to tell this story, creating an installation art piece/memorial to the victims and survivors of sexual violence. Through the use of metonymy, this project retains much of its political power and still avoids many of the traps of visibility. Due to the multiple, rhizomatic nature of the event, the Clothesline Project refuses normative recuperation and ultimately offers an invitation to be

strategically silent, while still giving voice to a global problem. Each shirt has its individual meaning, but as an assemblage, the collective nature of the Clothesline Project overall and its multiple sites works to create a rhizome that politically problematizes the issues of sexual violence and violence against women, taking off on its own clothesline of flight.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: SUBVERTING THIS SCENARIO

In January 2007, I attempted my own "minor performance" dealing not specifically with rape, but with feminism as an umbrella concept encompassing many diverse perspectives. The goal of my solo performance project was to conceptualize feminism as a mad, fragmented concept, using just one speaking body. Considering the implications regarding speaking out as a political tool and the more general problems with representations of rape, I feel that this mad conception of feminism can be applicable to the discourse of the rape scenario.

In the performance, I used the trope of the madwoman as a starting point in my walk through theories and histories of feminism. The madwoman as a trope is particularly fitting because it denotes not only a madwoman in the sense of a crazy or insane woman, but it also denotes an angry woman. By casting feminism as a madwoman, we begin to see the fragments of feminism, for the madwoman is ultimately a fragmented identity. Her essence cannot be pinned down, for the madwoman defies ontology. Because of this angry, insane, and fragmented nature of the madwoman, I believe it is an apt metaphor for the overall, umbrella concept of feminism.

If we take this metaphor further, in order to incorporate rape discourse, we can see how well it fits into the rape scenario. John McKenzie's minor performance includes the elements of madness, for madness itself is flighty, irreverent, and causes normative forces to mutate. It is this mad nature of the minor performance that can be utilized to subvert the rape scenario from within the system.

Women's voices have been silenced, heard, co-opted, and subversive. For a few decades, the emphasis has been on speaking out about rape, and we have done so. Now, however, we need to begin to look at *how* we speak out. "Speaking out" and "consciousness-raising" have served

the feminist movement well, for many boundaries were crossed when we broke our silence. But speaking out is a contingent practice. Positing discourse as a necessary route to healing creates a false double bind, most aptly described in John McKenzie's words "perform –or else." So too, anything that can be transgressive, as I have outlined in the previous chapters, runs the risk of being co-opted back into the mainstream. So how do we continue to work towards disrupting the norm, keeping the political from slipping into entertainment spectacle?

We have to keep changing, keep adding our voices and making them count. Refuse the god's eye view of objective history, without losing the political capital. We need to get "mad." Not just angry, but a little bit insane – fragmented, nomadic, never settling down, never slipping into simple ontological status of victim or survivor. Keep changing the categories, and leave those ontological categories unfinished. Refuse closure, for once a category gains closure, it can become commodity. We should not limit ourselves to only one method of consciousness-raising. Identity is not an automatic marker for political practice. Wendy Brown's move from "I am" to "I want this for us" can be a helpful means to keep a step ahead of the system. For "I am" remains a passive stance that falls into the trap of identity politics, whereas "I want this for us" keeps women in an active position of reinventing subversive modes of rape discourse.

Looking Back Through the Scenario

In Chapter One, I outline the various discourses and visibility politics surrounding representations of the rape scenario. I address some of the problems surrounding these representations, as well as their effects on the feminist agenda of consciousness-raising. A shift has happened from speaking out as libratory to speaking out as compulsory: perform – or else. Not only the individual practices of women speaking out, but also our fictional depictions of the rape scenario create a normalizing discursive field in which feminists need to navigate in order to

continue their working project towards ending rape. While the overall goal of this thesis deals with a rethinking of how we tell stories of violation within the rape scenario, rather than the feminist goal of ending rape, I believe that normative representations of rape work against the possibilities of this feminist goal. In other words, how we perform the stories matters.

The normative constructions, as I discussed in Chapter One, work towards containing the body of a raped woman [sic], by constructing a universal rape victim [sic]. This universal victim is usually white, middle-class, and female. This creation of a universal rape victim posits a male/female binary with regard to rape. The problematic binaries of male/female and man/woman are still very important to any discussion of rape, yet the recuperation of these binaries is a patriarchal position that does not work against this universal category. Chandra Talpade Mohanty states, "defining women as archetypal victims freezes them into 'objects-who-defend-themselves,' men into 'subjects-who-perpetuate-violence,' and (every) society into powerless (read: women) and powerful (read: men) groups of people" (58).

We cannot move out of ideology; rather, we need to question why it is that women are viewed as being able to be raped. The dominant hegemonic ideology and the representation of a universal rape victim, in fiction, film, and the news media articulate women as objects/commodities ready to be consumed for male use and/or pleasure. And here we return to the question of representation: our representations of rape recuperate this sense of women as commodity waiting to be sexually consumed or victimized. We need somehow to work within this scenario to change this ideology.

In Chapter Two, I focus my research on two particular commercials and the media attention (or lack thereof) that each received. These commercials attempted to work against a normative recuperation of the language of speaking out. Neither the TAASA or LAFSA

commercials engaged in a spectacular representation of their stories. However, their stories were still contained: Bridget Kelly's story found a spectacular representation within the news media; Charmaine Neville's story was not picked up by a national news outlet, but it was considered by many as crazy, hyperbolic, or simply untrue.

My access to the Bridget Kelly commercial first came from the *ABC Primetime Live* news report. My friend and I watched this report transfixed; we had both never seen anything quite like her story. Our immediate thoughts were how bold this move was, taking her story to the general public. But while speaking out may help some, it does not always have the same effects for everyone. Some find ways to use speaking out to transgress the system. Sometimes the transgressive attempt gets appropriated back into the system of dominant patriarchal ideology. Sometimes speaking out has outright negative consequences.

After writing the first draft of a paper on Bridget Kelly, her commercial, and the news story, I saw the commercial made by Charmaine Neville. Noting both the similarities and differences between the two, I found another way into my research. Neville's commercial gave a similar message, with notable differences.

These commercials tried to get outside the system; however, they ultimately got pulled right back into it. The commercials both tried to find that space of in-betweenness, where other options can come to life and destroy the "perform – or else" binary. I think these were valiant attempts to bring a minor performance to such an uncomfortable topic.

In Chapter Three I focused on a transgressive approach towards rape discourse. Within the Clothesline Project, I find subversive potential due to its disruptive nature and its reliance on co-participants, intertextuality, and polyphony.

I drove ten hours to view the Clothesline Project at Mississippi State University. It seemed as if I needed to witness this event firsthand in order to write about it. When I approached the clotheslines, I felt the pull to make my own shirt. After taking pictures of the clotheslines themselves, the signs, and the tables with paint and t-shirts provided for participants, I decided to put down the objective eye of a camera and participate subjectively in this experience. I opted for a bit of t-shirt intertextuality. Borrowing from Inga Musico's book, *Cunt*, and Diana Taylor, I painted the words: "Rape Not Cunts, Subvert This Scenario" on my t-shirt. Defaulting into academic language, the words from my research seemed like the best way to go about representing the performance of my t-shirt.

Situating the Scenario

Diana Taylor offers some ways in which thinking of the scenario may be useful for understanding social structures. I would like to apply her trajectories towards what I have called the rape scenario, and to look at how the performance artifacts analyzed in my study work to add to our understanding of it.

Taylor begins by suggesting that in order "to recall, recount, or reactivate a scenario we need to conjure up physical location" (29). By returning to the field, Bridget Kelly conjures up a memorial within the physical location of the commercial. Charmaine Neville only briefly refers to the school where she was raped, but contexts her experience nonetheless within the historical location of the Hurricane Katrina aftermath. The Clothesline Project locates itself rhizomatically in various physical locations, all containing echoes of past events that take place in a number of states and countries.

Secondly, Taylor suggests that "viewers need to deal with the embodiment of social actors" (29). By personally appearing on television commercials that featured themselves, these

women literally put a face on rape. Their stories are not only reported or discussed in written formats, but their bodies appear in a space, looking straight at the camera, requiring viewers to deal with their bodies and their experiences. The Clothesline Project similarly deals with the embodiment of social actors, by using t-shirts as the metonyms for bodies. Also, the invitation for onlookers to become participants by designing and hanging their own shirts brings forth the potential for social and political action.

Third, scenarios "predispose certain outcomes and yet allow for reversal, parody, and change" (31). The rape scenario, specifically in terms of how it has been constructed in the last fifty years in America, has been predisposed to either silencing or co-opting survivor speech. The Kelly and Neville commercials attempt to reverse the "silence equals shame" stigma as well as to refuse recuperation from the dominant discourses. While the dominant discourses work to contain these commercials, it is the attempt to create a space of in-betweenness that works towards changing the rape scenario. The parodic effects of the Clothesline Project, particularly the parody of domesticity, work as a flighty minor performance of rape discourse. The possibilities for change occur within the language of consciousness-raising, done by the shirts that refuse containment within a universal victim paradigm.

Fourth, "the transmission of a scenario reflects the multifaceted systems at work within the scenario itself" (31). The two commercials demonstrate the various levels of mediation, discourse practices, and narrative implicit in the performance of a rape story. The news media's representations of the TAASA commercial also work to show how multiple systems are at work within the rape scenario: the transgressive attempt at consciousness-raising, as well as the normative and recuperative functions that work to contain the story. The Clothesline Project, by its polyphonic multiplicity, further demonstrates this effect of the scenario. Various codes, such

as the color code and the use of written and/or pictorial narrative strands, bring the multiplicity inherent in the rape story to life.

Fifth, "the scenario forces us to situate ourselves in relationship to it" (32). The commercials seek to position themselves alongside other survivors; the message in both commercials is one that simply states, "You are not alone." It is an attempt to reach out to fellow survivors, to put a face on the rape scenario. The Clothesline Project works in a similar manner; however, this event positions itself alongside onlookers in a literal and tangible manner. Passersby can literally touch the clotheslines, the shirts, and ultimately, the message generated by the installation performance.

Lastly, "scenarios conjure past situations, at times so profoundly internalized by a society that no one remembers the precedence" (32). The rape scenario depicted in these artifacts is not for the first time. The story and history of rape has pervaded our society from the beginning. The commercials and the Clothesline Project conjure up past encounters with the rape scenario in the minds of their audiences, as well as show a long history of violence and violation.

The scenario ultimately "places spectators within its frame, implicating us in its ethics and politics" (33). The rape scenario involves corporeal, quotidian bodies as well as abstract institutionalized systems and discourses. It allows for subversion from within, and gives us room to maneuver, to seek subversive discursive practices that do not undermine the feminist goal of ending rape altogether. It refuses the "god-eye trick of seeing everything from nowhere" which is Donna Harraway's condemnation of objectivity (189). She calls for a "feminist objectivity [which] means quite simply *situated knowledges*" (188, original emphasis). While the commercials attempted a minor performance, situating their performers personally as subjects talking within and through the rape scenario, their transgressive discourse became an object of

spectacle. The Clothesline Project, on the other hand, shows the situated-ness of individuals within a collective scenario. It refuses one construction of violation, providing room for multiplicity, difference, and fragmentation.

How we speak out is the new question that should drive our discursive practices within the rape scenario. Donna Harraway argues

> for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (195)

Critically and knowingly situating our voices from within the rape scenario can give us an opportunity to refuse the fetishistic trap of "perform – or else" where our voices become mythological and universalized. From here, we can begin to create truly uncomfortable performances.

I left my t-shirt, boldly stating "Rape Not Cunts, Subvert This Scenario" at Mississippi State University, to become a part of the rhizome Clothesline Project that may end up on another line somewhere else in the country. Or maybe it will always remain at Mississippi State, year after year, as a testament to my visit. Who knows? Maybe adding my shirt in my own, distanced language is my mad contribution to an already fragmented and uncomfortable performance of identification and remembrance.

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