

Rape in Revolutionary America, 1760-1815

By

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We acknowledge with respect the ɫək'w əŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stand and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

Rape had an indelible effect on the American Revolutionary era. Using trial testimonies and depositions, newspapers, and literary sources, this thesis argues that there was a level of continuity between peacetime and wartime rape characterized by the assaulters' modus operandi and rape's ideological exploitation. Eighteenth-century Anglo-American society dictated that rape, or "carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly against her will," was only a crime against virtuous white women. The gendered and racialized ways pre-revolutionary society identified and prosecuted rape influenced how rapists conducted their assaults. Women had to prove their sexual morality, that penile penetration and male ejaculation occurred, and that they sought help immediately after the assault to prosecute their attackers. During the war, rape became an important metaphor. Wartime publishers and propagandists used reports and victim testimonies as evidence of British immorality and to justify political independence. The rape of America subsumed individual atrocities. The nationalization of women's sexual virtue continued into the new Republic. Artists and writers memorialized the Revolution through explicitly sexualized narratives and sentimental novels that emphasized female sexual morality. Women's sexual virtue was linked with the stability of the Republic. This thesis utilizes a diverse historiography to highlight the intersectional correlations between rape and eighteenth-century patriarchal power in America.

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Introduction

On December 23, 2018, the popular Sony Pictures television show *Outlander* depicted a brutal rape in pre-revolutionary America. In an effort to recover her mother's wedding ring, Brianna, the daughter of the show's primary characters, is raped in the backroom of a tavern. Multiple men sit at a table throughout the assault, and while the rape is never physically seen, Brianna leaves the room with a bloody nose and torn clothes.¹ One season later, the main female protagonist is raped in captivity. Although the episode empathetically recounts the isolating trauma and violence of sexual assault, this rape is used to dramatize the season finale.² Using historical rapes for entertainment has become a common practice.

Rape is a means to exert culturally specific power.³ Rape is constantly in the public eye, but there are often superficial discussions about the prevalence of sexual violence. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the rise of social movements such as #MeToo, #SayHerName, and the Time's Up Movement demonstrate the institutionalized power of sexual violence in America.⁴ It is rape's naturalization that prompts many historians to question if rape has *a* history, let alone multiple histories.⁵ Rape studies can show historians the intersecting power of sexual violence and social hierarchies, demonstrating that sexual violence warrants historical attention.

This thesis studies the impact of rape in America between 1760 and 1815. In the American Revolutionary period, rape reinforced intersectional constructions of patriarchal power. The

¹ *Outlander*, "Wilmington," Season 4 Episode 8, Netflix, December 23, 2018.

² *Outlander*, "Never My Love," Season 5 Episode 12, Netflix, May 10, 2020.

³ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), 7.

⁴ President Trump has been accused of rape and sexual assault by 25 women since at least the early 1990s. President Biden has been accused of sexual assault against former staff assistant Tara Reade in 1993. Other leaders and giants in American society have been accused of sexual violence and misconduct, including Brett Kavanaugh, Harvey Weinstein, and Andrew Cuomo.

⁵ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 7.

eighteenth-century definition of rape—“carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly against her will”—required penile penetration and male ejaculation, limiting rape to female victims and male perpetrators.⁶ Furthermore, as American men held sexual ownership of their wives and female dependents, rape was a violation of male property rights and an affront to the patriarchal order.⁷ As early Americans believed that slaves, servants, and women needed constant oversight for their own well-being and the good of the community, eighteenth-century America resided within a universally understood hierarchy which subordinated female rape victims to that of their male benefactors.⁸ Racial, classist, legal, and gendered power relationships determined how rape was perceived in early American society.

Using trial testimonies and depositions, newspapers, and literary sources, this study questions how rape influenced the American Revolution and how the war, in turn, shaped conceptions of sexual violence. The ways pre-revolutionary society identified and prosecuted rape influenced how rapists conducted their assaults.⁹ During the war, the rapes committed by British and Hessian soldiers symbolically stripped American colonists of their power. Colonial wartime propagandists used rape as a metaphor for the Revolution. After the war, pre-revolutionary conceptions of rape and their politicization in wartime propaganda established female sexual virtue

⁶ Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, 2 vols (London, 1736), I, 628; Katharina Erhard, “Rape, Republicanism, and Representation: Founding the Nation in Early American Women’s Drama and Selected Visual Representations,” *American Studies* vol. 50, no. 3 (2005): 513; Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 265-6.

⁷ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 11; Julia Rudolph argues that rape and resistance both relied on and subordinated conceptions of female rationality and property status. See Julia Rudolph, “Rape and Resistance: Women and Consent in Seventeenth-Century English Legal and Political Thought,” *The Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 2 (April 2000): 161-2, 171; Ryan, *Everyday Crimes: Social Violence and Civil Rights in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 1-16; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 10, 14, 267.

⁸ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 3; Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 1.

⁹ Daniel Williams makes a similar assertion about rape narratives in his “The Gratification of that Corrupt and Lawless Passion: Character Types and Themes in Early New England Rape Narratives,” in *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 217.

as a national priority. Post-revolutionary society emphasized female sexual responsibility in a patriarchal system that deemed dependents unworthy of citizenship.¹⁰ There was a level of continuity between peacetime and wartime rape characterized by the assaulters' modus operandi and rape's ideological exploitation.

The history of rape is marked by silences that reflect the power structures of early America. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot's theoretical framework, silences enter the historical record at four key moments: the formation of sources, the making of the archives, the creation of historical narratives, and the construction of retrospective significance.¹¹ In other words, a society's reactions and feelings towards a topic, such as rape, can influence how experiences are recorded, remembered, and tagged in the archives. Historians' biases can also impact how they interact with sources in their work. Eighteenth-century rape exists within these silences.

The silences surrounding sexual violence became apparent with the surge of gender and social histories in the late twentieth century. Since the publication of Susan Brownmiller's, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), many American historians have tackled rape in their work. Encouraged by the works of Deborah Gray White, bell hooks, and Thelma Jennings, many feminist slavery historians have demonstrated the sexualized component of violence during slavery. Slavery institutionalized the exploitation of Black women economically and sexually, making women's bodies the prerogative of male slaveholders. Other acts, such as flogging people naked and castrating male slaves, attacked a person's capacity to behave sexually.¹² Recently, the

¹⁰ Clare A. Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 238.

¹¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

¹² Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 160; Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985); Thelma Jennings, "'Us

works of Treva B. Lindsey, Rachel Feinstein, Jennifer Morgan, and Jessica Marie Johnson present the histories of Black women as more than victims, exploring their sexual freedom and stories of resistance. Many Black women, enslaved and free, used sexual intimacy to challenge constructions of their sexuality.¹³

A great deal of historians' work on rape focuses on times of conflict and societal upheaval. Wars provide a gateway to analyze breaches of previous moral barriers and societal reactions. During wartime, rapists use sexual violence to oppress, vilify, and "other" their victims without fear of reprisal.¹⁴ In her gendered analysis of rape, Brownmiller suggests that "rape by a conquering soldier destroys all remaining illusions of power and property for men of the defeated side. The body of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victor's trooping colors."¹⁵ As a result, rape is considered an inevitable and effective tool of war. Rape during the American Revolution, albeit a frequent consequence of the war, was shaped by other political, social, and cultural factors. This study builds on a diverse historiography to demonstrate the impact of rape on early American institutions.

One of the most comprehensive studies about sexual violence during the American Revolutionary era is Sharon Block's *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (2006). By unravelling the ambiguous power dynamics that characterize sexual violence, Block explains the

Colored Women Had to Go Through a Plenty": Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women," *Journal of Women's History* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1990): 45-74; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

¹³ Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 1-3. See Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie Johnson, "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom," *Meridians* 12, no. 2, Harriet Tubman: A Legacy of Resistance (2014): 169-195; Rachel Feinstein, *When Rape was Legal: The Untold Story of Sexual Violence During Slavery* (Abingdon: Routledge Press, 2019); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Elizabeth Heineman, ed. "Introduction," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 3; Holly Porter, "Moral Spaces and Sexual Transgression: Understanding Rape in War and Post Conflict," *Development and Changes* 50, no. 4 (2019): 1009.

¹⁵ Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 38.

boundaries where consensual sex ended and rape began. Framing her work around the eighteenth-century legal definition of rape—“carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly and against her will”—Block distinguishes a two-tiered legal theory.¹⁶ Elite white masculinity cast sexual coercion (the lesser charge) as the unfortunate result of sexual desire rather than the intent to commit rape itself. Physical force and lack of consent did not indicate rape. Sexual acts could bleed into one another as consensual sex could be forceful, and rape could begin with consent. Men’s racial and class identities determined rape’s classification and punishment.¹⁷ Block’s study grounds my discussions of power and sexual violence in colonial and early America.

Many early American gender scholars use the example of rape to demonstrate the relationships between gender and the law. Kelly Ryan, Anna Clark, and Richard Godbeer illustrate how patriarchal prerogatives subsumed rape.¹⁸ Due to the power of the “resilient patriarchy”—the continued existence of paternalistic institutions after the Revolution, which claimed that patriarchal authority was the natural and desirable method to police sexual behaviour—officials claimed the right to enforce and prosecute certain sexual conduct as crimes. The laws of bestiality, prostitution, and rape cast sexual violence as a gendered act aimed at humiliating women.¹⁹ After the war, women and girls received increased scrutiny about their sexual behaviour. Clare A. Lyons shows that normative femininity dictated women were chaste and virtuous; those who did not conform were sexually deviant wantons responsible for their own abuse.²⁰

¹⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 4-5, 16-7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11; Rudolph, “Rape and Resistance,” 161-2, 171; Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 1-16; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 10, 14, 267.

¹⁹ Mark E. Kann, *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 1-2, 9-10, 33; Doron S. Ben-Atar and Richard D. Brown, *Taming Lust: Crimes Against Nature in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1-4, 30-1; Anna Clark, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845* (London: Pandora, 1987).

²⁰ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 4-5; Garthine Walker, “Rape, Acquittal and Culpability in Popular Crime Reports in England,” *Past and Present* 220, no. 1 (August 2013): 115-118.

Other important works, such as Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (1980), Rosemarie Zagarri's *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (2007), and Jan Lewis's "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic" (1987), outline the foundations of American femininity.²¹ The Revolution presented women with a level of autonomy not seen during the colonial era. During the war, women boycotted goods, ran family businesses, and often quartered troops at great personal risk.²² After the war, Republican motherhood engaged women politically while upholding the gendered status quo. Republican motherhood posited that the American woman's virtuous character would keep her husband morally righteous and help her raise good republican sons. Post-revolutionary writers continued to use female sexuality as a political metaphor. Centering women and their virtue at the heart of the republic encouraged Americans to be hypervigilant about sexual behaviour and dismissed women's physical contributions during the Revolution.²³ Extending these analyses to include rape, I show how sexual violence was central to conceptions of sexuality and womanhood.

Other scholars, such as the intellectual and political historians of the Revolution, have focused extensively on propaganda but have paid little attention to the role of rape within those materials. Instead, these historians primarily focus on the ideological and economic themes within propaganda. For example, the Progressive historians of the early twentieth century explain the American Revolution in socio-economic terms. These "scientifically savvy" historians challenge

²¹ See Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 194-204; Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women & Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 102-9; Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (October: 1987), 689-90; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

²² Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 155, 163, 168, 202-4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 299; Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 5; Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 107.

the power of enlightened reason as the cause of people's colonial discontent, pointing instead to the power of propaganda.²⁴ The Consensus historians of the mid-twentieth century interpreted the Revolution as a constitutional movement to preserve political liberty from a tyrannical imperial government. Influential Consensus historian Bernard Bailyn suggests that revolutionary publishers printed legitimate concerns shared by politically united colonists.²⁵ The modern scholar Carol Sue Humphrey suggests that newspapers encouraged a more democratic system. Revolutionary printers targeted all American colonists to educate them and encourage public engagement.²⁶

Historians of Revolutionary memory take this analysis one step further. Scholars such as Sarah J. Purcell and Michael Hattem analyze the impact of self-sacrifice on the production of historical culture. As “historical memories are built on specific interpretations of the past—either created or adopted—primarily for the purposes of forging [a] group identity,” early Americans created histories immediately after the Revolution to fill the need for unity.²⁷ However, post-revolutionaries largely ignored the impact of rape during the war in favour of glorifying military sacrifices and martyred soldiers. Early Americans produced and consumed glorious, sanitized, and sentimentalized ideological histories to ensure cohesive unity.²⁸

Recently, scholars have started to question the role of sexual violence in wartime propaganda and Revolutionary memory. Post-revolutionaries often incorporated ancient Greco-Roman mythology into their national identity. Historians such as Caroline Winterer uncover how

²⁴ Gordon S. Wood, “Reassessing Bernard Bailyn’s *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* on the Occasion of its Jubilee,” *The New England Quarterly* vol. 91, no. 1 (March 2018): 81-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-4.

²⁶ Carol Sue Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 198-202; Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communication in Early America* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014).

²⁷ Michael D. Hattem, *Past and Prologue: Politics and Memory in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 5.

²⁸ Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 3.

classical traditions underwrote republican ideology. Heavily influenced by classically focused education, early American elites appropriated histories such as the rapes of Lucretia and the Sabine women into their revolutionary context.²⁹ Some historians, such as Lauren Duval, Holger Hock, and Katharina Erhard, problematize sexual violence in newspapers, broadsides, paintings, plays, and speeches as political fodder.³⁰ Scholars agree that publishers used images of sexual violence, such as *The able doctor; or America swallowing the bitter draught*, to exemplify British immorality and justify the war. The assault on America by immoral British soldiers served as a rallying cry to protect women, but more importantly, to restore male American honour. Other scholars question the popularity of seduction narratives, sexual violence, and female sacrifice in post-Revolutionary memory. Sentimental novels nationalized sexuality, using gendered assumptions of female sexuality to gauge political morality. The nationalization of sexualized wartime memory reinscribed gendered restrictions to resonate in public male-dominated spaces.³¹ Adding to recent discussions about revolutionary memory, I show how the politicization of America's sexual liberty erased the individuality of women's sexual experiences during the war. This thesis helps to fill a gap regarding the power of rape's symbolism in memory and propaganda historiography.

It is important to note that gendered assumptions dominate the historiography of rape: women are the victims, and men are the perpetrators. This assumption denies the possibilities of

²⁹ Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2002), 18; Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2-8; Melissa Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of the Republic: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 5-6, 8.

³⁰ Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), xii, 11. Hock argues the romanticization of the American Revolution downplays the sheer brutality and violence of the war. Lauren Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of Our Enemies," Massachusetts Historical Society Presentation, Sept. 22, 2020.

³¹ Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 513; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 265-6.

male victims or female perpetrators and preserves gendered rape myths. Many scholars do not even acknowledge the possibility of male victimhood and solely use feminine pronouns. Some scholars, like Rhonda Copelon, justify this by stating that “while men and boys may be victims, this violence overwhelmingly targets women and girls.”³² Nevertheless, male victimhood is possible, and historians should not disregard it. As Thomas Foster argues in his work on sexual violence against enslaved Black men, it is critical to understand the discourse of masculinity and its impact on race and victimhood. Expanding on studies of female exploitation, scholars must also recognize the plausibility of male victimhood and its varying manifestations within early American manliness.³³ This thesis expands on other gender, legal, and social histories to highlight the correlation between rape and early American patriarchal power.

This work is divided into three chapters. Chapter One suggests that wartime rape and civilian rape in the eighteenth century exhibited remarkable similarities. By examining victim testimonies, newspaper accounts, and literary sources, this chapter argues that in both contexts, female victims were kidnapped or isolated, threatened with physical harm, and brutally abused. Women consistently pointed to their attempts to reject their perpetrators’ advances and to scream for help. Chapter Two highlights the politicization of rape as a Revolutionary metaphor. Wartime propagandists and leaders used the rapes perpetrated by British and Hessian soldiers to unify Americans and justify independence. Propagandists described British soldiers as lustful savages, symbolizing their invasion as the rape of female America’s liberty. Chapter Three examines post-revolutionary America and the legacy of sexual violence. After the war, Americans nationalized

³² Rhonda Copelon, “Towards Accountability for Violence Against Women in War: Progress and Challenges,” in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 232.

³³ Thomas A. Foster, *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 1-15, 30.

sexual virtue through sexualized memories of the war and an emphasis on female sexual morality. Sentimental novels and post-revolutionary printed rape trials show the evolving ideas of gender within stable pre-revolutionary rape conceptions. Female sexual morality continued to be seen as a gauge for political morality.

Influenced by modern sexual violence historians, such as Elizabeth Heineman and Estelle Freedman, I have chosen to use a broad definition of rape. As post-structuralist theorists have argued, definitions are not stable and change throughout time.³⁴ The United States Justice Department presently defines rape as “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”³⁵ For the first time, the definition includes any gender of victim or perpetrator and instances where the victim cannot give consent due to incapacity.³⁶ “Sexual assault” has been defined as any act of sexual violence or abuse. This definition includes rape, attempted rape, sexual coercion through physical assault, voyeurism, and harassment.³⁷ Strictly adhering to the gendered eighteenth-century definition threatens to silence the experiences of those who did not fit the rigid criteria. The terms rape, sexual assault, and sexual violence are used interchangeably to demonstrate the power of eighteenth-century sexual violence. Using a broad definition of sexual violence is necessary to complete respectful and inclusive victim-based histories and highlight a gap in the historical narrative.

³⁴ Emily M. Hall, review of *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*, by Sharon Block, *Journal of African American History* 93, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 574.

³⁵ N.A. “Updated definition of rape,” The United States Department of Justice Archives, Jan. 6, 2012.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ N.A. “Sexual Assault,” Office on Women’s Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Mar. 14, 2019.

Rape is a demanding topic to study. As historian Shani D’Cruze states, authors and readers “inhabit a culture deeply implicated in sexual violence. The project is necessarily and unavoidably political. An attempt at dispassionate, discrete authorship runs the risk of becoming voyeuristic and exploitative.”³⁸ Sources and methodologies are often fragmented, and scholars must be creative to find the voices of rape victims who are often silent in the historical record.³⁹ There is something inherently disturbing about being pleased to find records of sexual violence. Nevertheless, studies of rape are critical to undertake. Rape can tell historians about the complex intersections of political, gendered, social, and economic connections in a given culture. Rape evolves in historically specific contexts and reproduces culturally symbolic sexual identities. Challenging what historian Marisa Fuentes describes as the “mutilated historicity” of the archives—the disfigurement and violation of historical actors—creates the space to question the power relations of a historical era and to remember the traumas of sexual violence empathetically.⁴⁰ Rape does have a place in historical discourse, and its victims should be remembered.

³⁸ Shani D’Cruze, “Approaching the history of rape and sexual violence: notes towards research,” *Women’s Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (February 2011): 377.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Sabine Sielke, *Reading Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in American Literature and Culture, 1790-1990* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3; Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1-7. Fuentes specifically uses this term in relation to the records of enslaved women in the archives.

Chapter One: “Carnal Knowledge Forcibly Against Her Will”: The Continuities of Eighteenth-Century Rape

The impacts of wartime rape have gained international attention since the late twentieth century. In the 1970s, many scholars considered rape as a marginal expression of extremist, fringe manhood, something that occurred outside the normal bounds of society. In the 1990s, feminist scholars argued that rape and sexually violent war crimes were central to patriarchal societies.¹ Feminist historians adamantly refuted biologically driven arguments that suggested that rape satisfies a “sexual urge” caused by high testosterone levels. Rather, wartime rape humiliates the victims, intensifies aggression towards enemy soldiers, and bestows the perpetrators with a sense of power and domination.² These scholars recognized that rape does have a history and warrants historical attention.

Despite the growing attention to wartime rape, it remains an “unspeakable” war crime paradoxically politicized through debates and remembrance.³ Most notably, theories suggest rape is an inevitable “weapon of war.” Conflict studies scholars propose that the female body is part of the battlefield, making women disproportionately victims of wartime rape.⁴ Current social science

¹ Sharon Block, “How Should We Look at Rape in Early America?” *History Compass* 4, no. 3 (2006): 604; Edward Shorter, “On Writing the History of Rape,” *Signs* 3, no. 2 (Winter, 1977): 471, in Sharon Block, “How Should We Look at Rape in Early America?” *History Compass* 4, no. 3 (2006): 604; Nicola Henry, *War and Rape: Law, Memory, and Justice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3. Rape was an integral component of the ethnic-cleansing campaign in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Starting in the 1990s, rape began to be prosecuted as a war crime and victims testified in international courts. Henry states this movement thrust rape into historical consciousness. Many scholars discuss theory of wartime rape within the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina. See Henry, 1-3; Ruth Seifert, “The Second Front: The Logic of Sexual violence in Wars,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 19, no. 1-2 (1996); Susan Brownmiller, “Making Female bodies in the Battlefield,” in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 180-3.

² Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 11-2, 32; Seifert, “The Second Front,” 35-6; Harry Feldmann, *Vergewaltigung und ihre psychischen Folgen: Ein Beitrag zur post-traumatischen Belastungsreaktion* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1992) in Ruth Seifert, “The Second Front: The Logic of Sexual violence in Wars,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 19, no. 1-2 (1996): 36.

³ Henry, *War and Rape*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4; Holly Porter, “Moral Spaces and Sexual Transgression: Understanding Rape in War and Post Conflict,” *Development and Changes* 50, no. 4 (2019): 1010; Brownmiller, “Making Female Bodies,” 180-3; Claudia Card, “Rape as a Weapon of War,” *Hypathia* 11, no. 4 (November 1996): 5-18, in Holly Porter, “Moral Spaces and Sexual

theories suggest that the general resistance to eliminating daily gendered violence and women's inequality supports a naturalized sexually violent culture seemingly separate from times of conflict. Consequently, wartime rape is often considered inordinately worse than average assaults and isolated from the larger historical narrative.⁵

This dominant theory presents a significant problem for historical studies beyond the twentieth century and the confines of war. As a historical process, rape is culturally constructed. Sexual violence studies track different constructions of power in historical narratives. Historians such as Estelle Freedman illustrate how intersecting factors such as gender, race, war, and the law redefine rape throughout history. Researching rape in America from slavery to suffragism, Freedman's monograph demonstrates rape's malleability. Redefinitions of rape support cultural expressions of power. The fear of the "Black male rapist" justified race-driven exclusionary policies. Gender and race determined rapists' identities and victimology.⁶ The multitude of behaviours, patterns, and definitions of abuse create historically specific rape cultures that are not transhistoric or limited to conflict.

Rape adheres to cyclical constructions of power. By examining primary sources such as victim testimonies, newspaper accounts, and military documents, historians can identify similar patterns in assaults specific to and separate from the American Revolution. How soldiers propositioned American women and reacted to their resistance resembled civilian rapes and connected to preconceived ideas of gender and violence. The law specified victimology and

Transgression: Understanding Rape in War and Post Conflict," *Development and Change* 50, no.4 (2019): 1010; Seifert, "The Second Front," 35-8; Rhonda Copelon, "Towards Accountability for Violence Against Women in War: Progress and Challenges," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 232; Alexandra Stiglmeier, ed. *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 85.

⁵ Copelon, "Towards Accountability," 234; Block, "How Should We Look at Rape in Early America?," 603-4.

⁶ Estelle Freedman, ed., "Introduction," *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1-3.

outlined the “correct” response to sexual violence. During the Revolution, women and girls still followed these specific protocols to ensure they would be believed. Rape and sexual violence were common during the war, but the patterns of assault were not distinctive from peacetime. Wartime rape adhered to previous definitions and patterns of rape cemented in Anglo-American conceptions of gender, race, and the law.

This chapter builds on the expansive historiography of early American gender and sexuality. Scholars such as Susan Klepp and Thomas Foster demonstrate gender’s impact on sex, marriage, and procreation.⁷ Eighteenth-century masculinity dictated the levels of appropriate sexual violence and tied masculine identities with beliefs about fertility.⁸ Works by historians such as Holly Mayer, Sally Smith Booth, and Mary Beth Norton are paired with more conventional military histories to show the challenges women faced during the war and how they adapted. Rape was considered the theoretical, always present, and unfortunate consequence of femininity.⁹ These histories contextualize rape’s role within conceptions of gender and sex.

Many historians use rape to analyze the complex relationship between gender and the law. Sharon Block’s work about sexual violence in early America uses sources originating from twenty-five archives and dating from 1700 to 1820. Block outlines early Americans’ conceptions of sex, race, and violence within the law. Sexual power and social power were inextricable: “The process

⁷ Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitations in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

⁸ Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man*, 60-1.

⁹ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), xix; Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 10; Kelly A. Ryan, *Regulating Passion: Sexuality and Patriarchal Rule in Massachusetts, 1700-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Kelly A. Ryan, *Everyday Crimes: Social Violence and Civil Rights in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); Sally Smith Booth, *The Women of ’76* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), 105-6, 181; Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2016); Harry M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 1999).

of the attack, an individual's response to the incident, and the range of available institutional redress all depended on social identities and status relations."¹⁰ Legal historians such as Kelly Ryan and Kathleen M. Brown illustrate the overlapping consequences of gender and race within patriarchal power and common law. Specifically, these scholars demonstrate how rape's encoding within the law was symptomatic of a broader economy of patriarchal violence. Their analyses show how rape and resistance helped perpetuate cyclical rationalizations of violence.¹¹ This chapter uses these frameworks to analyze wartime rape and highlight how rapists adapted and perpetuated sexual violence practices during the war.

Sexual violence scholars challenge the reproduction of violence in their work. Following the influence of Michel-Rolph Trouillot, historian Marisa Fuentes questions the historical biases in primary sources.¹² Fuentes' "along the bias grain" methodology demonstrates that the "absence of explicit representation" does not mean sexual violence did not happen. Rather, scholars can contextualize fragmentary evidence with other spatial or historical frameworks, subverting the overbearing power relations embedded in sources.¹³ Sharon Block goes against the conventional use of surnames for previously introduced individuals to avoid reinscribing racialized power imbalances. As enslaved people were usually identified through their first names, Block avoids

¹⁰ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-8, 240-1.

¹¹ Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 6-7, 43; Elaine Forman Crane, *Witches, Wife Beaters, and Whores: Common Law and Common Fold in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996); Edward G. White, *American Legal History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 22; Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1-11.

¹³ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 4-5, 7; Shani D'Cruze, "Approaching the History of Rape and Sexual Violence: Notes Towards Research," *Women's History Review* 1, no. 3 (1993): 377-9; Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2-3.

reconstructing this form of white privilege in her work. For Block, first names encourage readers to recognize the intimacy of sexual violence, reifying the victims as people and not statistics.¹⁴

Following Marisa Fuentes' and Sharon Block's leadership, this chapter aims to personalize the ambiguous and objectified experiences of assault.¹⁵ Where applicable, the names of survivors are given, and their experiences are shared. The violence experienced in New York and New Jersey, 1776-1777, is of primary importance to this study. The United States National Archives has historically safeguarded the recently digitized survivor depositions in the Papers of the Continental Congress. As some of the most cited sexual violence narratives, these documents are crucial to reconstructing the power of rape during the war. While I applaud Block's intention, I continue to use surnames when referencing previously introduced individuals. Learning and sharing experiences of sexual violence are not the same as truly knowing these people. Establishing a superficial relationship with sexual violence survivors suggests that rape is only worthy of historical attention if we are emotionally invested. Historians must reconstruct these intimate and painful moments of American history empathetically and responsibly.¹⁶

The fear of wartime rape was a palpable reality for many women and children during the American Revolutionary era. Starting in 1768, Bostonian women reported numerous attempted rapes by British soldiers during the city's pre-revolutionary occupation. Women were grabbed, followed, and carried off by soldiers, and many soldiers behaved "with great Insolence" towards the women in the community.¹⁷ On June 8, 1769, the *Supplement to the New-York Journal* published an article criticizing the British troops' debauched violence. The article explicitly tells

¹⁴ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 14.

¹⁵ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 1-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 204; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 115; "A Journal of Occurrences, continued," *The New-York Journal* (New York, NY), Dec. 29, 1768.

the story of a British soldier's attempted rape of an older woman. The woman was alone in her home when the soldier approached her to talk about the Bible. When the soldier asked the woman to look at a fake injury, he seized her shoulders, threw her on the floor, and attempted to rape her. Eventually, the woman's screams and resistance discouraged the soldier.¹⁸

Female camp followers were also vulnerable to sexual abuse. Camp followers included soldiers' families, tradespeople employed by the army, and refugees.¹⁹ Many African Americans joined the British army following Lord Dunmore's November 1775 Proclamation. Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, determined that any disenfranchised servants or African Americans would be freed upon joining His Majesty's army. Dunmore wished to deprive American planters of their workers while simultaneously increasing the British army's ranks.²⁰ Female camp followers earned their keep by working as laundresses, cooks, and nurses. Women provided ammunition, carried water, and looted bodies during battles, doing jobs that allowed men to fight and rest. As Holly Mayer states, by 1750, almost all of the British army's nurses were women.²¹ Many women did not follow the military by choice. For example, Loyalist women had to follow their husbands into battle. English loyalty caused many women to lose their homes and livelihoods, forcing them to flee. Many Loyalist women had to follow the military as vulnerable and isolated refugees, putting them at risk of being violated.²²

¹⁸ "A Journal of Occurrences, April 30," *Supplement to the New-York Journal* (New York, NY) June 8, 1769.

¹⁹ Holly A. Mayer, "Camp Followers," *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution: Library of Military History*, ed. Harold E. Selesky, Vol. 1 (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 157.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 16; "Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, 1775," Nov. 7, 1775, onboard the *William* near Norfolk.

²¹ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 8; Mayer, "Camp Followers," 157; Booth, *Women of '76*, 181; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 212.

²² Booth, *The Women of '76*, 182-4; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 213-4.

Some of the most explicit examples of sexual violence occurred during the British campaign into New York and New Jersey, 1776-1777. Beginning with the landing of General Howe and the British army in Staten Island on July 2, 1776, the troops' methodical advancement into New York and New Jersey left a trail of abuse. Alan Taylor reports that half of the Royal Navy, two-thirds of the British army, and 8000 Hessian mercenaries were involved in the campaign.²³ After months of battles, Washington's retreat across New Jersey signalled a significant turning point in the war. British forces raged across New York and New Jersey, pillaging unchecked. Indiscriminate of age, sex, or loyalty, British and Hessian forces burned, robbed, and destroyed cities.²⁴

Women and girls were particularly at risk for sexual violence. A 1776 public notice from Bucks County, New Jersey, states that sixteen young women from Hopewell, New Jersey, reportedly fled the British army and sought shelter on the mountain near Ralph Harts. This information was given to the British, and the girls were later harboured at the military camp. Historians will never know the girls' identities or how long they were kept as prisoners.²⁵ The notice also details how American soldiers found three abused women on the Jersey Shore. The soldiers surmised British troops abused the women, with the youngest girl at fifteen years old assaulted that morning by a British officer. The notice concludes with the tale of the attempted rape of William Smith's daughter. A Hessian officer almost raped Smith's (unnamed) daughter, but her father saved her, killing the officer before succumbing to his wounds.²⁶

²³ Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 162-3.

²⁴ N.A. *A Brief Narrative of the Ravages of the British and Hessians at Princeton in 1776-1777*, ed. Varnum Lansing Collins (New York: The New York Times and Arno Press, 1968), 1-7, 12.

²⁵ "Bucks County, December 14, 1776. The Progress of the British and Hessian Troops though New Jersey has been attended with such scenes of Desolation and Outrage, as would disgrace the most barbarous Nations," Philadelphia, PA, 1776; Booth, *Women of '76*, 108; Hooock, *Scars of Independence*, 164.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Some of the most cited examples of rape during the American Revolution are the testimonies of Sarah Cain, Elizabeth Cain, and Abigail Palmer.²⁷ The testimonies of these three young Hunterdon County, New Jersey residents are extremely distressing and offer a glimpse into the sexually charged violence experienced by many girls and women. The three girls were at Edmund Palmer's house when five British soldiers terrorized them in December 1776. Soldiers demanded Palmer's granddaughter, Abigail, accompany them to the back room. When Abigail Palmer refused and screamed, the soldiers threatened to knock her eyes out. Despite her grandfather's and aunt's pleas for her to be spared, the thirteen-year-old Palmer was raped by three soldiers for three consecutive days.²⁸ Soldiers also raped fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Cain. Soldiers demanded Cain accompany her sister Sarah and Abigail Palmer to the British camp. After Cain refused the soldiers' demands, they threatened to shoot her in the head if she cried out during her assault. On the third day of Palmer's abuse, soldiers dragged Cain into the same room and raped both girls. Like Elizabeth Cain and Abigail Palmer, Sarah Cain also begged not to go to the camp. Based on Sarah's March 1777 testimony, she states:

...[soldiers said she] should go with them, to their Camp about three quarter of a mile from the place, or swore they would poison her or Blow her Brains out...then charged his Bayonet against her Breast, and swore he would Run her thro the Heart if she Refused to go, when she this Deponent Beged and Intreated to be Excused, & told them she could not leave her Parents, but they Damn'd her Parents & said what was her Parents to them & then two of them seiz'd hold of her & dragd her into a Back Room against all her cries...²⁹

²⁷ See Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 203; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 164-66; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 120-1; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 81-2.

²⁸ Deposition of Abigail Palmer, Mar. 22, 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress (hereafter cited as PCC), item 53, reel 66.

²⁹ Deposition of Sarah Cain, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66; Deposition of Elizabeth Cain, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

Soldiers took the girls to the camp, where they were raped for another two days. Finally, the girls were brought to a local farmhouse where the Cain sisters' father, Thomas Cain, found them the following morning.³⁰

Each girl's assault followed a pattern. Soldiers demanded the girls go somewhere, either a back room or the military camp, and when the girls refused, they were threatened with bodily harm. This abusive pattern is also evident in other testimonies. An invading soldier told Rose Luke to retrieve a harness from a neighbour's house. After she refused, the soldiers dragged Luke to her neighbour's and told her to go up the stairs, or they would kill her. When Luke begged for one of the residence's slave women to go up with her, the soldier threatened to kill her as well.³¹ Mary Campbell's experience is similarly distressing. Another Hunterdon County resident, Campbell's testimony resembles the experiences of Palmer and the Cain sisters. Two British soldiers came to Campbell's house and asked to speak to her. When Campbell refused, the soldiers dragged her and her mother to an empty shop nearby. At the shop, the soldiers threatened to run a bayonet through both women's hearts if Campbell did not stop crying. Three soldiers raped Campbell, who was at least five months pregnant.³²

Each assault follows a similar process. The soldiers demanded the women go somewhere outside of their home or isolated from their immediate community. Each woman refused to go outright or tried to excuse herself. When the soldier(s) refused to let them leave, they threatened their victims, and the women were forcibly isolated and raped. It is crucial to understand that none

³⁰ Ibid. Mary Phillips, Edmund Palmer's married daughter was also raped at the same time, but her deposition is missing from the *Fold3 by Ancestry* database where the depositions are also available.

³¹ Rose Luke Testimony, Jul. 27, 1779, PCC, item 53, reel 66 in "To George Washington From Brigadier General Samuel Holden Parsons, 31 Jul. 1779," in *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 21, *1 June–31 July 1779*, ed. William M. Ferraro (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012, 758–769), 234-5.

³² Deposition of Mary Campbell, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

of the women were threatened with rape specifically. The soldiers did not hesitate to threaten their victim with physical harm like a blow to the head or a bayonet through the heart if the woman did not comply. Excessive violence was an integral component within the pattern of rape. Rapists expected multiple rejections and used fear of death or excessive violence to subdue resistance.

Similar patterns are also visible before the war; for example, in the civilian rape case of Abial Hollowell vs. Bryan Sheehen. On September 13, 1771, Sheehen was imprisoned for the beating, wounding, and rape of Abial Hollowell. According to a publication circulated on the day of his execution, Sheehen relentlessly pursued Hollowell despite knowing she was married. The pair met at the house of a Mrs. Poor in Marblehead, where he inquired her name and marital status. Hollowell and Sheehen ran into each other again at Mrs. Poor's, where Hollowell rejected Sheehen's sexual and monetary propositions. When he returned to Mrs. Poor's again, Sheehen ignored the reiterations of Hollowell's marital status and threatened the women hiding her. During this altercation, Hollowell hid in a closet and then on a bed covered with sheets. Sheehen found Hollowell again when she and Mrs. Poor went to the well, and he renewed his propositions. That night Hollowell was in bed with her two children when Sheehen came up to the room with a lighted candle. Frightened, Hollowell asked him what he wanted and urged him to leave. After Hollowell rejected his offers, Sheehen threatened to kill her if she made any noise during the assault.³³

It is unclear where the Hollowell children were during the assault, but neighbours heard Abial's cries for help and rescued her. Hollowell's testimony was supported by the physician who

³³ "An Account of the Life of Bryan Sheehen, this Day executed in Salem, for committing a Rape on the Body of Abial Hollowell, Wife of Benjamin Hollowell, of Marblehead, of which Crime he was convicted before the Superior Court of Judicature, held at Salem, in November last and received sentence of Death accordingly [...]" (Portsmouth, NH: Daniel and Robert Luist Fowle, 1772); "Salem, September 24," *The Essex Gazette* (Salem, MA), Sept. 24, 1771; "Salem, November 12," *The Massachusetts Gazette, and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* (Boston, MA), Nov. 18, 1771; "Thursday, November 14. Boston," *The Massachusetts Spy* (Boston, MA), Nov. 14, 1771.

examined her after the attack, and by the witnesses in the house. Doctors examined Sheehen twice, and he remained in jail until his trial in early November. Despite having blood on his hands and clothes, Sheehen pleaded not guilty, claiming his actions were consensual.³⁴ The trial lasted six hours, and after an hour of deliberation, the jury found Sheehen guilty of rape. Sheehen, the first person in Essex County to be executed for rape since 1692, was executed on January 16, 1772.³⁵

Rape patterns show that sexual violence is contingent on power. Gendered, racialized, and political power dictated how society defined rape during the Revolutionary era. For instance, eighteenth-century conceptions of gender strongly supported patriarchal ideologies of sex and violence. In every way—physically, religiously, politically—women were considered inferior to men and more likely to fall victim to immoral sexuality.³⁶ Not only were women’s bodies “scientifically” proven inferior to men’s, but a common misconception suggested that women had to orgasm, and therefore, enjoy the interaction to conceive a child. As Susan Klepp states, “Women’s essence was found in their productivity...Men were simply human, women were “the Sex.”³⁷

In contrast, eighteenth-century normative masculinity was based on control and proper sexual behaviour. Normative heterosexual sex—the method of purposeful procreation—was by and for men.³⁸ Sex was an unequal partnership, and physical force was not the clear division

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 139-40; Sharon Block, “Rape in the American Revolution: Process, Reaction, and Public Re-Creation,” in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 25, 37-8; Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 7; Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 219; Samuel Farr, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence: or, A succinct and compendious description of such tokens in the human body as are requisite to determine the judgment of a coroner, and of courts of law, in cases of divorce, rape, murder* (London: T. Becket, 1788), 43.

³⁷ Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 4.

³⁸ Thomas Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 24-5, 65, 68.

between coercion and consent. As historian Thomas Foster states, masculinity was a double-edged sword: men were supposed to control their passions while remaining authoritative.³⁹ Male and female sexuality were direct opposites: men desired sex, and women desired chastity. Male sexual dominance accommodated a moderate degree of violence. Sharon Block asserts that “sex was a battle, and women were expected to accept (if not enjoy) their defeat at men’s hands gracefully.”⁴⁰ Men could justify forceful persuasion because societal standards warranted a degree of physical strength.⁴¹

Patriarchal power defined rape. The eighteenth-century definition of rape, “carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly against her will,” suggests rape was the unfortunate consequence of womanhood.⁴² This definition dictates rape as a heterosexual and gendered act only done against a woman or a girl by a man with extraordinary violence. Rape was the result of religious, social, and sexual immorality. This male-centric definition of rape codified what violence was acceptable.⁴³ According to Block, there were two forms of sexual violence: forced sex and sexual coercion. Forced sex was the unfortunate result of sexual desire and not necessarily the intent of the sexual act itself. Women were raped when they refused to comply with sexual offers.⁴⁴ Sexual coercion was the result of passions and the extension of normative sexual practices. Sexual coercion was less severe than forced sex and largely reinforced gendered conceptions of sex and violence. Women had to prove that irregular violence occurred to claim rape.⁴⁵

³⁹ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 20.

⁴¹ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 19.

⁴² Ibid, 16-7; Anna Clark, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence: Sexual Assault in England, 1770-1845* (London: Pandora, 1987), 24, 39.

⁴³ Ibid., Another variation of this definition is: “carnal knowledge of any woman above the age of ten against her will, and of a woman-child under the age of ten years with or against her will.” Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, 2 vols (London, 1736), vol. I, 628.

⁴⁴ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 16-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 20-21, 23, 25.

The eighteenth-century legal system reinforced gendered conceptions of rape. According to English common law, rape was a capital crime. Massachusetts colonial laws declared

If any Man shall RAVISH any maid, or single Woman, committing Carnal Copulation with her by force, against her own will; that is above the age of ten years, he shall be punished either with death or with some other grievous punishment according to the circumstances, as the Judges or General Court shall determine.⁴⁶

In Boston, 1675, the General Court Sessions confirmed that “Rapes, Ravishments, Unnatural Abuses and Adultery shall be punished with Death” while “Fornication & other dissolute Lasciviousness shall be punished with Discretion according to the quality of the Offence.”⁴⁷ Public executions and punishments ensured that even those with little education had considerable knowledge about the law. The law unified early Americans around a powerful value system.⁴⁸

Likewise, there were also laws penalizing militaristic sexual violence. Neither the Continental nor British Army sanctioned rape. In *A Treatise on Courts Martial*, initially published in 1769, Stephen Payne Adye of the Royal Regiment Artillery cautions British soldiers about their actions.⁴⁹ The treatise is divided into two parts. The first section details Adye’s remarks on martial

⁴⁶ William H. Whitmore, Record Commissioner, ed. “Capital Crimes, The General Laws of the Massachusetts Colony, Revised and Published, by Order of the General Court, October 1658,” in *The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts* [...] (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1890), 229. Treason, murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, burglary, arson, counterfeiting, and theft were capital crimes in England and America. However, capital crimes were not uniform in the earliest colonial criminal codes. Rape was not a capital crime Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania in the seventeenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century these laws had changed throughout the colonies. See Stuart Banner, *The Death Penalty: An American History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5-6; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth* (Boston: William White, 1855-1861), 11:12; John D. Cushing, ed., *The Earliest Printed Laws of Pennsylvania* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1978), 37-38, 40, 44; *The Colonial Laws of New York* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1978) 1:20-21, 77 in Stuart Banner, *The Death Penalty: An American History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.

⁴⁷ Whitmore, ed., “Several Laws and Orders Made at the Sessions of the General Court Held at Boston the 13th of October 1675. As Also at the Sessions of Court held at Boston, the 3d. of November 1675,” (Cambridge: Samuel Green, 1675), in *The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts* [...] (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1890), 446.

⁴⁸ Crane, *Witches, Wife Beaters, and Whores*, 5, 11, 14-6; White, *American Legal History*, 68; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 142-3 note 26.

⁴⁹ Stephen Payne Adye, *A Treatise on Courts Martial. Containing, I. Remarks on martial law, and courts martial in general. II. The manner of preceding against offenders. To which is added, an essay, on military punishments and rewards* (New York: Printed by H. Gaine, 1769), i-iii.

law and the origins of courts-martial. The Court of Chivalry and the Articles of War were the foundations of courts-martial, and undisciplined soldiers were demoted, discharged, or executed.⁵⁰ In the second section, Adye contextualizes various legal opinions within military law. Adye uses rape to illustrate how the military did not make distinctions between the principal actor and an accessory in a felony case; all parties would be charged as guilty and deserving of the punishment regardless of sobriety or ignorance of the law.⁵¹

During the 1776 New York campaign, two drunk British soldiers were apprehended for the rape of Elizabeth Johnstone. John Dunn and John Lusty entered Johnstone's Long Island home and took turns raping her in front of Johnstone's four-year-old daughter. The pair threatened to kill Johnstone if she resisted. During the trial, Johnstone confirmed that she called out for help and that both men penetrated her and ejaculated. Witnesses testified that both men were intoxicated at the time of the assault. The army executed both Dunn and Lusty for their crime.⁵²

In contrast, surviving evidence of Continental Army soldiers raping girls and women as they marched throughout the countryside is remarkably limited. The Continental Army's stance on soldier discipline mirrored that of its British counterpart.⁵³ Section X, Article 1 of the American Articles of War of 1776 states that

Whenever any officer or soldier shall be accused of a capital crime, or of having used violence, or committed any offense against the persons or property of the good people of any of the United American States, such as is punishable by the known laws of the land, the commanding officer and officers of every regiment, troop, or party, to which the person or persons so accused shall belong, are hereby

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1-6.

⁵¹ Ibid., 51-3; 100-1.

⁵² Trial of John Dunn and John Lusty, Sept. 7, 1776, War Office 71/82, 412-25 in Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), 171; Block, "Rape in the American Revolution," 29.

⁵³ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 4-5. According to Mayer, the American Articles of War of 1776 contained all the British regulations in the British Articles of War of 1765, See Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 13.

required...to be aiding assisting to the officers of justice in apprehending and securing the person or persons so accused, in order to bring them to a trial.⁵⁴

Section IX Article 1 states that every commanding officer is responsible for redressing abuses committed by those under his command. Those who refuse to punish soldiers would also face a court-martial as if they also committed the crime.⁵⁵ Section XIII Articles 11, 13, and 16 prohibit soldiers from harming any individuals protected by the military. Soldiers who “maliciously destroy any property whatsoever belonging to the good people of the United States... [shall] be punished according to the nature and degree of the offense.”⁵⁶ Soldiers were legally prohibited from rampaging throughout the American countryside. Scholars note that greater oversight or American soldiers’ awareness of their coexistence with women after the war may have curbed sexually violent behaviour.⁵⁷ Regardless, both militaries prohibited sexual violence. Both the Continental and British armies expected men to behave honourably and with discipline, but as we see with civilian rape cases, the law did not stop men from abusing women.

If a woman wanted to report her abuser to the authorities, it was her responsibility to prove her abuse according to a set of physical and behavioural standards.⁵⁸ Legal scholars, judges, and lawyers throughout Britain and America quoted Lord Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale’s infamous caution that “rape is a most detestable crime, and therefore ought severely and impartially to be punished with death; but it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved, and harder to be defended by the part accused, tho never so innocent.”⁵⁹ As a result,

⁵⁴ Journals of the Continental Congress, Articles of War; Sept. 20, 1776, Section X, Articles 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Section IX, Article 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Section XIII, Articles 11, 13, 16.

⁵⁷ Hooch, *Scars of Independence*, 173-4.

⁵⁸ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 129; Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, vol. I, 635; Garthine Walker, “Rape, Acquittal and Culpability in Popular Crime Reports in England, c. 1670- c. 1750,” *Past and Present* 220 no. 1 (2013): 125; J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 125.

physical evidence of the attack, such as cuts, inflammation, or blood, as well as eye-witness reports, were essential to receiving a favourable legal judgement.⁶⁰ Women also had to prove their resistance to the assault by fighting back and screaming for help. Without evidence of such cries, many thought “the like circumstances carry a strong presumption, that her testimony is false or feigned.”⁶¹

Most importantly, women had to prove that penile penetration and male ejaculation occurred. Legally, rape was a heterosexual crime and any form of sexual violence that did not include penile penetration did not classify as rape. Rape by objects—tree branches, brooms, fire pokers, even hands—could not be indicted.⁶² Legal jurists such as Hale helped codify rape as an example of abhorrent masculine power. Hale dictates in his influential legal treatise, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, that penetration and ejaculation were the hallmarks of rape:

The essential words in an indictment of rape are *rapuit* [ravish] & *carnaliter cognovit* [(he) carnally knew], but *carnaliter cognovit*, nor any other circumlocution without the word *rapuit* are not sufficient in a legal sense to express rape...To make a rape there must be an actual penetration or *res in re...*and therefore *emission seminis* is indeed an evidence of penetration, but singly of itself it makes neither rape nor buggery, but it is only an attempt of rape or buggery, and is severely punished by fine and imprisonment.⁶³

Published after Hale’s death in 1676, the *Historia Placitorum Coronae* heavily influenced rape law and still remains a principal authority on common law crimes.⁶⁴ Hale’s work was so influential

⁶⁰ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 88-9, 105-6, 109-110.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 131-2; Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, vol. I, 633.

⁶² Unfortunately, there are many examples of assault by object in history. Interestingly, historians know that Bryan Sheehen used his hand to abuse Abial Hollowell. He was arrested with blood on his hand and the reports of his life, and the assault specifically mention this. It is possible that Hollowell was also abused per the rape standard and the newspapers wanted to stress the sheer vulgarity of her abuse. See “An Account of the Life of Bryan Sheehen.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18; Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, vol. I, 628; Definition of *Rapuit*, Online Dictionary of Law Terms and Legal Dictionary; Definition of *Carnaliter Cognovit*. Online Dictionary of Law Terms and Legal Dictionary.

⁶⁴ David Eryl Corbet Yale, “Sir Matthew Hale: English legal scholar,” *Encyclopæ Britannica, Inc.*

that Stephen Adye cites it in *A Treatise on Courts Martial* as does famous English jurist and judge William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69).⁶⁵

Evidence of penile penetration was not enough to carry a rape charge; an individual's character strongly influenced the believability of rape claims. Many physicians purported that the physical harm triggered by rape had other causes.⁶⁶ For example, many thought that if a woman's vulva was distended and flaccid, or her clitoris or vagina was enlarged, she was not a virgin, which made her less likely to be believed.⁶⁷ Some believed female cries of resistance were not actual attempts to stop the assault but mere gestures to societal expectations of modesty and self-serving deflections of responsibility.⁶⁸ Assaulted women were expected to pursue legal recourse against their abuser immediately. If a woman waited, it could be perceived that she was a willing party and only sought redress to cover up her immorality or an extramarital pregnancy. Eighteenth-century society was extraordinarily concerned with protecting men from malicious victimization by salaciously immoral women.⁶⁹

Accusations of rape from young, white female virgins and respectable married women were most likely to gain community support. Modesty was the hallmark of womanhood: if a woman did not behave in a chaste manner and engaged in sex before marriage, she was deemed untrustworthy.⁷⁰ In a sermon preached about Bryan Sheehen's execution, Pastor James Diman stressed the relationship between rape and immorality. The author suggested, "that the dignity of

⁶⁵ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765), Book IV, 215.

⁶⁶ Farr, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*, 43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 27, 40.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 40, 88.

the person against whom a crime is committed, greatly inhances [sic] the crime.”⁷¹ The “ensnaring company of lewd women” caused many men to act immorally. Diman believed that the houses of “whorish women” were the way to hell and counteracted divine law, which restrained male lust.⁷² By replacing Sheehen’s crime with a narrative of the dangers of female sexuality, Diman justified the gendered double-standard of patriarchal society.

Rape convictions were largely limited to those who attacked women that the patriarchy classified as valuable.⁷³ This meant that many lower-class and servant women were further disadvantaged at seeking legal retribution for assault. Many masters assumed they had the right to female bodies and controlled daily routines. Masters could coerce their dependents into submission through promises of marriage and financial gain or demand sexual gratification through violence.⁷⁴ As Block outlines, “a household head’s power over dependent woman’s labor could be translated into opportunities for sexual coercion without the taboo of incest or child rape.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, seeking legal retribution required women to submit intimate details of the experience and their sexual lives to male Justices of the Peace (JPs), many of whom were socially superior in wealth, respectability, and age.⁷⁶ Victims were again subjected to patriarchal power; a public trial could impact their ability to find work, and if JPs were not convinced that there was enough evidence, cases could be downgraded to attempted rape or misdemeanours.⁷⁷

⁷¹ James Diman, A.M. Pastor of the Second Church in Salem, *A sermon, preached at Salem, January 16, 1772. Being the day on which Bryan Sheehen was executed, for committing a rape, on the body of Abial Hollowell, the wife of Benjamin Hollowell, of Marblehead* (Salem: Samuel and Ebenezer Hall, 1772), 8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 20-1.

⁷³ Daniel Williams, “The Gratification of that Corrupt and Lawless Passion: Character Types and Themes in Early New England Rape Narratives,” in *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 195.

⁷⁴ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 64 note 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁶ Ryan, *Regulating Passion*, 29.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 164-7; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 64 note 15, 113.

The master/servant dynamic also impacted who could be perceived as an abuser. The patriarchy was not a uniform system. Wealthy white men had the funds and social connections to hire lawyers or avoid paternity suits and courtrooms. The press presented those who did not have access to these privileges as unable to control their passions, “preserving the logic that elite men were the proper leaders of the colony.”⁷⁸ For example, there was a distinct class element to Sheehen’s rape trial. Sheehen was a former servant of Hollowell’s husband, a shipbuilder, dismissed because of his carelessness and impiety. After leaving Hollowell’s employ, Sheehen avoided indentured servitude by fighting in the Seven Year’s War, his wife cheated on him, and he abandoned his children. As David Williams proposes, the fact that Sheehen raped the wife of his former master is unlikely to have gone unnoticed by their community. Sheehen’s abandonment of his family and his class status suggests that his actions symbolically attacked the patriarchy that he could not emulate.⁷⁹ Without Hollowell’s marital status and Sheehen’s rejection of patriarchal standards, the verdict may not have been as harsh. The nature of master/servant relationships reduces the opportunities for finding rape accusations against masters in the historical record.⁸⁰

These social and legal barriers restricted many women from bringing accusations against their abusers. According to Block’s initial analysis, of the seventy-three guilty verdicts in colonial rape cases (1700-1776), sixty-eight resulted in execution. This figure suggests that colonial America rigorously prosecuted sexual violence. However, legal practice rarely matched with the law itself.⁸¹ Expanding her scope to include cases the courts identified as less than rape and/or attempted rape, Block outlines how sexual violence was minimized by overemphasizing other

⁷⁸ Ryan, *Regulating Passion*, 46-7, 50-1; quote on p. 46.

⁷⁹ Williams, “The Gratification,” 200-3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 64 note 15.

⁸¹ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 142-4, 152.

forms of sexual impropriety, such as adultery.⁸² Many women would charge their abusers with misdemeanours to avoid the unpleasantness of a rape trial, in which it was not necessary to prove penetration and ejaculation.⁸³ Attempted rape convictions resulted in whippings, fines, exile, or prison. In New York, 1766, a man charged with the attempted rape of a child was sentenced to be whipped for three rounds of thirty-nine lashes. Another man in Boston was charged with abusing and the attempted rape of a ten-year-old girl. The man was attached to the pillory for an hour, whipped fifteen times, and imprisoned for a year. Victims could charge their abuser without the same level of scrutiny required with a rape accusation.⁸⁴

This sexual double standard did not disappear during the war. In an anonymous narrative of the British and Hessian attacks in Princeton 1776-1777, the author details how two British cavalymen lied to a girl, saying they were looking for rebels hiding and heard about a barn nearby. The soldiers attacked the girl and held her down while each man raped her. The author states the victim was a local farmer's daughter and would not give her name to avoid community reproach.⁸⁵ Even military courts could reduce the charge to a misdemeanour after hearing the evidence, the soldier's motive, and his character witnesses.⁸⁶ Rape and sexual coercion cases were consistently thrown out and offenders not indicted, leaving many victims to bear unjust societal disdain. It is not surprising that many women did not report their abuse—the chance of indicting offenders without sacrificing the victim's reputation was slim.

⁸² Ibid., 6, 29-30.

⁸³ Ibid., 160; Beattie, *Crime and the Courts*, 129; Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, vol. I, 628.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 142-3 note 26; "New-York, November 3," *New York Journal* (New York, NY), Nov. 6, 1766; "Portsmouth, August 11," *The Boston Post-Boy* (Boston, MA), Aug. 13, 1769.

⁸⁵ N.A., *A Brief Narrative*, 15.

⁸⁶ Abye, *A Treatise on Courts Martial*, 103-5.

Patriarchal society deemed women untrustworthy to judge their own consent. Even if a white woman met all the physical requirements, rape cases were tried at the discretion of an all-male jury.⁸⁷ Some even believed that rape was impossible. Multiple appeals claimed it was legally impossible to rape an adult woman in Massachusetts between 1660-1697.⁸⁸ According to Samuel Farr's *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*:

But the consummation of a rape, by which is meant a compleat, full, and entire coition, which is made without any consent or permission of the woman, seems to be impossible, unless some very extraordinary circumstances occur: for a woman always possesses sufficient power, by drawing back her limbs, and by the force of her hands, to prevent the insertion of the penis into her body, whilst she can keep her resolution entire.⁸⁹

Farr's entire chapter is a medical analysis of rape. The chapter answers three questions: whether rape is possible, whether a woman can become pregnant, and what are the signs of rape. Farr dismisses the possibility of rape and confidently states that any form of resistance successfully stops sexual assaults. Eighteenth-century women were fundamentally disadvantaged when seeking retribution. Rape was a gendered act, defined by the participants' identities and relationships, not by the quality of the interaction.⁹⁰

The language used to describe and historicize rape highlights the similarity of abusive patterns specific to and beyond the Revolution. The etymology of rape can be traced back to Roman and medieval European law. Rape derives from the Latin *raptus*, meaning "theft" or "seizure." Used interchangeably with "ravishment" from the Old French *ravir*, meaning "to

⁸⁷ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 6, 27, 29-30, 40.

⁸⁸ Whitmore, ed. *The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts*, 22. Whitmore states that the Laws of 1660 dismissed the rape laws set in 1642 that punished the rape of girls under ten and married women. The General Court revisited the law in 1669 and reinstated the illegality of fornicating with girls under ten. An Act was passed in 1693 to include the rape of any women as a capital crime but was disallowed by the Crown. This act was later passed in 1697.

⁸⁹ Farr, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*, 42, 45-7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 2-3.

delight” and “to steal,” rape is intrinsically connected to physical and metaphorical abduction.⁹¹ Isolation was integral to rape. Isolating the victim from her community increased her chances of being raped without her cries being heard while simultaneously laying the foundations for the victim’s experience and reputation to be questioned.

The role of isolation is best seen in the London rape trial of Lord Baltimore. Numerous colonial newspapers such as the *Boston Chronicle*, *Massachusetts Gazette*, and the *Connecticut Journal* reprinted the March 26, 1768 trial that found Lord Baltimore, colonial proprietor of Maryland, not guilty for the rape of Sarah Woodstock. Woodstock, the daughter of the local milliner, claimed that Baltimore—with the help of his housekeeper, Elizabeth Griffinburg, and his friend Mrs. Ann Harvey—kidnapped her, held her captive for eleven days, and raped her twice.⁹² Woodstock testified that she and Baltimore first met in December while she was working at the Tower-Hill millinery shop. While waiting to meet a potential client at Mrs. Harvey’s house, Woodstock became trapped. Unbeknownst to Woodstock, Harvey used this meeting as a ruse to isolate her. After trying to get Woodstock to stay for tea, Harvey invited her to see her “acquaintance” at their house. Instead, Harvey brought Woodstock to Baltimore’s London home.⁹³

Woodstock’s experience fell into a similar pattern of eighteenth-century rape. When Woodstock first felt uncomfortable at Mrs. Harvey’s and later at Lord Baltimore’s, she expressed her desire to leave multiple times and tried to escape. After days of suffering psychological abuse and refusing most food and drink, Woodstock agreed that if her father appeared at the house and

⁹¹ Corrine J. Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (New York: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 20; Definition of *Ravir*. *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

⁹² *The Trial of Frederick Calvert, Esq; Baron of Baltimore, in the Kingdom of Ireland, For A Rape on the Body of Sarah Woodstock; and of El. Griffinburg, & A. Harvey, otherwise Darby, As Accessories before the Fact* (London: 1768).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

if Baltimore offered good terms, she would consider staying with him.⁹⁴ Baltimore isolated Woodstock even further by taking her to his home in Epsom, Surrey. In Epsom, Griffinburg and Harvey stripped Woodstock of her clothes and forced her into Baltimore's bed. Despite her extreme fatigue, Woodstock struggled and screamed. Baltimore covered her mouth to stop her cries and raped her. Baltimore assaulted her once more the next morning. The trauma of her rape made Woodstock feel that she had lost everything and wanted to die.⁹⁵ As one commentator suggested in the *Boston Post-Boy*,

There is also reason to conclude, that what has generally happened in other cases of the same kind, did actually happen in this, and that after violation, the girl, supposing all to be lost that she could lose, particularly her reputation, and that her return back to her friends & lover upon the terms on which she stood when she left them was impossible, might think a continuance with lord B. the least of two evils.⁹⁶

By isolating Woodstock, Baltimore was able to control her actions and her narrative. Baltimore and his accomplices repeatedly lied to Woodstock, saying they would let her go, only to come up with excuses. Baltimore's offers to send letters to Woodstock's father and friends enabled him to say that she was there of her own volition. When Lord Mansfield (Lord Chief Justice) remanded Baltimore to his home, it was clear Woodstock's isolation sparked rumours of her presumed promiscuity. One of Woodstock's friends looked at her with so much disgust it took her by surprise. Baltimore used these rumours and repercussions as further incentives to stop Woodstock from claiming rape.⁹⁷ The judge, Sir Sydney Stafford Smythe, quoted Hale's treatise during the trial and reminded the jury that if rape claims were not made immediately after the crime, there was a strong presumption that they were false. Despite her captivity explaining the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 17-8, 22-3.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 8-30.

⁹⁶ "Remainder of Lord Baltimore's Tryal, continued from our last," *The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser* (Boston, MA), Aug. 15, 1768.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 45, 76.

delay, Woodstock's isolation hindered her ability to stop the rape and compromised her reputation. Without any witnesses to the rape, the jury was not inclined to believe a working-class spinster over an aristocrat.⁹⁸

Isolation is a rape pattern evident throughout the eighteenth century. In 1774, a disgraced soldier waited until the seven-months pregnant Mrs. Staples was alone before raping her. The man threatened to kill Mrs. Staples with a knife if she made any noise or resisted. After the assault, the man intended to take her to Quebec, but when he stumbled and fell, Mrs. Staples ran into the nearest house and screamed for help. The search party found the man asleep and carried him before the magistrate, where he confessed.⁹⁹ Christiana Gatter followed society's resistance protocols and used them to her advantage when soldiers plundered her New Haven home in 1779. Gatter testified that when a British soldier approached her with a gun and told her to lie down, she enticed the soldier into the house, hoping her husband would save her. When the soldier encouraged her to go to the cellar and then the bedroom, she manipulated the soldier closer to the door. Gatter saved herself by flattering the soldier outside, where a neighbour helped her.¹⁰⁰ Gatter's actions demonstrate the communal understanding of eighteenth-century rape. Christiana tried to place herself in the vicinity of other people, first her husband and then out in the community, manipulating the soldier and the situation so others could help her. If Gatter were raped before someone reached her, the possibility of someone hearing her resistance would corroborate her lack of consent. Unfortunately, later that night, two soldiers came back to her home and took turns raping her after threatening to hurt her if she made any noise. Christiana's husband Martin ran

⁹⁸ *The Trial of Frederick Calvert*, 141; "Remainder of Lord Baltimore's Tryal, continued from our last," *The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser* (Boston, MA), Aug. 15, 1768.

⁹⁹ "Falmouth, Casco-Bay, August, 1774," *Essex Gazette* (Salem, MA), Sept. 20, 1774.

¹⁰⁰ Deposition of Christiana Gatter, Jul. 26, 1779, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

from the house and hid in a cornfield during the assault.¹⁰¹ Isolation helped rapists control their victims and required the victims to react quickly to evolving and traumatic situations.

Rape patterns show that sexual violence was also implicitly economic. As Anna Clark states, female sexuality was expressed in economic terms. According to English common law, married women, *femmes coverts*, and single girls, *femmes soles*, were their closest male relative's legal property. The "sexual economy"—how economic relations impacted sexuality through experiences such as marriage, prostitution, and rape—shaped both feminine and masculine responses to rape.¹⁰² Physical or sexual abduction was an assault on the victim's male counterpart's reputation and property. For instance, legal sources commonly identified women in relation to their closest male family member. At the top of Mary Campbell's testimony, it states, "Mary Campbell wife of Daniel Campbell," and Abial Hollowell is identified as Benjamin Hollowell's wife.¹⁰³ A woman's position in the family subsumed her rape. In England, rape victim Elizabeth Stone initially waited to report her assault at her husband's request, who said he would not live with her if she tried to bring her rapists to justice.¹⁰⁴ Even the Papers of Congress documenting the sexual violence rampant throughout New Jersey are entitled the "Papers and Affidavits Relating to the Plunderings, Burnings, and Ravages Committed by the British, 1774-84." The rape of women and children by British troops is historically categorized as theft of male property.

The racial order of eighteenth-century American society heavily influenced conceptions of and the historicization of rape. For example, as Elaine Forman Crane notes, the fear of the Black male rapist was firmly established at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As "Whites assumed

¹⁰¹ Ibid; Deposition of Martin Gatter, July 26, 1779, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

¹⁰² Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence*, 21-3.

¹⁰³ Deposition of Mary Campbell, March 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

¹⁰⁴ Clark, *Women's Silences, Men's Violence*, 27.

that any sexual advance by a Black man toward a white woman would be unwelcome, a Black defendant faced a presumption of guilt before the trial even began.”¹⁰⁵ In some colonies, Black men were castrated for rape and attempted rape beginning in 1750. These specific race-related legal punishments gave the socially constructed racialized binary tangibility.¹⁰⁶ In his recent monograph about rethinking the sexual violations of enslaved Black men, Thomas Foster states that enslaved men were violated by both white men and women during slavery, challenging cultural perceptions of the Black male rapist.¹⁰⁷

The case of Arthur, a Black man sentenced to death in 1768, repeatedly appears in the archives and in multiple newspaper reports.¹⁰⁸ The story of Arthur’s life published prior to his execution records his escape from slavery, his abuse at the hands of his mistress, and his efforts to survive before being charged with the rape of Deborah Metcalfe.¹⁰⁹ In this narrative, Arthur confesses his guilt and repeatedly blames his “Black Designs” for his crimes. Arthur was the first Black rapist in American literature and helped set the foundation for the racialized stereotype. Arthur specifically warns “those of my own Colour, as they regard their own Souls to avoid Desertion from their Masters, Drunkenness and Lewdness.”¹¹⁰ The narrative emphasizes the

¹⁰⁵ Crane, *Witches, Wife Beaters, and Whores*, 129.

¹⁰⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 150-1, 164. Niambi Carter’s 2012 article about twentieth-century lynching, suggests that castration is a unique form of male-male sexual abuse. See Niambi M. Carter, “Intimacy without Consent: Lynching as Sexual Violence,” *Politics & Gender* 8, no. 3 (September 2012): 414-421.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas A. Foster, *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 2.

¹⁰⁸ “Postscript to The Boston Weekly News-Letter,” *Boston News-Letter* (Boston, MA), Sept. 29, 1768. There are multiple examples, news articles, and sermons about the conviction and death of Arthur for the rape of white woman Deborah Metcalfe.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; Kelly, *Everyday Crimes*, 94.

¹¹⁰ “The life, and dying speech of Arthur, A N---- man; who was executed at Worcester, October 20th 1768. For a rape committed on the body of one Deborah Metcalfe,” Boston, MA, Oct. 18, 1768; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 207; Williams, “The Gratification,” 200.

connection between race and criminal sexuality, suggesting that Black men were more likely to have and act on aggressive sexual desires.

The law prohibited Black and enslaved women from seeking legal redress for rape. Historians such as Estelle Freedman and Deborah Gray White demonstrate how enslaved women's systematic sexual abuse is both undeniable and unjustly silenced in the historical record. Kathleen M. Brown suggests ideas of gender stemmed from the perceived natural differences between men and women, justifying other unequal power structures. By the seventeenth century, racialized patriarchal power dictated that white English women embodied virtuous womanhood while African American women embodied immoral, sexual lust.¹¹¹ Many historians point to slaveholders' resistance to providing proper clothes as a way to distance themselves from enslaved people. As Kristen Fischer notes, near nakedness substantiated white claims that enslaved peoples were emotionally blunted and unfazed by their exposure at the auction house and in the fields.¹¹² The slave law *Partus Sequitur Ventrem*, established in Virginia in 1662, legislated that slavery was hereditary. Slaveowners were exempt from prosecution for rape, and there were economic incentives to impregnate enslaved women and increase their slave population.¹¹³ White men assumed Black women were "unrapeable" and welcomed their advances. In her 2019 monograph *When Rape was Legal: The Untold Story of Violence during Slavery*, Rachel Feinstein notes that because of the sexual norms of whiteness, white boys were often encouraged to lose their virginity

¹¹¹ Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches*, 1-2.

¹¹² Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 162-4.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*; Jennifer Morgan, "Partus sequitur ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery," *Small Axe* 22 no. 1 (March 2018): 1-3; Rachel Feinstein, *When Rape was Legal: The Untold Story of Violence During Slavery* (Abingdon: Routledge Press, 2019), 1-45.

by sexually violating enslaved Black women and girls. These naturalized assaults transferred and maintained the importance of white sexuality, incentivizing the rape of Black women and men.¹¹⁴

Archives retain the racial and gendered impact of eighteenth-century definitions of rape that limited it to an attack on white women. According to Block, there were no rape convictions against a white man for raping an enslaved woman between 1700 and the Civil War.¹¹⁵ Traces of citizens' or soldiers' abuse of enslaved women may not be found in the historical record. Racialized patriarchal power narrowed rape even further by casting perpetrators and victims in a distinct dichotomy. The racialized biases established prior to the war influenced how the rape of Black women and men was reported and historicized in the archives.

The language of sexual violence also influences the historicization of Revolutionary rape. For example, "rape," "ravish," and "rapine" are repeatedly used to identify sexual violence in the archives. These labels are also subject to eighteenth-century definitions of rape; these sources are limited to heterosexual rape or must explicitly mention the act by name to receive this moniker. Other forms of abuse, such as sexual harassment and non-penile penetration, are not classified in the archives as rape. Male rape and the rape of non-white individuals are extremely difficult to find. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, non-reproductive sex was classified as sodomy, not rape. Bestiality, a subcategory of sodomy, was associated with other forms of sexual violence, such as sexual assaults on children.¹¹⁶ One case of male rape can be found in a 1768 edition of the *Essex Gazette*. A seventy-year-old Surrey man was charged with the rape of his neighbour's wife but

¹¹⁴ Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 74.

¹¹⁵ Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 129; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 65. One of the most well-known narratives of the sexual exploitation of enslaved women is Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, detailing her own abuses at the hands of her master.

¹¹⁶ Doron S. Ben-Atar, *Taming Lust: Crimes Against Nature in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1-2.

claimed that “*she* had committed the rape upon *him*.”¹¹⁷ The emphasis on the man’s claim and the subsequent conviction shows that rape’s narrow definition restricted heterosexual rape to an assault on male property and female victims. Likewise, Kelly Ryan shows that many master/servant rape reports were often recorded as fornication or bastardy rather than sexual abuse.¹¹⁸ Patriarchal power continued to dictate rape in the archives. Researchers must use different terms such as “carnal knowledge,” “chastity,” “penetration,” “ravage,” and “brutality” to discover sources that do not explicitly mention rape as a term.

Many examples of sexual violence are recorded in vague language, leaving the reader to interpret what “the grossest of violations” and “ill-use” of women means. For example, a letter to Sheriff Cornelius from Nathanael Greene summarizing the plunder and burnings in New Haven and Fairfield mentions the “barbarous and inhumane” abuses of women.¹¹⁹ Archived under “Moral Conditions: Carnal” in the widely-used database *Early American Imprints Series I: Evans, 1639-1800*, a pre-revolutionary moral commentary serves as a reminder of the dangerous connection between carnality and bloodlust but does not explicitly mention rape.¹²⁰ Historians know of the rapes in New Haven and Fairfield that Greene references, such as the attack on Christiana Gatter, but his letter is not catalogued the same way. Unless the source explicitly details heterosexual rape, it is unlikely to be identifiable with word-search algorithms.

The presence of sexual violence during the American Revolution is still somewhat disputed by scholars. Most notably, historians Harry M. Ward and Sylvia R. Frey consider the rape of

¹¹⁷ “London, June, 1768,” *Essex Gazette* (Salem, MA), Oct. 4, 1768. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁸ Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 43.

¹¹⁹ Nathanael Greene to Sheriff Cornelius, Jul. 12, 1779, Nathanael Greene Papers, David Library of the American Revolution.

¹²⁰ G. C. *A little looking-glass for the times; or, A brief remembrancer for Pennsylvania. Containing some serious hints, affectionately addressed to people of every rank and station in the province: with an appendix, by way of supplication to Almighty God* (Wilmington: Printed and sold by James Adams, 1764), 16.

civilians an “extreme rarity.” Ward states that rape was most likely only against wives and children within army camps, and British army records suggest that the few recorded incidents were almost exclusively conducted by Loyalist regiments. As the New Jersey rape testimonies were the result of the “American propaganda mill,” the congressional investigation into the New York and New Jersey campaigns lacked corroborative evidence.¹²¹ Ward limits his sources to Frey’s monograph, a record of the Congressional Committee (April 1777), a July 19, 1779, *New-York Journal* article, and Varnum L. Collins’ edited *A Brief Narrative of the Ravages of the British and Hessians at Princeton 1776-77*.¹²² Although Collins’ work is a narrative by an anonymous author, it is a valuable collection of first-hand accounts of British and Hessian tyranny frequently cited by other scholars such as Sharon Block and Holger Hock.¹²³ In his desire for quantitative legal data, Ward misses the commonness of rape during the Revolution highlighted in testimonies, military correspondence, and newspaper articles. Rape’s narrow definition and the barriers to reporting abuse have heavily impacted the presence of sexual violence in the archives. Nevertheless, it is up to the historian to go beyond fragmentary information and provide context that can shed light on these historical experiences.

Interestingly, Sharon Block suggests that the brutality of wartime rape distinguished it from peacetime abuse and garnered more attention from the public. Her chapter in Elizabeth Heineman’s *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* argues that war enabled soldiers to use extreme violence in public or within the view of friends and family. Americans associated gang rapes by British soldiers with British plunder.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Harry M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society* (London: Routledge, 1999), 84; Hock, *Scars of Independence*, 470-1, note 29.

¹²² Ward, *The War for Independence*, 260, note 12.

¹²³ Collins, *A Brief Narrative*, viii-ix; see Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 223; Hock *Scars of Independence*, 160-1.

¹²⁴ Block, “Rape in the American Revolution,” 37-8.

Block explains that British and Hessian forces committed rape as soldiers and not as random attackers. These soldiers used their military background to their advantage; soldiers threatened victims with their weapons, eliminating the need to employ the same coercive tactics civilian acquaintances used. As an invading army, these soldiers disregarded American institutions and had little concern for the consequences of their actions. Wartime rape fit the archetype of what Americans thought rape was, i.e., a random attack in front of a witness with brutal force, immediately reported, and with an obvious motive.¹²⁵

Block also uses the declining severity of civilian rape punishments to bolster her argument. She states that imprisonment replaced death sentences for white criminals in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Due to the difficulty of securing convictions and the scrutiny of victims' reputations, women were unlikely to report their abuse. Military trials were harsher than civilian trials; the common "good character" defence many civilian defendants used was too weak in military courts. Women were more likely to notify authorities of rape during the war and to seek legal consequences. Wartime rape fostered more community engagement and calls for retribution than peacetime abuse.¹²⁶

Arguably, the war increased the severity of assaults. Women and children were brutalized *en masse* at higher frequencies by an invading army. Nevertheless, the fundamental patterns are similar to those of peacetime assaults. The soldiers' intentions and the rapes themselves may have been more public, but many perpetrators still isolated their victims. Victims were physically separated and raped in different rooms or psychologically isolated from receiving help through threats of physical harm. Military weapons helped bolster these threats to stop the victim's

¹²⁵ Ibid., 25-30, 37-8.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 31-33, 37-8.

resistance. Associating rape with property damage demonstrates the patriarchal economic understanding of female dependents during the eighteenth century.

The British Army had a high tolerance for sexual violence. Despite Block's assertion that military punishments were more severe than civilian sentences, she only found sixty records involving military personnel from 1700-1800. Only twenty-four cases were tried between 1760 and 1781.¹²⁷ In addition, the similarity between victim accounts specific to and distinct from the war highlights the continuities within patterns of assault. Therefore, Block's archetypal argument actually suggests a similarity between assaults. The archetypal rape of a random attack by a foreign invader in front of witnesses informed eighteenth-century conceptions of gender, sex, race, and the law, which in turn codified patterns of rape in Anglo-American society. Wartime violence may have been different in scale but not in execution.

By April 24, 1777, many Americans knew of the rapes committed by British soldiers. As reported in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Congress' investigation into the atrocities in New York and New Jersey determined that British soldiers lustfully brutalized innocent women.¹²⁸ Women and girls were dehumanized in their homes by soldiers, some raped by multiple assailants for consecutive days. These assaults broadly followed a similar pattern. Soldiers asked their victims to accompany them to a separate location. When the women refused or resisted, soldiers threatened them with physical harm. Victims screamed, tried to resist, and told their community about their assault. The fundamental similarities of these assaults resemble the patterns of abuse constructed by patriarchal power prior to the war. Eighteenth-century Anglo-American conceptions of gender,

¹²⁷ Ibid., 27; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 170.

¹²⁸ Charles Thomson, Secretary, "In Congress, April 18, 1777," *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Apr. 24, 1777.

sex, and violence dictated what rape was, informed how society reacted to rape claims, and codified rape in society.

The continuation of pre-existing patterns suggests that war and rape are not isolated from the larger historical narrative. In each instance, the victim knew what she was being asked or threatened with. Each woman explicitly outlined her experiences to the Justice of the Peace, emphasized her lack of consent, and her efforts to remove herself from the situation. Abigail Palmer and the Cain sisters declined the offer to go to the British camp. Mary Campbell resisted her assault while five months pregnant. Christiana Gatter successfully thwarted her assault, only to be raped later that night. It is possible that men felt war gave them a special licence to rape but neither army officially sanctioned rape rampages. The modus operandi of Revolutionary rape primarily adhered to pre-existing patterns of abuse warranted by patriarchal power.

Chapter Two: The Rape of America: Revolutionary Propaganda and Rape's Symbolism

On December 20, 1776, Adam Stephen wrote to Thomas Jefferson that “The Enemy like locusts Sweep the Jerseys with the Besom of destruction. They to the disgrace of a Civilisid Nation Ravish the fair Sex, from the Age of Ten to Seventy.”¹ Eight days later, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* printed an address stating that “liberty is now connected [to] your personal happiness, and every dear and valuable blessing—the chastity of the wives of your bosom, your daughters, which else may be violated by a brutal soldiery... is to be suffered should our enemy prevail...”² Many reports detailed British soldiers’ rape of American women and girls, connecting these attacks to Britain’s tyrannical seizure of property and liberty. Propagandists and pamphleteers used rape narratives to justify war.

During the Revolution, the public relied on newspapers, cartoons, broadsides, and sermons to transmit and receive information. Sexual violence appeared as a common theme in American propaganda. Throughout the colonies, Americans heard about the terrors perpetrated by the British army, and these reports shaped American responses to the war. Rape was the most extreme example of British corruption and became the symbol of British immorality. This chapter uses letters, illustrations, and early American print media to show how revolutionaries politicized rape rhetoric, conflating political independence with freedom from sexual violence. This chapter first discusses rape narratives before the war as cautionary moral tales and the foundations of wartime rape propaganda. Next, this chapter demonstrates the politicization of rape as a metaphor for the Revolution. By focusing the attention of rape narratives on the immorality of British soldiers,

¹ “To Thomas Jefferson from Adam Stephen, 20 December 1776,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760-1776, ed. Julian P. Boyd. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 599-660.

² Josiah Crawford, “Extract from the minutes,” *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 28, 1776.

propagandists downplayed the experience of the victims. America's collective experience subsumed their individual voices.

The significance of Revolutionary propaganda is a hotbed of historiographical debate. The intellectual debates between the Progressive and Consensus historians have dominated Revolutionary scholarship since the early twentieth century. Scholars previously focused on the importance of early American mass media, the proliferation of democratic ideals, and the socio-economic relationships that led to war.³ Gaining stature in the early twentieth century, Progressive historians emphasized the presence of conflict—especially class and geographical conflict—in the initial colonial settlements. These historians suggested that early American mass media accentuated previously established divisions.⁴ By the end of the French and Indian War (1763), the colonies had an effective information gathering and sharing network. Progressive historians treated ideological discourse as propaganda created to manipulate public opinion.⁵ The prominent Progressive historian Arthur Schlesinger's *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain 1764-1776* (1958) claims newspapers were invaluable war tools. Newspapers became integral subscription-based reports of morality, read and listened to in taverns and coffeehouses. Newspapers manipulated the emotions of the illiterate and the educated alike.⁶

In contrast, Consensus historians emphasized ideology as the cause of the Revolution. Inspired by Enlightenment teachings, Revolutionaries united in their efforts to create a republican world. Republicanism, with its roots in antiquity, separated England and America on a moral

³ Carol Sue Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 3-5; Gordon S. Wood, "Reassessing Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* on the Occasion of its Jubilee," *The New England Quarterly* vol. 91, no. 1 (March 2018): 82.

⁴ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, 3-5, 12-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 33-7; Wood, "Reassessing Bernard Bailyn," 82.

⁶ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, 13, 23, 33-7; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 20, 300-1.

dimension. Revolutionaries proposed an idealistic and virtuous society based on citizens' participation for the common good. Amidst England's descent into corruption, American printers and pamphleteers regularly published work discussing the dangers of uncontrolled political power.⁷ Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1976) suggests that newspapers and pamphlets encouraged colonists to develop common views of society and government, uniting colonists rather than dividing them with inflammatory words.⁸

Recently, the question of Revolutionary propaganda has re-emerged. English studies scholar Russ Castronovo's 2014 monograph, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* re-evaluates the propagation of ideas during the war. Coupling Revolutionary moments with examples from modern media, Castronovo uses historical examples to gain insights into the digitally-driven modern political sphere.⁹ The author challenges dominant assumptions that treat propaganda as deceitful and dishonest. Revolutionary propaganda should be defined as "publicly disseminated knowledge that serves to influence others in belief or action."¹⁰ Using this definition, historians can apply the concept of propaganda to revolutionary ideas.¹¹

Other scholars have tackled the mythologization of the war and Revolutionary propaganda. Holger Hoock's 2017 monograph presents an unvarnished history of Revolutionary violence and

⁷ Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), viii, x, 47, 68; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 50th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), viii-ix, 55-60.

⁸ Ibid.; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, xxi; "Propaganda," Oxford Dictionary; Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, 17-8; Wood, "Reassessing Bernard Bailyn," 87-8, 95.

⁹ Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communication in Early America* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014), 3-4; "Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communication in Early America by Russ Castronovo," review by William B. Warner, *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 no. 1 (Spring 2016): 176.

¹⁰ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776*, 10.

¹¹ Wood, "Reassessing Bernard Bailyn," 96.

outlines the impacts of romanticized misremembrance. Hoock begins his book with the Boston Massacre, illustrating how the skirmish became a source of propaganda and inspiration for the patriots.¹² Hoock devotes an entire chapter to what he describes as “Violated Bodies,” retelling accounts of the rape and mutilation of soldiers and women.¹³ Lauren Duval’s upcoming monograph addresses eighteenth and nineteenth-century rape narratives and sexuality.¹⁴ Duval concentrates on wartime violence against women and narratives of British cruelty. Evident in schoolbooks, plays, historical paintings, and literature, “defenseless women, at the mercy of cruel occupying forces, and [the] valorized American men’s heroic fight to liberate them” became a common patriotic narrative.¹⁵

Other scholars such as Sharon Block and Clare A. Lyons demonstrate how Anglo-Americans defined sex and civility in a strict dichotomy opposite to chaos and barbarity. Connecting rape to physical and rhetorical power, revolutionaries placed sexual virtue in the political realm.¹⁶ American fears of sexual slavery at the hands of the British prioritized their fight for liberty while simultaneously silencing discussions of American slaveholders’ abuses of enslaved people.¹⁷ Americans perceived themselves as morally superior to their British counterparts. Patriotic narrators used gendered and racialized language to cast the British as

¹² Hoock, *Scars of Independence: America’s Violent Birth* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), xiv, 3-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 151-177.

¹⁴ Lauren Duval, “The Horrid Deeds of Our Enemies,” Massachusetts Historical Society Presentation, Sept. 22, 2020.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ Sharon Block, “Rape without Women: Print Culture and the Politicization of Rape, 1765-1815,” *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (December 2002): 850.

¹⁷ Kelly A. Ryan, *Everyday Crimes: Social Violence and Civil Rights in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 130, 134, 140.

unchristian tyrants. Independence was not only politically motivated but also religiously justified.¹⁸

Despite the prevalence of rape narratives, illustrations, and letters, the history of rape's impact on revolutionary propaganda remains incomplete. Expanding on Castronovo's definition of propaganda, this chapter outlines how the presence of rape in early American print culture and the subsequent nationalization of rape narratives subordinated the individual sufferings of assault. Propagandists used rape to gain political and military support for the war. The fight for independence became synonymous with the fight to end British sexual, political, and economic abuse. Rape became a metaphor to justify the American Revolution.

Rape and Morality in Early American Print Culture

Rape was a common topic in early American media. Many eighteenth-century authors used moral themes to inform readers of the dangers of sin. The Great Awakening renewed emphasis on personal responsibility during the mid-eighteenth century, so many early American printers published public sermons, cautionary articles, and religious instructions to guide colonists away from sexual misbehaviour.¹⁹ Historian Daniel Williams states that rape narratives prioritized the abuser's actions, casting rapists as ungovernable disruptions to the social order. These men were outsiders who embraced self-gratification and abandoned self-sacrifice.²⁰ In Brookfield,

¹⁸ Ibid., Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: John's Hopkin's University Press, 2002), 1-14; Clare A. Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Merril D. Smith, ed. *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Ruth H. Bloch, *Gender & Morality in Anglo-American culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility and Family Limitations in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 79; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 32.

²⁰ Daniel Williams, "The Gratification of that Corrupt and Lawless Passion: Character Types and Themes in Early New England Rape Narratives," in *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 196, 218.

Massachusetts, 1779, Robert Young was tried for the rape of eleven-year-old Jane Green. In a poem of repentance, Young begged for Green's forgiveness. While drunk with lust and "on cursed purpose bent, [Young] severely us'd th' unhappy innocent."²¹ Young points to his own victimhood; the power of evil and lewdness ruined Young's engagement with Jane's older sister and led him to his death. Young cautions others against immorality and asks God to allow him into Heaven.²²

Newspapers frequently published execution sermons and the last words of rapists. Sermonizers focused on a criminal's sinful progression while de-emphasizing the rape that led to their execution. These publications explained how little sins culminated into more severe sinful sexual behaviour.²³ A "solemn caution to youth," published in 1774, recounts the life and crimes of Daniel Wilson. At twenty-five years old, Wilson admits to stealing, multiple escapes from prison, and rape. In a published confessional, Wilson admits to behaving with obscene and inhuman cruelty.²⁴ Wilson lived with his parents until he was seventeen, when he stole apples from a Black man. From there, he travelled, worked as a carpenter, and stole horses. The confessional barely acknowledges Wilson's rape charge, despite it being the reason for his execution.²⁵

Early American print culture emphasized the connection between sinful behaviour and sexual immorality, casting the violence of rape as a secondary concern.²⁶ Both Young's and Wilson's testimonials stress their seduction into depravity while simultaneously erasing the damage to the victims. In a separate published conversation with the local minister, Wilson advises

²¹ Robert Young, "The dying criminal: A Poem," New-London, CT, 1779.

²² Ibid.

²³ Williams, "The Gratification" 196, 218.

²⁴ "A Dialogue between a reverend clergyman and Daniel Wilson, a young man, aged twenty-five years, who was tried at Providence, in the colony of Rhode-Island, in March term, for a rape, found guilty, condemned and executed on the twenty-ninth of April, 1774. Published as a solemn caution and warning to youth," Sold by E. Russell, Boston, MA, 1774; "The life and confession of Daniel Wilson, who was executed at Providence (Rhode-Island) on Friday the 29th of April, 1774, for committing rape," Rhode-Island, NE, 1774.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 33.

American youths to turn away from sins—such as pride, lust, and vanity—in favour of turning towards God. Moral discourse presented sin and criminality as addictive and progressive. Criminality existed on a continuum; capital punishments were a chance for self-examination by the perpetrators.²⁷ The experiences of the victims are a small aside.

Moralistic rape narratives were only one part of a broader sexually violent media. In her study of Philadelphia from 1730 to 1830, Clare A. Lyons demonstrates the erotic nature of colonial print culture. Like other port cities, Philadelphia maintained cultural links between Britain and Western Europe by importing and selling texts, mainly to the upper classes. In the 1760s, cheaper domestic imprints such as annual almanacs, weekly newspapers, broadsides, and cheap pamphlets became more accessible to the average American colonist.²⁸ Torrid commentaries about rape appeared in many publications and voyeuristically entertained readers with tales of sexual danger. With expanding readership, popular culture helped determine how Americans interpreted the body, sexual desire, and sexual behaviour.²⁹

Popular transatlantic texts such as *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey* used the guise of court proceedings to sell eroticized details of seduction, rape, and sodomy. Based on actual trials at the Central Criminal Court in London, *The Proceedings* presented explicit descriptions of sexual behaviour.³⁰ In the 1762 rape trial of John Clarke, prosecutrix Sarah Denman stated that at eleven in the evening, Clarke came into her room, asked if she was alone, and then “had carnal knowledge

²⁷ “A Dialogue between a reverend clergyman and Daniel Wilson.”; Daniel A. Cohen, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1674-1860* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 84; Andrea McKenzie, *Tyburn’s Martyrs: Execution in England, 1675-1775* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 56, 59.

²⁸ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 116-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 118-9; Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, 133; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 31-3.

³⁰ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 141-2; Tim Hitchcock and William J. Turkel, “The Old Bailey Proceedings, 1674-1913: Text Mining For Evidence of Court Behavior,” *Law and History* 34, no. 4 (November 2016): 930. Details included sexual positions, penetration, and witness statements. See Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 141-2.

of my body to all intents and purposes.”³¹ When asked if she resisted, Denman stated that she cried as loud as she could with Clarke’s mouth over hers. During Clarke’s defence, seven female witnesses and neighbours claimed his innocence. The witnesses claimed that if Denman had cried out, they would have heard her.³² Another trial depicts a sixteen-year-old charged with the rape of four-year-old Mary Duncan. Despite the prosecution and a physician determining that Duncan was raped and the defendant’s private confession to raping Duncan twice, the rapist claimed that he was not guilty and never admitted to any confession. The defendant was acquitted of the charges.³³ The Old Bailey’s *Select Trials* (published 1718-21, 1734, 1742, and 1764) provided a closer examination of notorious murder, rape, and robbery trials.³⁴ Salacious texts regularly profited from rape narratives.

Revolutionary-era printers routinely used gendered, sexually violent language as a metaphor for morality and virtue. The multifaceted and complex nature of virtue meant that it was equally religious, sexual, and political. American concern about public virtue sensationalized male courage and heroism, prompting otherwise selfish individuals to act on behalf of a just social order.³⁵ For example, multiple colonial newspapers reprinted the transnational story of an unorthodox rape in Corke, Ireland (1769). A young man heard about a scheme to kidnap, rape, and marry his sister. The man dressed in his sister’s clothes and let himself be kidnapped in her place.

³¹ *The Whole Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace, Oyer and Terminer and Goal-Delivery For The City of London [...] Number IV. for the Year 1762* (London: Printed and Sold by John Ryall, 1762), 84-86.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *The Whole Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace, Oyer and Terminer and Goal-Delivery For The City of London [...] Number VIII, Part I, for the Year 1765* (London: Sold by W. Nicoll, 1765), 322-324.

³⁴ Hitchcock and Turkel, “Text Mining For Evidence,” 933; Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, “The Proceedings - Publishing History of the Proceedings”; Andrea McKenzie, “‘Useful and entertaining to the generality of Readers’: Selecting the *Select Trials, 1718-1764*,” in David Lemmings, ed., *Courtrooms and the Public Sphere* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 43-6, 68. Hitchcock and Turkel state that after 1787 witness statements in rape and sodomy cases were not reported as they were thought to present a moral danger to the reading public. See, Hitchcock and Turkel, “Text Mining For Evidence,” 933.

³⁵ Bloch, *Gender and Morality*, 138-9.

“The ravisher” brought “her” to his father’s house, and when a priest could not be secured, “in order to keep some appearance of decency, the supposed young girl was appointed to lie that night with the ravisher’s own sister...”³⁶ After raping the kidnapper’s sister, the brother quickly dressed and stole the priest’s horse the next morning. Called a hero, the brother not only foiled the kidnapper’s plans but was also acquitted of raping the kidnapper’s sister.³⁷ The publication prioritized the brother’s actions, placing the rape and attempted rape within the competing brothers’ interests and responsibilities. Targeted attacks against virtue became synonymous with assaults against the patriarchy.

Anglo-Americans also used rape as a political metaphor prior to the Revolution. Earlier illustrations commonly connected sexual violence and liberty. In 1768, the *Oxford Magazine* published *The Rape of the Petti-coat*. Part of the Wilkite propaganda campaign, the satirized rendition of the Earl of Bute and his rumoured paramour, the Princess Dowager of Wales, uses highly polemical imagery to contest the political interference of royal women. The Mayor of London removes a boot (representing Bute) from underneath a petticoat (representing the Princess Dowager) hung from a gibbet in front of his house.³⁸ The mostly male crowd filled with London’s Aldermen look on with surprise, humour, and discontent. One man smiles, holding a magnifying glass, while his neighbour raises his hand in triumph. The accompanying poem commends the Mayor’s actions:

³⁶ “Extract of a letter from Corke, March 28,” *The Boston Chronicle* (Boston, MA) June 15, 1769, 190; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 212-3. Block mentions that this report was also published in the *Virginia Gazette* and the *Connecticut Journal*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *The Rape of the Petti-coat*, *Oxford Magazine* (Oxford, England) Jul. 1, 1768; Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson, eds. *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 2-3. John Wilkes was a critical British supporter of the American Revolution. As a British Parliamentarian denied his seat, Wilkes was also a victim of political corruption. Wilkes’ experience became symbolic to American colonists. See Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 110-1.

Then from his mansion rush'd the val'rous chief, To serve his country, or to---take a thief; But more resolv'd to crush Rebellion's root, And triumph o'er the Petticoat and Boot; In equal balance hung the fierce dispute, Between the warlike magistrate and Boot. The Boot and Petticoat at length gave way, And now remain the trophies of the day, the Petticoat and Boot consign'd to Fame, Shall waft to latest times this hero's name.³⁹

The Mayor's actions are a justified attack on corrupt sexual and political power. Metaphorical sexual behaviour stood in for political impropriety, prompting others to protect British liberty.⁴⁰



Figure 1- *The Rape of the Petti-coat*. *Oxford Magazine*. July 1, 1768. *American Antiquarian Society*.

Rape and Propaganda

Many historians point to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) when discussing American wartime propaganda. However, rape narratives were also an incredibly effective

³⁹ *The Rape of the Petti-coat.*, 34-5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Gleadle and Richardson, *Women in British Politics*, 2, 7.

propaganda tool. Like pre-war rape narratives, rape propaganda used gendered language and salacious images to discuss the dichotomy of virtue and barbarity. Printers focused on England's political immorality, stressing how the Englishmen's uncivilized savageness left them unfit to govern American colonists' interests. Propagandists employed rape narratives as evidence of English intentions to subjugate colonists and to stir up support for independence.

The tradition of using rape to fight political battles was common before the American Revolutionary era. Many allegorical rapes date back to ancient Greco-Roman tradition and the creation of the Roman republic. For example, the rape of the Vestal Virgin Rhea Silvia resulted in the birth of Romulus and Remus and the creation of Rome.⁴¹ The rape of the Sabine women is another classical example of rape and war. Romulus created the festival Consualia as a ruse to take neighbouring women by force. When the Sabines were distracted by the games, Roman youths kidnapped the Sabine women present.⁴² The rape of Roman matron Lucretia has been repeatedly politicized throughout history. The basic plot sets the tragic story in 510 BCE Rome, where Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the last Roman king, brutally raped the virtuous and dutiful Lucretia. The next day, Lucretia gathered her family, recounted her assault, and killed herself with a stab to the heart. Lucretia's death sparked an uprising to rid Rome of its monarchy and establish its republican government.⁴³ In a version of this story by the Roman historian Livy, Lucretia killed herself to regain her honour and avoid other women using her experience to excuse unvirtuous behaviour. After her death, Brutus took the knife from her wound and vowed: "to chase [out] the King Lucius

⁴¹ James A. Arieti, "Rape and Livy's View of Roman History," in *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, eds. Susan Deacy & Karen F. Pierce (London: The Classical Press of Wales, 1997), 210.

⁴² Livy, *The History of Rome*, trans. by Rev. Canon Roberts. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1912), Book I, Ch. 9-11.

⁴³ Eleanor Glendinning, "Reinventing Lucretia: Rape, Suicide and Redemption from Classical Antiquity to the Medieval Era," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* vol. 2, no. 1/2 (June 2013): 61. Lucretia's story has been rewritten throughout history. Notable renditions include the work by Ovid, Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Shakespeare.

Tarquinius Superbus, with his criminal wife and all their offspring, by fire, iron, and all the methods I have at my disposal, and never tolerate Kings in Rome evermore.”⁴⁴

Lucretia’s story continued to be important in eighteenth-century debates about public political liberty and private sexual liberty.⁴⁵ Eighteenth-century rape standards required women to fight back to thwart rape attempts. Many writers used Lucretia’s suicide as an example of the proper recourse for cases where coercion or violent subjugation could be deemed as consent.⁴⁶ For example, William Penn’s *No Cross, No Crown*, reprinted in 1747, describes Lucretia as “a most Chaste *Roman* Dame, whose Name and *Vertue* is known by that *Tragedy* that follows them” but she “out liv’d her Chastity, even when she could not defend it.”⁴⁷ Henry Brooke’s *Juliet Grenville: Or, The History of the Human Heart* (1774) states that Lucretia is “the most celebrated, but least of all entitled to praise.” Brooke’s novel recounts multiple love stories and discusses the importance of female virtue. As virtue has the power to vindicate the injured and defend the assaulted, Lucretia chose her reputation over her virtue.⁴⁸ Therefore, Lucretia “shed her blood in atonement of her consent; but the stain still remains.—I pity, but cannot acquit or honour her.”⁴⁹ Lucretia’s submission—whether out of fear for her reputation or not—and suicide signified her complicity in the assault. Allegorical rape was already filled with meaning prior to the Revolution.

American Revolutionary rape propaganda often took the form of news coverage. On April 24, 1777, *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* published an update from the Second Continental

⁴⁴ Ibid., 63-6; Livy, “The Rape of Lucretia,” *The History of Rome*, trans. From the original in *Tite-Live: Histoire Romaine, Tome I, livre I*, ed. Jean Bayet (Paris: Societé d’Édition lettres, 1954), 92-95.

⁴⁵ Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 8.

⁴⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 44.

⁴⁷ William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown: A Discourse Shewing the Nature and Discipline of the Holy Cross of Christ, Part III*, 7th ed. (Boston, 1747, originally published, 1669), 83-4.

⁴⁸ Henry Brooke, *Juliet Grenville: Or, The History of the Human Heart. Three volumes in two*, vol. II (Philadelphia: Reprinted for John Sparhawk and John Dunlap, 1774), 48-50.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 90.

Congress. Congress developed a committee to investigate “the conduct of the enemy” after the atrocities in New Jersey. The committee divided the inquiry into four parts: “First, The wanton and oppressive devastation of the country, and destruction of property: Second, the inhuman treatment of those who were so unhappy as to become prisoners: Third, The savage butchery of many who had submitted or were incapable of resistance: Fourth, The lust and brutality of the soldiers in abusing women.”⁵⁰ The committee retrieved authentic information of indecent treatment and “actual ravishment of married and single women.” There is no record “any satisfaction was ever given, or punishment inflicted, except, that one soldier, at Pennington, was kept in custody for part of the day.”⁵¹ According to Holger Hoock, George Washington played an integral role in the investigation and recovery of a memorandum on rape which helped the committee and Hunterdon County Justice of the Peace Jared Saxton depose six rape victims, including Abigail Palmer, the Cain sisters, Mary Phillips, and two others.⁵² These depositions were appended to the Congressional investigation and printed in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* on December 28, 1776, and *The Pennsylvania Packet* on May 10, 1777.⁵³

The sexualization of the American Revolution through rape narratives, albeit effective political rhetoric, exploits rape experiences. Lauren Duval’s forthcoming book about British occupation during the Revolution suggests that Revolutionary narratives framed the war as a domestic invasion spearheaded by a dishonourable military and corrupt monarchy. Accounts of

⁵⁰ Charles Thomson, Secretary, “In Congress, April 18, 1777,” *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Apr. 24, 1777; Holger Hoock, “*Jus in bello*, Rape and the British Army in the American Revolutionary War,” *Journal of Military Ethics* vol. 14, no. 1 (May 2015): 84.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Hoock, “*Jus in bello*,” 85; “From George Washington to William Livingston, 3 March 1777,” in *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 8, *6 January 1777-27 March 1777*, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 500-2. The Memorandum has since been lost.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, “Appendix to the Committee, containing proofs and illustrations,” *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia, PA), May 10, 1777; “In Council of Safety, December 23, 1776,” *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 28, 1776.

the British invasion presented a compelling narrative to revolutionaries: American civilians, most often characterized by defenceless women, were at the mercy of tyrannical forces and relied on heroic patriots to liberate them.⁵⁴ Revolutionary rape narratives exemplify Joan Scott's central premise that gender, as an analytical category, provides a way to understand the construction and consolidation of power.⁵⁵ As outlined in the previous chapter, eighteenth-century rape was predicated upon beliefs of oppositional masculine and feminine gendered constructions which favoured white manliness. During the war, these gendered constructions expanded to accommodate the changing political atmosphere. American writers placed male British immorality directly opposite delicate American femininity. Rape was an effective tool to spur indignation at Britain's gross violations. Rape narratives reinforced the image of vulnerable domesticity, reducing intimate and complex experiences into a simplified gendered metaphor.⁵⁶

In a 1778 Boston Massacre commemoration speech, Esquire Johnathan W. Austin delivered an impassioned address highlighting the damaging impacts and sheer lustful barbarity of British forces:

but not to mention still greater scenes of cruelty--does not the ear tingle when it hears the shrieks of helpless virgins, dreadful victims to lust & barbarity, while the grey hairs & expressive groans of an aged parent, witness to his daughter's shame, plead in vain...These monsters exceed even the most barbarous nation... Lead your sons, ye fathers, not to the altar of Paganism, and under the tutelage of some unknown deity, but to the saved altar of freedom, & while the guardian God of America is witness to the solemn obligation, MAKE THEM SWEAR that they will never be friends to a power, who are thus sacrificing their dearest privileges. Ring in their young ears the dreadful tale of murders, rapes & massacres. Paint to them the conduct of Britain, as displayed in her arms in different parts of America, till

⁵⁴ Lauren Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of Our Enemies," Massachusetts Historical Society Presentation, Sept. 22, 2020, p. 4

⁵⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University, 1999), 44-49.

⁵⁶ Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of our Enemies," 5.

their young breasts glow with ardor, & thus early catching the flame of patriotism, they may through life, pursue undaunted to glorious an object.⁵⁷

Focusing on the rapes of American women and children at the site of a prolific display of violence, Austin uses the polarizing narrative of the Boston Massacre to recruit enlistment in the Continental Army. Austin demonizes England while emphasizing the morality and duty of American men. To prevent more harm, American men must rise and fight for independence from the unchristian British monsters.

Letters printed in newspapers also reference the gang rape of young girls and stress the need to stop Howe's army from advancing.⁵⁸ An extract of an American officer's letter published in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* recounts soldiers finding sixteen abused young women near Hopewell, New Jersey, as well as other atrocities. For instance, a respectable gentleman from Woodbridge, New Jersey, after hearing his daughter crying and screaming, killed a British officer who was raping his daughter. Unfortunately, two other soldiers came to their friend's aid and shot the father.⁵⁹ The author concluded that he was tired of the constant and unpunished terror at the hands of the British and urged Americans to join the fight and drive "these invading tyrants out of our country."⁶⁰

Rape narratives threatened to erase the individual experiences of sexual violence in favour of stirring up a more generalized outrage against the British. Both the officer's letter and Austin's

⁵⁷ Johnathan W. Austin, Esq., "Addition by Johnathan W. Austin, Esq.," delivered at Boston, March 5, 1778, in *Oration delivered at the request of the inhabitants of the town of Boston, to commemorate the evening of the fifth of March, 1770* [...] (Boston: Printed by Peter Edes, 1785), 110-1.

⁵⁸ "From George Washington to John Parke Custis, 22 January 1777," in *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 8, *6 January 1777-27 March 1777*, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 123-5; "From George Washington to William Livingstone, 3 March 1777," in *The Papers of George Washington*, 500-2.

⁵⁹ "Extract of a letter from an officer of distinction in the American army," *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 28, 1776.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

speech ignore the trauma experienced by the victims. The officer's letter describes the horrific assaults but quickly bypasses the women's experiences to recruit for the American army. Even the experience of the well-known gentleman's daughter is ignored. Historians will never know if the two soldiers raped her after her father died.⁶¹ Writers removed women from the story, centering the harm of rape as an assault against legitimate male power and infringement of male property.⁶²

Rape also became a metaphor for war through cartoons and war updates. Prints and engravings reproduced information, entertained readers, and satisfied the viewers' desire for digestible information. War cartoons focused on the colonial loss of liberties, uniting colonists through fear.⁶³ One of the most well-known representations to come out of the American Revolution is *The able doctor; or America swallowing the bitter draught*. Originally printed in *The London Magazine* in 1774, the print is a typical political rendition that was later reproduced by others, including Paul Revere.⁶⁴ In the image, a partially draped Indigenous woman representing America is held on the ground by the Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. Lord North (Prime Minister of Great Britain) is forcing tea, representing the Intolerable Acts, down America's throat with the "Boston Port Bill" extending out of his pocket.⁶⁵ Lord Sandwich, a noted womanizer and parliamentarian, restrains America's feet and looks up her skirt. There are four people in the background. Two people watch and point at America, and a soldier with a sword inscribed with "Military Law" stares at the scene. Another woman representing Britannia turns

⁶¹ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 211; Block, "Rape without Women: Print Culture and the Politicization of Rape, 1765-1815," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (December 2002): 850.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Rosemary Troy Krill, *Early American Decorative Arts, 1620-1860: A Handbook for Interpreters Revised and Enhanced* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2010), 17c, 17j.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17n.

⁶⁵ *The able doctor, or, America swallowing the bitter draught*, May 1774, *Library of Congress*; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 165-6.

away and covers her face with her hand.⁶⁶ According to Hook, the assault occurs on a visual axis between a paper labelled the “Boston petition,” and a background scene depicting a fleet of ships labelled the “British cannonaded.”⁶⁷

America’s personification is two-fold. First, this cartoon directly connects the rape of American women and girls with British policies. It makes a mockery of the assaults women faced while simultaneously conflating their experiences with the infractions of the British government. Second, the personification of America and her sexual assault suggests that the country as a whole is being raped. American property—homes, livestock, and women—were pillaged by British soldiers. This theme removes the individuality of intimate, sexually violent experiences. By portraying America as a woman, her sexual assault erases the individual trauma of rape victims.⁶⁸



Figure 2- *The able doctor; or America swallowing the bitter draught*, May 1774. Library of Congress.

American Revolutionary rape symbolism continued to perpetuate sexual violence as an act between men.⁶⁹ According to Sharon Block, “stories of rape made men the emotional, economic,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 211, 231; Block, “Rape without Women,” 850.

and social victims of the rape of their female dependents. Thus, the offense of rape was more than an attack on a man's property."⁷⁰ In Austin's sermon, he highlights the grey-haired and aged parents forced to witness their daughter's shame. George Washington recounts in a letter to the Governor of New Jersey, William Livingston, how a Pennington tavernkeeper witnessed the rape of a neighbour's wife and daughter "by the Enemy while they lay there."⁷¹ Martin Gatter testified that "he had suffered so much by them [British soldiers] the Day before that he got out the back of his House and, hid in a Corn Field till, Morning, when he returned to his House and found his Wife and Children alive, but his wife had been most horribly abused."⁷²

The use of rape as a metaphor allowed propagandists to manipulate sexual violence in culturally specific ways and ensure the brutality of the abuse resonated with their audiences. For instance, Lucretia continued to be an important symbol during the Revolution. As Bailyn states, "Knowledge of classical authors was universal among colonists with any degree of education, and references to them and their works abound in the literature."⁷³ Ancient authors such as Livy, Ovid, Aristotle, and Cicero structured early American ethical, political, and artistic principles.⁷⁴ At the second commemoration for the Boston Massacre, Dr. Joseph Warren referenced the rape of American women and girls in direct relation to Lucretia's abuse: "our beautiful virgins exposed to all of the insolence of unbridled passions,- our virtuous wives, endeared to use by every tender tie, falling a sacrifice to worse than brutal violence, and perhaps like the famed LUCRETIA,

⁷⁰ Block, "Rape Without Women," 853.

⁷¹ Austin, "Addition by Johnathan W. Austin, Esq.," 110-1; "From George Washington to William Livingston, 3 March 1777," in *The Papers of George Washington*, 500-2.

⁷² Deposition of Martin Gatter, 26 July 1779, PCC, reel 66 item 53.

⁷³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 23-4.

⁷⁴ Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1, 10.

distracted with anguish and despair, ending their wretched lives by their own fair hands.”⁷⁵ John Trumbull painted *Brutus and His Friends at the Death of Lucretia* (1777) in the middle of the Revolution.⁷⁶ In the painting, Lucretia’s bloodied dress is ripped, partially exposing her chest. The colour of her dress, her exposed breast, and her light skin depict Lucretia’s feminine beauty. The dagger Lucretia used to stab herself is on the ground surrounded by large pools of blood, while a woman and a man appear anguished and cover her wound. Brutus, clad in blue and gold, points to the dagger on the ground while one friend holds his hand, and another extends a sword.⁷⁷



Figure 3-Brutus and His Friends at the Death of Lucretia. John Trumbull, 1777. Yale University Art Gallery.

⁷⁵ Dr. Joseph Warren, “Addition by Joseph Warren,” delivered at Boston, March 5, 1772, in *Orations delivered at the request of the inhabitants of the town of Boston, to commemorate the evening of the fifth of March, 1770* [...] (Boston: Printed by Peter Edes, 1785), 23. Joseph Warren became immortalized in his own right after being shot in the face and instantly killed in the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. As Sarah Purcell notes, Warren was a well-known physician, orator, and the president of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts. Warren’s gruesome death and popularity successfully sentimentalized his death and became a tool to mobilize support for the war. See Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 11.

⁷⁶ John Trumbull, *Brutus and His Friends at the Death of Lucretia*, 1777, Oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 49, Yale University Art Gallery; Duncan Macmillan, “Woman as Hero: Gavin Hamilton’s Radical Alternative,” in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, ed. Gill Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 97 note 27 in Katharina Erhard, “Rape, Republicanism, and Representation: Founding the Nation in Early American Women’s Drama and Selected Visual Representations,” *American Studies* vol. 50, no. 3 (2005): 511.

⁷⁷ John Trumbull, *Brutus and His Friends at the Death of Lucretia*, 1777.

Much like the Roman Republic, America's origins rested upon rape. The indignation at the corruption of female virtue and the war against a tyrannical monarchy mirrored mythologized Roman experiences.⁷⁸ Like many other rape narratives, Lucretia's allegory subsumes her individual pain for the good of the republic. As scholar Melissa Matthes eloquently summarizes:

Lucretia must die, then, for two reasons: first, because she is at risk of being pregnant with a monstrosity—the offspring of the tyrant. The lineage of the tyrants must be thwarted; the republic requires that the sons give birth to themselves in order to defy paternal power. And second, she must die because her violation marks the failure of masculinity, specifically of her male kin to protect her. She reveals their failure to be men.⁷⁹

Lucretia's story contributed to early American understandings of revolution and became a narrative of virtuous men rather than female abuse.

Raping women and girls in front of their family members aimed to humiliate both male and female victims.⁸⁰ As mentioned in the previous chapter, separating a woman from help during her assault was a common feature of eighteenth-century rape. During the Revolution, British soldiers adapted this protocol. Abigail Palmer and the Cain sisters were raped in a backroom of Edmund Palmer's home while he begged for them to be spared. Mary Campbell's rape while five months pregnant was a direct assault against American manhood. As Susan Klepp states, procreation was power. Children were an important source of labour and pride for families and nations. Men passed on their familial legacies, and patriotic women raised strong male soldiers.⁸¹ British soldiers raping Mrs. Campbell while pregnant sullied the Campbell family and the future

⁷⁸ Melissa Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of the Republic: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 5-6, 8-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁰ Sharon Block, "Rape in the American Revolution: Process, Reaction, and Public Re-Creation," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 25-30, 37-8.

⁸¹ Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 3, 60-3, 75; Deposition of Abigail Palmer, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66; Deposition of Sarah Cain, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66; Deposition of Mary Campbell, Mar. 22, 1777, PCC, item 53, reel 66.

of America. While women may have been the victims, the rapes were directed against American men. Hoock provides an example of a *Virginia Gazette* contributor asking for the depositions of parents and husbands who saw their wives and daughters raped to be published. The contributor's request for only the male depositions and the absence of female voices suggests that female pain is invalid. Wartime rape propaganda mediated women's experiences, reaffirming the need for patriarchal protection and masculinity. Women were the object of the attack, but American manhood was the real victim. Publishers focusing on men's emotions made them infallible witnesses to the rapes.⁸² The atrocities gained national attention and were instrumental in swaying public opinion, but sexual assault survivors were denied a voice.

American women seeking to prosecute British soldiers faced greater challenges than before the war but were less likely to be challenged.⁸³ The limited number of courts-martial suggests that soldiers were not prosecuted for their crimes despite rape being strictly against British and American codes of conduct. Sharon Block states that women and families may have been reluctant to tell male officials about sexual attacks for fear of reprisal during the war.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Block suggests that women were more likely to report their abuse during the war than in peacetime. Unlike in civilian courts, physical evidence did not play into military trials, and a woman's character did not come into question the same way. With men at the center of rape stories, rape narratives were undeniable. Published depositions enabled the public to prosecute British immorality in the court of American and international opinion.⁸⁵

⁸² Block, "Rape Without Women," 854-5; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 165; "Mr. Purdie," *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg, VA), Jan. 31, 1777.

⁸³ Hoock, "*Jus in bello*," 80.

⁸⁴ Sharon Block, "How Should We Look at Rape in Early America?" *History Compass* vol. 4, no. 3 (2006): 605; Block, "Rape in the American Revolution," 29-32; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 170-1.

⁸⁵ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 237; Hoock, "*Jus in bello*," 86.

Sexually charged language flooded Revolutionary publications. In his 1776 tragicomedy, *The Fall of British Tyranny: or American Liberty Triumphant*, John Leacock rails against the actions of the British Parliament using sexually charged language. Leacock unflatteringly renames British politicians complicit in English tyranny. The Earl of Dartmouth (Secretary of State for the Colonies) becomes Lord Hypocrite and Lord Dunmore (Governor of Virginia and signatory of the 1775 Proclamation), Lord Kidnapper. Lord Catspaw (Lord North) declares that English soldiers must subdue colonists to break their brutish nature.⁸⁶ The satirized versions of British leaders condemn the American rebels' actions and denounce the freedom of the press. In contrast, British supporters of the Revolution, such as Earl Camden, John Wilkes, and John Shipley, the Bishop of St. Asaph, are renamed Lord Justice, Lord Patriot, and Lord Religion. Lord Justice states that the English constitution is deflowered and "made to commit rape on her own body, by the avaricious frowns of her own father, who is bound to protect her, not to destroy her."⁸⁷ Printers drew on pre-existing colonial fears of subjugation to disseminate knowledge and persuade the American populace.⁸⁸

Bernard Bailyn suggests that Revolutionary propaganda was deeply meaningful and not solely intended to be inflammatory. As revolutionaries perceived liberty to be the natural victim of aggressive power, publishers used metaphors and analogies as an emblematic victory over dark and perverse primordial forces.⁸⁹ For example, a broadside published in Philadelphia, 1776, stresses the systematic violations by the British government as an express attempt to enslave

⁸⁶ John Leacock, *The Fall of British Tyranny: Or American Liberty Triumphant* (Philadelphia: Printed by Styner and Cist, 1776), viii, 13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁸ Wood, "Reassessing Bernard Bailyn," 96; Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776*, 10.

⁸⁹ Bernard Bailyn, "Foreword to the Original Edition," in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 50th Anniversary Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), xxxi; "Preface to the Fiftieth Anniversary Edition," ix, 55-59.

colonists. The English crown indulges in wartime rapine and bloodshed. To prevent Philadelphia from falling into the hands of the enemy, Patriots must check their progress and “convince our Friends, in the distant Parts, that ONE SPIRIT ANIMATES THE WHOLE.”⁹⁰ Drawing on their knowledge of the sexual abuses within American slavery, revolutionaries perceived British victory as political and sexual enslavement. Rape metaphors were not only a matter of political persuasion. The metaphors highlighted real fears about sexual subjugation that could be prevented with independence.⁹¹

Likewise, English commentators used the media to express their concerns over the Revolution in equally vitriolic language. A comment printed in the October 16, 1777 edition of the *Public Advertiser* claims the United States is a “Mock-Republic” full of bad republicans. These “False-Americans” ignore the inhumanity of their violence in favour of tyranny, oppression, cruelty, and rapine while chanting “We Are Free!”⁹² The author uses the Revolutionaries’ language against them, claiming:

If our Colonists have any truly *British* Blood left in them; if they are not degenerated into infinitely worse than AMERICAN Savageness, they will be first, on a Resumption of their Senses, on a Reclamation of the Honors of their British, to demand Justice against those who have so grossly traduced their Mother-Country, while deceiving and tyrannizing over them, even them, never but loved as her legal Issue, whom, so far from wishing to inslave, she would disdain to own, if they were not FREE! And to keep whom FREE, she has so often profusely lavished her Blood and Treasure.⁹³

Other Englishmen supported the Revolution. A Boston broadside printed a letter from an English supporter, commending the Revolutionaries and urging them to keep fighting. The tyranny the Revolutionaries fought against threatened to tear Britain apart as well: “The court keeps all

⁹⁰ “The Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, To the Peoples in general, and particularly to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania, and the adjacent States,” Philadelphia, PA, 1776.

⁹¹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, ix, 55-59.

⁹² “News,” *Public Advertiser* (London, England,) Oct. 16, 1777.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

measures, at home and abroad, from the knowledge of the people as much as possible, lest they should be incited to a civil war, as the cause of liberty is now become the universal topic.”⁹⁴ It was prudent for Revolutionaries to resist their adversaries and protect the constitution from being ravished.⁹⁵

Rape was also a source of comedic inspiration during the Revolutionary era. Published in Boston, 1771, *The Trial of Atticus, before Justice Beau, for a Rape*, satirizes a fictional rape trial. The Chuckles accuse their neighbour Atticus of indecent behaviour after sitting on the bed with Mrs. Chuckle. This accusation (two years after the incident) turns into a rape trial when Justice Beau, Lawyer Rattle, and the “witnesses” rally around the Chuckles’ accusations. During the trial, witness testimonies and the date of the assault change with Lawyer Rattle’s prompting. Rattle coaches Mrs. Chuckle to say that she told her husband immediately and that she cried out despite her earlier assertions that she remained quiet to accommodate for Atticus’ headache.⁹⁶ The characters of Atticus and the Chuckles, not the “rape,” are on trial. Witnesses use Atticus’ previous debauched behaviour, such as an incident when Atticus supposedly drank at Lieutenant Scant’s custom and left without paying, to support their accusation. The author uses the trial to reinforce the contemporary assumption that women’s consent was always assumed, i.e., Mrs. Chuckle consented to Atticus’ behaviour and her husband and Lawyer Rattle’s scheme, and the ease with false accusations are made.⁹⁷ The obscene nature of the trial is both comedic and a reflection of the gendered conceptions of rape.

⁹⁴ “A genuine letter from a well-known patriot at St. James’s to his friend in Boston, relative to the present distracted state of American affairs,” Boston, MA, 1775.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *The Trial of Atticus, before Justice Beau, for a Rape* (Boston: Printed by Isaiah Thomas, 1771); Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 161.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Another apparent rape joke appears in a 1776 letter written by Francis, Lord Rawdon of the Sixty-Third Regiment of Foot. Lord Rawdon, Adjutant to General Clinton, proudly describes to his uncle, the Earl of Huntingdon, the heinous actions throughout New Jersey as systematic and without conscience:

The fair nymphs of this isle are in wonderful tribulation, as the fresh meat our men have got here has made them a riotous as satyrs. A girl cannot step into the bushes to pluck a rose without running the most imminent risk of being ravished, and they are so little accustomed to these vigorous methods that they don't bear them with the proper resignation, and of consequence we have most entertaining courts-martial every day.⁹⁸

Historians have used Rawdon's words as evidence of English derision of rape victims.⁹⁹ Holger Hock connects Rawdon's statement to an article from London's *Morning Chronicle*, which considered a gang rape in New Jersey as an improvement on American "breeding." Rawdon's satire suggests that rape was normalized as a by-product of war.¹⁰⁰

In contrast, Don Hagist raises issues with the letter's uses. Since the letter's publication in 1934, Hagist states that scholars have used it as evidence of British depredations without evidence to support these claims. According to Hagist, out of the 587 general courts-martial in America between 1774 and 1783, only eight were for rape, and none occurred on Staten Island during the time in question. In addition, Rawdon's other letters consistently include sarcastic and colourful passages, leading Hagist to believe Rawdon was trying to inform and entertain. Hagist surmises

⁹⁸ Francis, Lord Rawdon to Earl of Huntingdon, quoted in Sally Smith Booth, *The Women of '76* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), 105; Don N. Hagist, "Rawdon's Ruse," *The Journal of the American Revolution* (July 2014).

⁹⁹ Citations of Rawdon's words range widely. See Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 41; Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, eds., *The Spirit of Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by Participants*, I (New York, 1953), 424; in Sally Smith Booth, *The Women of '76* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), 105; Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence*, 171; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 202-4.

¹⁰⁰ Hock, *Scars of Independence*, 171; *Morning Chronicle*, Apr. 2, 1777, quoted in Hock, 171.

that regardless of quantifiable evidence, historians have used this passage to prove their theses, cementing this questionable letter as fact in the historical record.¹⁰¹

The possibility that Rawdon's account of Revolutionary rape was satirical does not take away from the fact that sexual violence was a common occurrence during the war. Rather, Rawdon's letter demonstrates the politicization of rape. For many historians, the lack of quantifiable data leads them to question the possibility, and therefore believability, of rape. However, as outlined repeatedly in the previous chapter, historians know that sexual violence was common during the American Revolutionary era, and there were many obstacles to recording abuse. Anna Clark defines rape as the violent and forcible seizure of a woman's sexuality aimed at humiliating women.¹⁰² Rawdon aimed to humiliate American women and claims of independence through his letter. Regardless, if Rawdon's claims cannot be quantified, it does not diminish the power of his words and what his letter can tell historians about how eighteenth-century Anglo-Americans viewed rape. Using Clark's theory, scholars can use Rawdon's letter as evidence that wanton abuse took place.

The Silences of Rape Symbolism

Rape symbolism relied on stark contrasts between American civility and enemy barbarity. Throughout the war, both British and American forces created alliances with surrounding Indigenous tribes.¹⁰³ By the eighteenth century, American colonists no longer feared rape by

¹⁰¹ Hagist, "Rawdon's Ruse."

¹⁰² Anna Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845* (London: Pandora, 1987), 39; Shani D'Cruze, "Approaching the History of Rape and Sexual Violence: Notes Towards Research," *Women's History Review* 1, no. 3 (1993): 391-2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 279. Historian Jeffrey Ostler suggests that many Indigenous groups joined the war to survive. Many American Revolutionary leaders welcomed Cherokee resistance because it gave a rationale to fight and claim traditional Cherokee land. See Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 49, 51-3, 55-6.

Indigenous raiders. The lack of rape in seventeenth-century captivity narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's 1682 captivity by the Shawnee and Seneca tribes led many eighteenth-century English women to believe they were sexually safe from Indigenous men.¹⁰⁴ There are no records of Indigenous men raping white captives. Some scholars attribute this to the traditions of mourning war—the practice in which Indigenous groups adopted many of their captives to restore depleting populations—or to a cultural prohibition of warriors engaging in sex during war.¹⁰⁵ Propagandists and printers used the lack of sexual violence by Indigenous warriors to prove that the British were worse than those they deemed savages.

Nevertheless, as Alice Nash highlights, indigeneity is not homogenous. Most academic literature on captives and captivity narratives derives from Iroquoian practices and cannot translate to all tribes. For instance, the Northeastern Wabanaki tribe did not practice mourning war.¹⁰⁶ Nash astutely points out that the discussion about the lack of Indigenous wartime rape assumes that rape is a natural consequence of war. Rape's absence, rather than presence, needs to be explained.¹⁰⁷

Publishers specifically referred to the rape of white women in their publications. The Revolution did not bring meaningful conversations about enslaved women to the forefront of the country.¹⁰⁸ Although gossip about sexual abuse and violence against enslaved people challenged American claims of morality and righteousness, enslaved women were routinely abused. The Revolution also renewed fears of slave rebellions. Since the seventeenth century, North American colonists feared that slaves would rape white women during a revolt. According to Block, "rape

¹⁰⁴ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 222.

¹⁰⁵ Hock, *Scars of Independence*, 278; Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 165-188; Alice Nash, "'None of the Women Were Abused': Indigenous Contexts for the Treatment of Women Captives in the Northeast," in *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America*, ed. Merril Smith (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 24 note 1.

¹⁰⁶ Nash, "'None of the Women were Abused,'" 10, 17-18.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 note 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 129, 155-8.

was the utmost rejection of the fundamental unit of patriarchal control: legitimate marriage. Rape was publicly figured as a means to attack, affront, or access patriarchal prerogatives.”¹⁰⁹ The irony of slaveholding America’s fears of sexual slavery at the hands of their British overlords has not gone unnoticed by historians. Only those who were free and propertied were able to rebel against their oppressors.¹¹⁰

There are also silences surrounding rape by Continental soldiers. Revolutionary rape narratives primarily discussed the rape of American women by British or Hessian officers. However, historians know that American soldiers were also guilty of rape during the war. Hooch states that the Loyalist press occasionally accused Patriot soldiers of sexual abuse.¹¹¹ There is an article on patriot abuse in the same publication as the congressional rape depositions. Three soldiers came to the house of Mr. Nowel Furman near Princeton, abused his family, stole clothes, almanacs, and other goods. Although the publication does not explicitly mention rape, it does say that the family was abused “in a barbarous manner.”¹¹² Based on the terminology to describe rape and sexual violence in the eighteenth century, the soldiers may have raped Furman’s wife, and *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* was hesitant to tarnish patriot support. However, it is also possible that American soldiers did not engage in rape to the same degree as British soldiers. Some historians suggest that the unavoidable cohabitation with their victims after the war discouraged American soldiers from abusing colonists.¹¹³

The lack of rape by revolutionary forces is also evidence of the success of American propaganda. Wartime propaganda politicized the rape of American women as the rape of American

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 220.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 115; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 237-8; Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, 196.

¹¹¹ Hooch, *Scars of Independence*, 173.

¹¹² “Princeton, New-Jersey, December 5, 1776,” *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 28, 1776.

¹¹³ Hooch, *Scars of Independence*, 173-4; Block, “Rape in the American Revolution,” 25-30, 37-8.

property and America herself. Men were required to protect America from violation and fight for her sexual independence. American soldiers may have extended this belief to all white women, regardless of political loyalty. For an American soldier to rape a white woman, he would rape America and violate the freedoms he desired.

Publishers also falsely accused all enemy soldiers of rape. There is evidence that British soldiers tried to stop their comrades from raping women. After three days of abuse, Abigail Palmer and the Cain sisters were liberated from the military camp by a British soldier. A British captain saved Eunice Burr in Fairfield, Connecticut. However, soldiers accosted Eunice on three separate occasions in a few days. When Eunice tried to protect her aged neighbour and daughter with General Tyron's written protection, the soldiers ripped the paper from her hand, damning Tyron and the protection.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, just like all Indigenous tribes were not homogenous, not all British soldiers engaged in wartime rape.

Rape served as an abstract concept that no longer solely represented a male-female sexual act but the entire Revolution. Printers characterized British soldiers as voracious predators. The Continental Congress used the mangled bodies of women, children, and soldiers as polemical symbols to gain support.¹¹⁵ By reducing women to sexual victims and the embodiment of virtue, Revolutionary rhetoric nationalized female sexuality. With America's burgeoning print culture, propagandists were able to produce multiple rape narratives at faster rates. Arguably, rape symbolism began to outpace the social reality of non-metaphorical rape. This continual

¹¹⁴ Testimony of Eunice Burr wife of Thadeus Burr Esqr., Aug. 2, in "To George Washington From Brigadier General Samuel Holden Parsons, 31 July 1779," in *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 21, 1 June–31 July 1779, ed. William M. Ferraro (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 758–769; Hooch, "Jus in bello," 82. Hooch states that under General Sir William Tyron, soldiers raided Connecticut towns in a "frenetic atmosphere of alcohol-fueled looting and burning..." and despite several attempts to dissuade soldiery abuse, another group of soldiers would continue the abuse separately. The constant terrorization of Connecticut women and girls demonstrates the inability of British officers failing to restrain their troops.

¹¹⁵ Hooch, *Scars of Independence*, 153, 164.

nationalization of verified abuse and symbolic assaults made Revolutionary rape similar to ancient Roman narratives, yet distinct from other sexually violent conflicts. Women did not belong to themselves but to America.

Beginning with the Intolerable Acts and the British occupation of Boston, publishers highlighted the tyranny of the British government. Rape rhetoric fuelled portrayals of British immorality. The rampant pillaging and sexual abuse of American women and girls symbolically violated patriarchal power and justified calls for independence. Sermonizers, publishers, and Congress pointed to the abuses of American women and girls as a recruitment tool. A summary of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety best represents the politicization of rape narratives during the war:

We call upon you, we entreat and beseech you, to come forth to the assistance of our worthy Gen. Washington, and our invaded brethren in the Jerseys; if you wish to secure your property from being plundered, and to protect the innocence of your wives and children, if you wish to live in freedom, and are determined to maintain that best boon of heaven, you have no time to deliberate. A manly resistance will secure every blessing. Inactivity and sloth will bring horror and destruction. Step forth like men.¹¹⁶

The prevalence of rape in early American mass media created the foundations to translate the sexual violence of the Revolution into a nationalistic narrative. Avenging rape became synonymous with American male honour.

¹¹⁶ "In Council of Safety, December 23, 1776," *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 28, 1776.

Chapter Three: For the Good of the Republic: The Nationalization of Virtue

On April 19, 1783, Zabdiel Adams preached a sermon in Lexington, Massachusetts, to commemorate the American Revolution. Adams reminded the audience of the “wantonness of British rage” that killed America’s bravest young men and ravished women and girls. As the Revolution was part of God’s plan to separate America from England’s jealous rage, women’s abuse was not in vain. Adams urged his audience that “to forget, indeed, I know is not our duty.”¹ The abuses American women and girls faced at the hands of the British continued to be part of revolutionary memory.

The American Revolution provoked widespread discussions about virtue, sex, and power.² Through the sexual symbolism in revolutionary propaganda, women became the guardians of virtue. After the war, republican theorists continued to use female sexual virtue to gauge political morality.³ If American citizens displayed the same sexual debauchery as English and Hessian soldiers during the war, then the Republic would not survive. Based on the evidence in seduction novels, trials, and rape narratives, sexual violence continued to dominate the popular imagination in the American Republic.

The postwar period marked accelerated changes in education, political engagement, and independence for white American women.⁴ Early American women did not accept their subordinate status. As Mary Beth Norton states, many women competently managed family

¹ Zabdiel Adams, A.M. Pastor of the Church in Lunenburg, “The evil designs of men made subservient by God to the public good; particularly illustrated in the rise, progress and conclusion of the American war. A sermon preached at Lexington, on the nineteenth of April, 1783[...],” Lexington, MA, Apr. 19, 1783.

² Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility and Family Limitations in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 107.

³ Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: John’s Hopkins University Press, 2002), 266-7, 295; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 228.

⁴ *Ibid.*

estates, fundraised, and boycotted goods during the Revolution despite the preconceptions about feminine weakness and incapacity. Women's wartime contributions sanctioned white women's political engagement.⁵ Historian Susan Klepp suggests that women found autonomy through greater freedom in courtships and marriage, challenging the sexual double standard.⁶ Linda Kerber's and Jan Lewis' work on "Republican Motherhood" and "Republican Wives" centers women in America's political sphere. Republican motherhood compounded expectations of women's faith, domestic responsibilities, and civic virtue.⁷ The republican mother was supposed to be affectionate, chaste, and virtuous. In the family, she guided her husband's morality, educated her sons about strong republican principles, and taught her daughters how to make husbands "virtuous and happy."⁸

Classicist historian Caroline Winterer suggests the foundations of republican motherhood were based on the idea of the "Roman Matron." Drawing on their classical education, "men created a national ideology based on the reverence for the Greco-Roman soldier/farmer/hero, [and] women created the complementary but different ideal of the Roman matron, a pillar of female virtue, the woman who was a married mother, learned, chaste, sober, and dignified."⁹ Regardless of its name, the establishment of a female-centric national ideology enabled women to connect to the Republic

⁵ Ibid.; Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5.

⁶ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 230, 240; Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 243, 246.

⁷ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 228; Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (October: 1987), 689-90, 720; Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 5.

⁸ Ibid.; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 243-4, 248, 254-5; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 235; Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York, 1967), 32 in Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 254-5.

⁹ Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 8.

and showed how American citizens could govern themselves in a society bound by love rather than brute force.¹⁰

Historians generally accept that ideas about gender relations changed from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹¹ Some suggest that Americans experienced political and sexual revolutions simultaneously. Richard Godbeer's work on colonial and revolutionary New England suggests that throughout the 1700s, the increasing diversity of New England's population weakened the strength of Puritan ideals. A steady rise in premarital pregnancies and the loosening of seventeenth-century parental control created a more open sexual climate during the Revolution.¹² As Godbeer states, "the pursuit of individual happiness, a recurring priority in Enlightenment writings, combined with the invocation of liberty by revolutionary leaders to justify youthful insistence upon personal freedom," included sexual liberty.¹³

Clare A. Lyons's work on Philadelphia from 1730 to 1830 traces the transformation from colonial constructions of gender to regulations of sexuality during the nineteenth century. Using print material and church and legal records, Lyons traces the changes to colonial beliefs, which dictated that as Eve's descendants, women were subject to sexual temptation and lust.¹⁴ As Sharon Block states, "Puritan emphasis on religious morality was joined by an emphasis on civic morality in the new nation; colonial concern about sinners transformed into concern about rakes in the early Republic; and images of respectable women ruined through love and bad marital choices

¹⁰ Ibid., 41; Lewis, "The Republican Wife," 695.

¹¹ Ruth H. Bloch, *Gender & Morality in Anglo-American culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

¹² Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 227-9.

¹³ Ibid., 237.

¹⁴ Clare A. Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), 4-8, 155-7.

eventually complemented seventeenth-century images of lustful women.”¹⁵ Republican virtue became normative female sexuality. Women were responsible for their sexual behaviour, and society considered those who did not conform as lustful sexual deviants.¹⁶

Other scholars demonstrate the lasting influence of violence and sexualized revolutionary narratives. Much like Lauren Duval’s forthcoming book, Katharina Erhard’s work investigates how republicans negotiated the Revolution through the female body. Examining the works of female playwrights such as Susanna Haswell Rowson and Mercy Otis Warren, Erhard demonstrates the prevalence of sexualized narratives in wartime memory.¹⁷ Scholars such as Michael Hattem and Sarah Purcell have traced the transformations of colonial and revolutionary memory in national histories. Following the war, Americans “began the cultural construction of a ‘deep national past,’ built on mythical symbolism, epic renderings of the American past, and the nationalization of the natural history of the continent by appropriating the past of its Indigenous Peoples.”¹⁸ Post-war commemorations created a national mythology that prioritized principles such as self-sacrifice, military heroism, fear of centralized power, love of liberty, and reverence for the common good.¹⁹ Some scholars argue that sentimental literature combined the politicization of rape and the nationalization of virtue into educational tracts to ensure the republic’s survival. As the American Revolution coincided with a reading revolution, literacy and domestic publication in the United States increased. America’s first novels were complex social, political, and cultural

¹⁵ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 225, 229.

¹⁷ Katharina Erhard, “Rape, Republicanism, and Representation: Founding the Nation in Early American Women’s Drama and Selected Visual Representations,” *American Studies* vol. 50, no. 3 (2005): 507-534.

¹⁸ Michael D. Hattem, *Past and Prologue: Politics and Memory in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 3-4, 9.

¹⁹ Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1-4.

discussions to educate young people—especially women—on navigating a patriarchal society obsessed with female sexual behaviour.²⁰ Americans retooled the violence of the Revolution to foster national unity.

Influenced by wartime rapes and propaganda, Americans correlated the stability of the Republic with sexual morality. Post-revolutionary Americans nationalized female virtue in two ways: through sexualized wartime memory and seduction narratives. Americans fortified pre-revolutionary conceptions of rape and placed the onus of sexual responsibility on women. As the heart of the Republic, it was essential for women to avoid being seduced into licentiousness. Women and girls had to eschew immoral sexual behaviour, not only for themselves but for America.

Post-revolutionary writers continued to discuss the rape of American women and girls at the hands of the British in their works. After the Revolution, many historians began to write with the intent to contribute to a national audience. As Michael Hattem suggests, “as Americans themselves tried to figure out who they were as citizens of a new nation created seemingly out of thin air, historians and other intellectuals were engaged in the same process. Their major contribution to that process was the creation of a national history.”²¹ Revolutionary leaders such as George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson understood that Americans needed to have a new national past to unify them and replace their previous colonial history. Political leaders, historians, artists, poets, and essayists conversed with one another to collect and preserve primary

²⁰ Erhard, “Rape, Republicanism, and Representation,” 507-534.; Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Bloch, *Gender & Morality*, 126; Bruce Burgett, *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Cassandra A. Good, *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jack Marietta and G. S. Rowe, “Rape, Law, Courts, and Custom, Pennsylvania, 1682-1800,” in *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America*, Merril D. Smith, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 81-102.

²¹ Hattem, *Past and Prologue*, 141-6, 182, quotation 208.

sources, creating the nation's first historical societies and institutions.²² The actual and metaphorical rape of American women and girls was part of this history and became institutionalized within Revolutionary narratives.

James Murray's three-volume work, *An Impartial history of the war in America, between Great Britain and the United States (1781-1784)*, demonstrated the power of American print media. Murray stated that the publications of congress's inquiries into the conduct of British soldiers roused Americans' spirits and removed despondency.²³ Murray drew attention to soldiers "murdering the defenceless, plundering the innocent, ravishing women, and destroying infants...[inflicting] great injury to the British cause. The Americans thereby united more closely, and [were] urged to action, by the most powerful motives."²⁴ Support for the British cause dwindled with supporters converted "by the depredations, the rapes, and the murders, of which the British troops had so frequently proved guilty, into malignant enemies."²⁵

David Ramsay's *The History of the American Revolution (1789-1790)* cast the Revolution as a constitutional crisis caused by Britain's imperial interests and colonial self-government. The experiences of Connecticut women, such as Eunice Burr and Christiana Gatter, "would shock the ears of modesty, if particularly recited."²⁶ Ramsay stated that many Connecticut women were mistaken to hope that their sex and written safeguards from British officers would protect them.

²² Ibid., 162-4, 170. Hattem gives a visual representation of participants in this historical network. See p. 164, Fig. 3.

²³ James Murray, *An Impartial history of the war in America, between Great Britain and the United States, from its commencement to the end of the war [...]* Vol. II (Boston: Nathaniel Coverly and Robert Hodge, 1782), 169.

²⁴ Ibid., 170, 173.

²⁵ James Murray, *An Impartial history of the war in America, between Great Britain and the United States*, Vol. III, 106-7. Murray uses British General Fox's commentary during a parliamentary request to inquire the failure of the British naval expeditions in 1781 to denounce British sexual liberty. The British navy's efforts continued to be thwarted by the French navy.

²⁶ Michael D. Hattem, "The historiography of the American Revolution," *Journal of the American Revolution: Beyond the Classroom Series*, August 23, 2017; David Ramsay, *The history of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1789), I, 326-7.

British and Hessian soldiers pillaged their homes, threatened them with bayonets to their breasts, and assaulted those they considered part of their plunder.²⁷ Serialized in the popular *Columbian Magazine*, Ramsay's history had a wide audience as soon as it was published.²⁸

The *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations* (1805) described the Revolution as resistance to “the love of domination and an uncontrolled lust of arbitrary power.”²⁹ Mercy Otis Warren, the first female historian of the Revolution, recounted the rapes in New Jersey. She suggested that enemy forces were so intent on annihilating American colonists, they attacked everyone regardless of their political affiliation. Patriot and Loyalist women were chased into the woods and raped while their houses burned to the ground, and “many unfortunate fathers, in the stupor of grief, beheld the misery of their female connexions, without being able to relieve them...”³⁰ The British army's uncontrolled lust viciously stripped colonists of their domestic power.

American histories of the Revolution continued to politicize rape narratives. As Sarah Purcell points out, wartime commemorations “provided the context through which political martyrs acquired their glory and power as national symbols,” but “not all martyrs were created equal.”³¹ Early Revolutionary historians contextualized the rape of American women in primarily military terms. The majority of the histories focused on the battles and anecdotes of military and political leaders. Ramsay's military history is so detailed that there are accounts of the military's

²⁷ Ibid., vol. II, 103.

²⁸ Hattem, *Past and Prologue*, 152-3, 168-9.

²⁹ Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations* (Boston: Originally Printed by Manning and Loring for E. Larkin, 1805, reprint Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), 5.

³⁰ Ibid.; Hattem, “The historiography of the American Revolution.”

³¹ Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, 20-1.

daily movements and even the weather. Warren's narrative provided fewer military details but used wartime propaganda to ground her political observations. The rapes of American women and girls are only mentioned within a few pages as secondary examples of the brutalities of the invading militaries. By mentioning the rapes in relation to military expeditions and the desire for power, writers continued to cast rape as a male problem. Women and girls were once again used to symbolize British immorality and their abuse of power.

American conceptions of gender and sexuality continued to evolve in response to shifting political, religious, and social ideologies. As Katharina Erhard suggests, "written and visual representations cast the American Revolution as a sexualized narrative: a female-connoted, virtuous American liberty was encroached by an aggressive, male British power in order to stir nationalism."³² Historical scenes played an integral role in the development of America's cultural identity. By memorializing only certain moments, post-revolutionaries dictated that they were important.³³ The "Ode in honour of the Pennsylvania militia" (1800) commemorates the success of Washington's forces and the destruction of British depravity. The poem states that: "All behind a bleeding soil—Every pleasant feat laid waste, Where the soldier rov'd for spoil, Or deflow'r'd the virgin chaste."³⁴ The author remembers the Battles of Trenton and Princeton in line with the Revolution's sexualized narrative.

Early Americans reshaped the infamous murder of Jane McCrea (1777) into a sexually violent narrative. McCrea was from a patriotic family but engaged to an officer in Burgoyne's

³² Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 507-9; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 50th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 55-62.

³³ Hattem, *Past and Prologue*, 154; Melissa Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of the Republic: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 8.

³⁴ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, "An Ode in Honour of the Pennsylvania Militia, and the Small Band of Regular Troops, Under the Command of Gen. George Washington; who in the Depth of the Winter, In the Year 1776 [...]," (Albany: Printed According to Act of Congress, 1800), 3 verse 2.

army. On her way to visit her fiancé at Fort Edward, Jane was attacked by two Indigenous men. The two men scalped McCrea shortly after. Anglo-Americans placed the blame on Mohawk warriors, although the identity of McCrea's killers was never confirmed.³⁵

After her death, Revolutionary commentators wrote accounts that stressed Jane's femininity and the incivility of Britain's Indigenous allies, and therefore Britain herself. *The Continental Journal* published a series of correspondence between Lieutenant-General Burgoyne of the British Army and Major General Horatio Gates of the Continental Army. Burgoyne's letter requests Gates to let the baggage and servants of American prisoners of war pass through undisturbed. Burgoyne stresses that he does not fail in his attention to his prisoners and asks a returned display of civility. In his response, Gates states that he is astonished that Burgoyne has the nerve to ask for civility when the British government actively employed "the Savages of America." Gates references McCrea's story, highlighting that she was "a young lady lovely to the sight, of virtuous character, and amiable disposition."³⁶ According to a newspaper article published in 1853, Gates also issued a general order about McCrea, rousing the country's hostility towards the British.³⁷ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* published an extract from a gentleman who heard of McCrea's tragic death and her "share of beauty." The author knew Jane's brother who, as he assured readers, would "not forget the injury, but revenge it tenfold."³⁸

³⁵ William H. Truettner, "Picturing the Murder of Jane McCrea: A Critical Moment in Transatlantic Romanticism," in *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature, 1790-1860*, ed. Andrew Hemingway and Alan Wallach (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2015), 232; Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American *Tableau d'Historie*," *Art Bulletin* 47, no. 4 (December 1965): 481-4. The spelling of McCrea's last name varies within sources.

³⁶ "Boston, September 18," *The Continental Journal, and Weekly Advertiser* (Boston, MA), Sept. 18, 1777.

³⁷ "The Murder of Jane McCrea by Indians—Historical Facts of the Case," *Brother Jonathan* (New York, NY), Aug. 6, 1853.

³⁸ "Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Snook-kill, July 27, 1777," *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), Aug. 12, 1777.

McCrea's tragic demise and her youthful beauty continued to garner attention long after the Revolution. Prominent American poet Joel Barlow's *Columbiad* (1809) uses racialized language to retell McCrea's story. The poem states that General Burgoyne tried to curb the "inhuman mode of warfare which had been customary among those savages," but

No sooner did hostilities begin between the two armies than these people, who could have no knowledge of the cause nor affection for either party, and whose only object was plunder and pay, began their indiscriminate and ungovernable ravages on both sides. They robbed and murdered peasants, whether royalists or others; men, women, children, straggling and wounded soldiers of both armies. The tragical catastrophe of a young lady of the name of Macrea... is well known.³⁹

Writers sensationalized the tragedy and violence of Jane's death by highlighting her innocence. Some writers juxtaposed the image of her corpse and her beauty.⁴⁰ Other writers stressed that McCrea was supposedly going to be married that evening and died in her wedding dress. McCrea was a "blooming beauty, shivering in the distress of innocence, youth, and despair, the victim of their fury. The helpless maid was butchered and scalped, and her bleeding corpse left in the woods, to excite the tear of every beholder."⁴¹ Newspapers across the country told readers about McCrea's life and death throughout the war and into the early 1800s. Jane's story regained public attention during her reburial in 1822, and she is even mentioned in a mortuary notice following her brother's death.⁴² McCrea's "blooming virginity" effectively politicized her story within a sexualized revolutionary narrative.

³⁹ Joel Barlow, *Columbiad* (Philadelphia: 1809), No. 41, Book VI. Line 685; Hattem, *Past and Prologue*, 163.

⁴⁰ Phillip Freneau, *America Independent*, in *The Poems of Phillip Freneau* (Philadelphia, 1786) in Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire," *The Art Bulletin* vol. 47, no. 4 (December 1965): 483-4.

⁴¹ Edgerton, "The Murder of Jane McCrea," 484; Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, vol. I, quotation, 233-4; "Boston, September 18," *The Continental Journal, and Weekly Advertiser* (Boston, MA), Sept. 18, 1777; John Lathrop, A. M. Pastor of the Second Church in Boston, *A discourse, preached on March the fifth, 1779* (Boston: Printed and Sold by Draper and Folsom, 1778), 12-3.

⁴² "Jane McCrea," *Norwich Courier* (Norwich, CT), Oct. 18, 1820; "Miscellany. Murder of Miss Mcrea," *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), Jan. 23, 1824; "Jane McCrea," *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot* (Boston, MA), Apr. 22, 1822. Jane's reburial was published in a number of newspapers including the *American Mercury* (Connecticut),

Lauren Duval analyzes wartime memory by comparing John Trumbull's 1790s sketch of Jane McCrea and John Vanderlyn's famous 1804 recreation. As Duval points out, the commemoration of Jane's tragic capture and scalping evolved throughout the centuries.⁴³ Trumbull's sketch depicts three Indigenous men holding McCrea's naked waist while one has his arm raised with a knife. McCrea's house and a white man—Jane's fiancé, scholars suggest—who struggles to reach her are visible in the background. Duval contends Trumbull's image shows the reality of frontier life subsumed by war.⁴⁴ In contrast, Vanderlyn's painting is much darker. Two



Figure 1-The Murder of Jane McCrea. John Trumbull, 1790. Fordham University Libraries.

the *Watch-Tower* (New York), *Vermont Gazette* (Vermont), *Providence Gazette* (Rhode Island); "Mortuary Notice," *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), June 1, 1826.

⁴³ Lauren Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of Our Enemies," Massachusetts Historical Society Presentation, Sept. 22, 2020, p. 9-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; John Trumbull, *The Murder of Jane McCrea*, 1790, pen and ink, 4x7, Trumbull Drawings, Fordham University.

Indigenous men hold a partially exposed Jane—one holds her hair, and the other holds her arm—and raise their weapons.⁴⁵



Figure 2-The Death of Jane McCrea. John Vanderlyn, 1804. Wikimedia Commons.

Art historians consider Vanderlyn's work a departure from previous British and American artists. From the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, few white American artists showed Indigenous hostility toward white subjects in such blatant ways. Jane's exposed breast and her isolation in the forest suggest a sexually violent element in her already horrific death. Jane's assault supports a strict dichotomous image: American men sacrificed their lives for freedom in battle while their families and homes were raped and pillaged.⁴⁶ Vanderlyn emphasized Jane's attack, stressing the moment where she could not escape her death or rape. Barlow initially

⁴⁵ Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of our Enemies," 9-10; John Vanderlyn, *The Murder of Jane McCrea*, 1804, oil on canvas, 32.5"x26.5", Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art, *Wikimedia Commons*.

⁴⁶ Duval, "The Horrid Deeds of our Enemies," 9-10; Truettner, "Picturing the Murder of Jane McCrea," 231.

commissioned Vanderlyn to illustrate his poem, but they soon parted ways due to creative differences.⁴⁷

Visual representations of rape also took shape through plays. Revolutionary themes were popular in American theatre because they enabled the audience to see themselves and their past on stage, bolstering a sense of identity.⁴⁸ Ancient models and images of abused female bodies united the ancient and new American traditions. Mercy Otis Warren's play *The Sack of Rome* (1790) overlays her discussion of revolutionary America and the necessity for republican virtue with numerous rapes.⁴⁹ The first rape is mentioned in Act I, Scene II, where Leo (the Bishop of Rome) and Ætius (Rome's Commander) allude to Emperor Valentinian's rape of the noble Petronius Maximus' wife, Ardelia. Following the rape of Ardelia, "the first and fairest matron left in Rome," and her subsequent death, her husband seeks revenge.⁵⁰ When Maximus overthrows Valentinian, he declares that Valentinian's wife Edoxia "must be mine" and sends Leo to encourage her into submission.⁵¹ Later in the play, the Empress Edoxia, her two daughters, and other Roman women are abducted and raped by barbarian invaders, mirroring the rape of the Sabine women.⁵²

Rape narratives used women's bodies to police and uphold the Republic's strength. Using similar pre-revolutionary tropes, writers characterized rapists as ungovernable disruptions to the patriarchal social order.⁵³ *The Sack of Rome* represents two complementary images. First, the play

⁴⁷ Ibid. According to Truettner, Vanderlyn was focused on matching the horror in other Salon history paintings.

⁴⁸ Hattem, *Past and Prologue*, 157, 161; Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University), 18.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 510-1.

⁵⁰ Mercy Otis Warren, *Sack of Rome, Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1790), 19, 35, 39-56.

⁵¹ Ibid., 58; Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 512.

⁵² Warren, *The Sack of Rome*, 77-95; Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 512.

⁵³ Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 511-2; Daniel Williams, "The Gratification of that Corrupt and Lawless Passion: Character Types and Themes in Early New England Rape Narratives," in *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 218.

presents a modified captivity and invasion narrative. Greg Sieminski suggests that colonists started to view themselves as captives of an unjust tyrant during the Revolutionary era. This metaphor took even more salience as many Americans endured brutal captivity at British hands.⁵⁴ Rome's captivity and the rape of Roman women by barbarian invaders mirrored Britain's invasion and rape of America. The only way to escape their "collective captivity" was through political rebellion and patriotism.⁵⁵ Second, the play shows that female American virtue must be protected to ensure the survival of the Republic. Emperor Valentinian's rape of the virtuous Ardelia and Maximus' ambition lead to Rome's invasion.⁵⁶ As Erhard states, "by staging revolutions gone awry, relocated in time and place, Warren strove to bring the 'backsliding' American people back on the path of virtue... inspir[ing] American citizens to 'learn their follies ere it was too late.'"⁵⁷

Rape symbolism continued to evolve after the Revolution. Popular sentimental novels provided the danger and adventure of captivity narratives in a melodramatic setting of love and patriarchal order. Like revolutionary rape narratives, sentimental novels presented the heroine protecting her chastity from foreign invaders.⁵⁸ Seduction, not rape, became the cautionary crime that gained the public's attention. Often based on supposed historical events, these novels recounted dangerous romances, illicit pregnancies, and, most importantly, public shame and death.⁵⁹

Seduction novels served two functions. First, seduction novels helped strengthen the nationalization of American sexual virtue. As Lyons states, "Seduction, rape, and marriage were

⁵⁴ Greg Sieminski, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution," *American Quarterly* vol. 42, no. 1 (March 1990): 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁶ Erhard, "Rape, Republicanism, and Representation," 512.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 517.

⁵⁸ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 293; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 45-7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860* (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), 14.

the primary metaphors used to describe the political relationships of the times. Americans were warned to guard against the rape of liberty and to beware the seduction of British consumption.”⁶⁰ In a public address to the “supporters and defenders of American freedom and independence,” the author claims that Loyalist traitors “who had till then led inoffensive lives and maintained good characters,” were seduced by the British.⁶¹ Seduction novels reinforced women’s sexual symbolism that republican theorists established; publicizing traditionally private feelings unified all Americans in an egalitarian public sphere.⁶² To avoid immorality and threaten the country’s unity, women had to practice constant vigilance to maintain their sexual purity. In the republic, women’s virtue continued to gauge political morality.

Second, seduction novels showed the importance of sexual virtue. Seduction literature responded to growing anxieties about sexual freedom and women’s autonomy. As many scholars of women’s history have outlined, the Revolution enabled an unprecedented level of women’s political engagement and autonomy through changing perceptions of women’s intellectual capacity and social contributions.⁶³ Many patriot leaders schooled in Enlightenment principles believed that women had an equal capacity for reason. Others believed that women’s lack of self-

⁶⁰ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 297; Jacob Cushing, *Divine Judgements upon Tyrants: and Compassion to the Oppressed. A Sermon, Preached at Lexington, April 20th 1778. In Commemoration of the murderous war and rapine, inhumanely perpetrated, by the two brigades of British troops [...]* (Boston: Printed by Powars and Willis, 1778); Phillip Payson, “A Sermon, Boston 1778,” in *American Political Writing During the Founding Era, 1760-1805*, eds. Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983), 524.

⁶¹ Alexander McDougall, “To the Supporters and Defenders of American Freedom and Independence, in the State of New York,” New York, NY, 1778, 3.

⁶² David Lawrimore, “The Novelist as Organic Intellectual: William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy*, Reconsidered,” *American Literature* 88, no. 4 (December 2016): 705; Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, 228, 253-4; Jan Lewis, “The Republican Wife,” 689-90, 720; Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 5.

⁶³ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 62; Cassandra Good, *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 46; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 256, 265, 293; Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 19, 26. Katey Flechl’s thesis challenges the radical impact of female education immediately after the Revolution. Through an analysis of opinion pieces, school advertisements, and academy speeches, Flechl suggests that female educational discourse helped construct gender in revolutionary America by limiting education to how women could use it to fulfill their motherly and wifely duties. See Katey Flechl, “‘Man’s Reasonable Companion:’ Scottish Enlightenment Rhetoric and Female Education Discourse in Revolutionary America,” M. A. Thesis, University of Victoria.

determination reinforced female inferiority and women's matrimonial subordination.⁶⁴ Marriage was the model for republican society. To ensure the Republic's survival, men had to avoid tyrannical behaviour politically and within the family. Republican marriage was the union of two virtuous individuals: it "demanded virtue of women, not because it numbered them as citizens but because it recognized how intimately women, in consensual unions, were connected to men. A virtuous man required a virtuous mate."⁶⁵ However, many women used their sexuality to express their independence inside and outside of marriage. Women engaged in extramarital affairs, left their marriages for new men, and had illicit pregnancies.⁶⁶ Susan Klepp suggests the decline in fertility rates following the Revolution corresponded with women trying to escape their *femme covert* status by refusing to be solely "the Sex."⁶⁷ Other women chose to exercise their sexual independence and support themselves through sex work. Some women engaged in prostitution casually to support their wages, while others had long careers in the trade.⁶⁸ As Lyons states, "when women adopted forms of sexual behaviour independent of marriage, they undermined the tidy binary gender association of women as dependent and men as independent, thus denaturalizing women's perceived inherent dependence and their exclusion from the polity."⁶⁹

Sentimental literature responded to women's attempts at increased autonomy by reinforcing the gendered status quo. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature suggested increased independence in heterosexual friendships, and unregulated courting enabled men to use

⁶⁴Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 19, 22-9; Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 238-9, 288; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 52-3 in Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 239; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. VII, paragraphs, 77-83, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980; originally published 1690), 42-5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 693-8, quotation 699, 709.

⁶⁶ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 256.

⁶⁷ Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 264-5.

⁶⁸ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 284.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.

the label “friend” to seduce young women.⁷⁰ Publishers characterized seducers as predators who pressured their victims into compliance. Combined with republican virtue, the normative view of femininity suggested that women were responsible for their safety and sexual purity.⁷¹ The novels educated both men and women about the importance of refraining from illicit sexual activity for their safety and the Republic’s.

Widely accepted as the first American novel, William Hill Brown’s epistolary novel *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) details the tragic romance of half-siblings Harrington (an upper-class merchant) and Harriot (an orphaned servant). Unbeknownst to the lovers, Harriot is the illegitimate child of Mr. Harrington. When Harrington junior and Harriot first meet, Harrington would only entertain sleeping with her because of her class. However, the pair’s sentimental connection causes Harrington to fall in love with Harriot. The pair’s anticipation to marry is muddled with family scandal, Harriot’s untimely death, and Harrington’s eventual suicide.⁷² Considered “the dupe of Nature, and the sacrifice of Seduction,” Harrington and Harriot are reunited in death.⁷³

Hannah Webster Foster based her epistolary novel *The Coquette* (1797) on the supposedly true events in the life of an eighteenth-century Connecticut woman named Elizabeth Whitman. Foster describes the heroine, Eliza Wharton, as a coquettish beauty. Following the death of her fiancé, Eliza hesitates to relinquish her youthful independence. Pursued by both Reverend Boyer and the local rake Major Peter Sanford, Eliza’s story details the tragic consequences of seduction.

⁷⁰ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 62; Good, *Founding Friendships*, 46; Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 256, 265, 293; Thomas J. Joudrey, “Maintaining Stability: Fancy and Passion in *The Coquette*,” *New England Quarterly* vol. 86 no. 1 (March 2013): 67.

⁷¹ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 256, 265, 293; Brown, *The Sentimental Novel*, 14; Burgett, *Sentimental Bodies*, 111.

⁷² William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, intro and notes by Carla Mulford (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Company, 1789. Reprint, New York: Penguin Classics, 1996); Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 85; Cathy Davidson, “‘The Power of Sympathy,’ Reconsidered: William Hill Brown as Literary Craftsman,” *American Literature* 10 no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 20, 22-3, 27; Lawrimore, “The Novelist,” 704-5.

⁷³ Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, 102.

After entertaining Sanford's advances, Eliza is left without marriage prospects and succumbs to an illicit affair with the Major. Eliza becomes a fallen woman who dies after giving birth to an illegitimate stillborn.⁷⁴

Charles Brockden Brown's dramatic story *Ormond* (1799) is a tale of seduction, attempted rape, and murder.⁷⁵ After Constantia Dudley's family is left destitute by Craig (no last name), Mr. Dudley becomes a blind raging alcoholic. Constantia cares for the family and their adopted child Lucy. After a meeting with Craig, the cynical and manipulative Ormond enters Constantia's life and becomes infatuated with her. Overcome with despair at Ormond's fascination with Constantia and his refusal to marry, Ormond's mistress, Helena, commits suicide. Following the murder of Mr. Dudley (by Craig) and Craig (by Ormond), Ormond tries to rape Constantia and stop her from going to Europe. Constantia defends herself against Ormond's advances and kills him.⁷⁶

Susanna Haswell Rowson's bestselling *Charlotte Temple* (1794) follows the tragedy of the young Charlotte Temple. The rakish Englishman Montraville seduces Charlotte and brings her to America. Montraville's affections are quickly given to another while Montraville's friend Belcour plots against Charlotte. Charlotte dies in childbirth as a fallen woman. Upon Charlotte's death, Montraville realizes his genuine love for her and tries to redeem himself by accepting responsibility for his actions.⁷⁷ First published in Britain (1791) and later in America (1794), *Charlotte Temple* demonstrates the power of eighteenth-century print media. Selling nearly forty

⁷⁴ Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette: The History of Eliza Wharton. A Novel: Founded on Fact*, Intro and notes by Carla Mulford, (Massachusetts: E. Larkin, 1797. Reprint, New York: 1996).

⁷⁵ Hana Layson, "Rape and Revolution: Feminism, Antijacobinism, and the Politics of Injured and Innocence in Brockden Brown's *Ormond*," *Early American Studies* 2 no. 1 (Spring 2004): 160.

⁷⁶ Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; or the Secret Witness* (London: Printed at the Minerva-Press, 1799).

⁷⁷ Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth*, intro. and ed. by Ann Douglas. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1791. Reprint: Penguin Classics, 1991). Lucy's fate is decided in Rowson's sequel, *Lucy Temple*.

thousand copies by 1810, *Charlotte Temple* was the most famous American novel before Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).⁷⁸

Seduction novels educated young people about the dangers of exercising sexual freedom and encouraged them to protect themselves from the tragedy of seduction and abandonment.⁷⁹ William Hill Brown's novel features three seductions that ground the main storyline. First is the seduction of Ophelia by her brother-in-law, Mr. Martin. After becoming his mistress, Ophelia gave birth to a son. Ophelia's shame and her family's anger prompted her to poison herself.⁸⁰ Brown also recounts the tragic separation of a neighbouring couple. Partners since childhood, Fidelia and Henry grew into their romance naturally. The pair were engaged when the local rake Williams stole Fidelia away into his carriage. Henry, "senseless and confounded" with the possibility of Fidelia's ruin or betrayal, jumped into the river.⁸¹ Lastly, Brown recounts Mr. Harrington's seduction of Harriot's mother, Maria. After two years of adultery, the once affluent Maria gave birth to Harriot and died soon after.⁸² Reverend Holmes blamed Mr. Harrington for Maria's demise: "BEHOLD the youthful virgin arrayed in all the delightful charms of vivacity, modesty and sprightliness—Behold even while she is rising in beauty and dignity, like a lily of the valley, in the full blossom of her graces, she is cut off suddenly by the ruse hand of the Seducer."⁸³ Harrington and Harriot are the innocent victims of wanton sexuality.

Each novel's female protagonists are mirrored by secondary characters who act as a moral sounding board and remind them of the dangers of seduction. Lucy routinely reminds Eliza of the

⁷⁸ Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 17.

⁷⁹ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 263.

⁸⁰ Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, 37-40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50-1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 65-72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 68.

dangers Sanford poses and mediates Eliza's distress after Boyer and Sanford's marriages.⁸⁴ Constantia's friend, Sophia Courtland, narrates the story and takes her to England after Ormond's death. Sophia credits Constantia with having taught her virtue and felicity.⁸⁵ When Myra finds out about Harriot's parentage, she tries to prevent the marriage and spare Harrington's feelings. Myra frequently discusses education, female domesticity, and religion in her letters. It is her virtuous and moral character that attracts Harrington's friend Mr. Worthy and results in their marriage.⁸⁶

The female antagonist in *Charlotte Temple*, Mademoiselle La Rue (later Mrs. Crayton), actively conspires with Belcour and Montraville to seduce Charlotte. As the victim of irresponsible guides, Charlotte's ruin is inevitable. However, Mademoiselle La Rue's actions haunt her throughout her life. Appearing on the Temples' doorstep in London, the woman confesses her guilt. Because of the Temples' virtue, they lodge the woman in a hospital where she dies shortly after. Susanna Rowson ends her book with the "striking example that vice, however, prosperous in the beginning, in the end leads only to misery and shame."⁸⁷ Women were supposed to support each other and maintain their virtue. Those who were seduced or refused their gendered responsibility would be ruined.

Some authors gave the impression that rakes could be reformed and repent upon the death of their victims. The underlying notion that women could seduce men into virtue directly correlated with republican wifedom.⁸⁸ In *The Coquette*, Sanford's initial objective is to seduce Eliza. In Sanford's first letter to his friend, he recounts that upon meeting Eliza, he "fanc[ies] this young lady is a coquette; and if so, I shall avenge my sex, by retaliating the mischiefs, she mediates

⁸⁴ See Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette: The History of Eliza Wharton*, 124-5, 127-8, 149-151, 193-4, 202-3.

⁸⁵ Brockden Brown, *Ormond*, 258, 292, 333-6.

⁸⁶ Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, 30-31, 99-101; Lawrimore, "The Novelist," 707.

⁸⁷ Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*, 51, 59, 131-2.

⁸⁸ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 283-4.

against us. Not that I have any ill designs; but only to play off her own artillery, by using a little unmeaning gallantry.”⁸⁹ Sanford pursues Eliza, despite his marriage to another woman later in the book.⁹⁰ Only upon Eliza’s death does Sanford’s guilt for seducing her cause him to “recoil with horror from the black catalogue of vices.” Sanford warns his friend and the readers to resist the dangers of uncontrolled passions.⁹¹ When Montraville stumbles upon Charlotte’s funeral, he asks Mr. Temple to hit him. Mr. Temple refuses because Montraville’s memories are his punishment. After the funeral, Montraville kills his former friend Belcour for his schemes and becomes deeply depressed. Throughout the rest of his life, Montraville suffers bouts of deep melancholy and weeps over Charlotte’s grave.⁹²

In contrast, Ormond tries to manipulate Constantia into changing her views about love and marriage. Ormond issues Constantia a challenge to change his opinion while secretly trying to do the same to her. Ormond’s opposition stems from his gendered ideals; to find an intellectual equal, he would have to marry a man.⁹³ If Ormond could not genuinely change Constantia’s mind, he would pretend to be seduced by her virtue. Constantia avoided Ormond’s previous advances and tried to convince him to marry his mistress.⁹⁴ Constantia, a paragon of sexual virtue, is willing to die to protect her chastity.

Eighteenth-century literature routinely presented the belief that choosing death over dishonour proved a woman’s virtue. A pre-revolutionary poem printed in a Massachusetts broadside recounts the dangers of sexual immorality. An unmarried girl “whose *Love was true*”

⁸⁹ Foster, *The Coquette*, 118.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198-9, 205-6, 217-8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 238-9.

⁹² Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*, 128-130.

⁹³ Brockden Brown, *Ormond*, 148, 185, 207.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

became pregnant. The girl's lover broke his promise to marry her late in the pregnancy. The girl went mad, ripped out her hair, and drowned herself in the night.⁹⁵ Interestingly, the author directs the poem to young rakes and warns them of the consequences of seduction. Seduction destroys the souls of the seducer and the victim. Refraining from lust would save their souls and keep young women from killing themselves in remorse.⁹⁶ Seduction novels continued this belief. In *The Power of Sympathy*, Maria is unafraid of death as it would free her from an unhappy world. Ophelia expiates her transgression through suicide in the hopes of assuaging her father's anger.⁹⁷ Constantia is willing to die to protect herself from being raped. According to Marquis Beccaria's famous *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (1778), a woman may lawfully kill another to protect her chastity.⁹⁸ Consequently, Ormond's death is justified.

Eighteenth-century sentimental literature suggests that seduction and rape were overlapping categories. Seduction narratives could include rape and rakes often used sexually coercive behaviour. After the war, seduction and rape still existed on a continuum. As a result, the presence of sexual coercion in seduction novels further complicated conceptions of rape. Unlike rape narratives that primarily focused on the rapist's life of sinful actions and provided little detail about the victims, seduction novels presented deviant rakes as young, charming elites and the victims as young, innocent, and virtuous individuals.⁹⁹ Readers become invested in the characters and their love story, causing them to be equally disappointed in the male characters' immoral

⁹⁵ "A poem occasioned by the late sudden and awful death, of a young woman, who was found drowned, in Medford-River," Medford, MA, 1771.

⁹⁶ Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, 85.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39, 73; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 44-5.

⁹⁸ Marquis Beccaria, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments. With a Commentary attributed to Monsieur de Voltaire*, (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by R. Bell, 1778), 320-3. Beccaria also cites English judge Sir Michael Foster's, *Crown Cases*, 274 to ground his view.

⁹⁹ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 17; Williams, "The Gratification," 195.

intentions and the female characters' susceptibility to seduction. Seduction novels continued to perpetuate the belief that sexual coercion was an extension of normative masculine behaviour.¹⁰⁰

To the modern reader, seduction narratives resemble modern understandings of sexual violence. The continual sexual harassment and coercion of the female characters, the normalization of exploitative behaviours, and the disregard of non-penile penetration as something other than rape are consistent with modern constructions of sexual assault. The subsequent seduction cannot be isolated from the larger goal. Rakes such as Montraville, Sanford, Ormond, and Mr. Harrington intend to have sex with a specific victim, regardless of consent. Because the assaults are not extremely violent or conducted by an invading force, seduction did not fit the pre-revolutionary rape archetype.

Seduction novels reinforced beliefs that the Republic's stability was tied to sexuality, seduction, and marriage. As Jan Lewis suggests, on the one hand, "women played their moral role not by denying their sexuality, by becoming "passionless," but by using it to tempt men to good" in marriage.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Americans imagined sexual violence as the natural consequence of explosive male lust.¹⁰² Expanding the eighteenth-century ideals that suggested all women secretly craved sex; post-revolutionaries believed women craved male penetration and attention. In her study of nineteenth-century masturbation and pornography, April Haynes suggests that this was the actualization of seduction: it took men to arouse women, who were oblivious to their own desires, reinforcing "the thrilling fantasy that men possessed an irresistible power to turn any virgin into a whore."¹⁰³ Early American ideology revolved around a patriarchal and false dichotomy of

¹⁰⁰ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 17, 34.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, "The Republican Wife," 701.

¹⁰² April Haynes, *Riotous Flesh: Women, Physiology, and the Solitary Vice in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 16.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 61.

virgins and whores that naturalized sexual violence. Portraying women as partially to blame for their own ruin contributed to ideas that women could control all sexual interactions and cast rape as an extraordinary circumstance.¹⁰⁴

Scholars continuously debate the role seduction novels had in undermining or upholding female disenfranchisement. Some literary scholars use Eliza's desire for autonomy in *The Coquette* as an example of proto-feminism. Historian Cathy Davidson says *The Coquette* exposes the "fundamental injustices" of patriarchal culture. Eliza tries to negotiate for her freedom within a tyrannical patriarchy but is ultimately left with no choices; Boyer's insecurities cause him to reject Eliza, who then proves his fears by having sex with Sanford. Designed to "tease the reader into thought," the novel outlines how a patriarchal society that rewards innocence and virtue must break down in order for women to procure their own independence.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, Lauren Davis proposes that Foster's book cannot be adapted for feminist purposes. Eliza's story is an allegory of national control; Eliza's unsuccessful attempts at independence reinforced that marriage was necessary to stabilize the Republic and its people. So "by allowing Eliza to question the desirability of marriage for all women and by showing how Eliza falls as a result of actions that parallel national policy, Foster suggests that the woman-as-nation metaphor cannot be successfully adapted for feminist purposes."¹⁰⁶ Thomas Joudrey takes this analysis one step further and suggests *The Coquette* perpetuated the belief that sex remained exclusively within marital unions. Eliza's childish desire for independence is the same as Sanford's: both fear arbitrary confinement through matrimony and domestication.¹⁰⁷ Scholar Laura Korobkin states that Eliza's desire for freedom is based on social

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 16; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Davidson, *The Revolution and the Word*, 226-230; Joudrey, "Maintaining Stability," 61-3.

¹⁰⁶ Lauren E. Davis, "Entangling Alliances: *The Coquette* and Allegories of Independence in Transatlantic Context," *Early American Literature* 50 no. 2 (2015): 400, 410; Joudrey, "Maintaining Stability," 67-8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 70-2, 84.

dissipation, luxuries, and class-based idleness, i.e., the worst parts of British aristocratic culture. The combination of Eliza's yearning for self-indulgence and luxury tarnishes not only her sexual virtue but her social virtue as well.¹⁰⁸ Seduction novels contextualized evolving sexual identities that prized the subordination of women through marriage and sexual virtue as fundamentally American values.

Some literary historians, such as Cathy Davidson, suggest that printers were not solely devoted to republican virtue. The demand for literary entertainment took many forms, such as captivity narratives, travel books, and seduction novels. Printers had to determine what books would make money.¹⁰⁹ Printers sensationalized texts by strategically italicizing or capitalizing words like seduction or incest to sell books. Instead of large print networks that unified republicans through national ideology, there were multiple local networks that did not extend past the Eastern Seaboard. Sentimentalism was tied equally to ideology and the economy.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, David Lawrimore suggests that *The Power of Sympathy* supports an upper-class aristocracy rather than egalitarianism. Using William Hill Brown's lesser-known works, Lawrimore argues that Brown privileged model intellectuals like Mr. Worthy. In contrast to Worthy, Harrington's egalitarianism is superficial. Harrington's letter states that Harriot seduces him to virtue, transforming him from a libertine to a democrat. However, Harriot's letter suggests that Harrington's imagination reforms him.¹¹¹ Lawrimore states that "because Harrington's sentimentality is politicized as egalitarian in nature, the novel concurrently satirizes egalitarian feelings."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Laura Korobkin, "Can Your Volatile Daughter Ever Acquire Your Wisdom?": Luxury and False Ideals in *The Coquette*," *Early American Literature* 41, no. 1 (2006): 79-80, 89-91, 97.

¹⁰⁹ Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20; Lawrimore, "The Novelist," 695-6.

¹¹¹ Lawrimore, "The Novelist," 711-12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 705-6.

The success of revolutionary rape narratives spurred the success of seduction narratives. Republican theorists endeavoured to show that citizens could govern themselves in a society bound by love, equality, and fraternity.¹¹³ With the absence of a monarchy that compelled loyalty, political writers needed to find a new sentiment to bind Americans together in support for the interests of the nation rather than the individual. Post-revolutionary writers argued that private and public virtue sustained each other; a society focused on self-gratification cannot sustain political freedom.¹¹⁴ No longer at risk of random brutalization from an invading enemy, publishers showed that the threats to American sexual virtue were internal.

The increased attention to the dangers of seduction reinforced gendered sexual responsibility. Christine Stansell suggests that the ideological climate of post-Revolutionary America reinvigorated previously established misogyny.¹¹⁵ American society challenged female rape accusations with increased scrutiny. As accused rapists were no longer British savages, women were required after an assault, once again, to demonstrate their strong moral and chaste characters, their resistance, and their quick reactions in court. Without evidence of extremely violent wartime rape, early Americans did not rally around the victims.

In 1793, a New York woman named Lanah Sawyer accused Henry Bedlow of rape. Seventeen-year-old Sawyer testified that, after saving her from a group of French men, Bedlow escorted her home and introduced himself as Lawyer Smith. The pair met the following Sunday, and Bedlow asked Sawyer to walk with him on the Battery that evening. When Sawyer refused, Bedlow repeated his request to meet with her multiple times. Sawyer agreed to meet with him on Wednesday evening, and Bedlow once again escorted her home. The following day, Sawyer's

¹¹³ Lewis, "Republican Wife," 695.

¹¹⁴ Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution*, 295.

¹¹⁵ Stansell, *City of Women*, 20.

neighbour told her that Smith was the well-known rake, Henry Bedlow. Sawyer assured her neighbour this was a mistake and met with Bedlow that Wednesday evening. The pair went to a local shop, had ice cream, and walked around the Battery twice.¹¹⁶

In her testimony, Sawyer explicitly outlines how Bedlow manipulated the situation to prevent her from going home. When she heard a clock chime twelve times, Bedlow assured her that it was only ten in the evening. When the pair reached John Street, Bedlow prevented Sawyer from heading home by keeping his arm around her and directing her towards Ann Street. Once Bedlow brought her to Mrs. Cary's brothel, Sawyer began to suspect his intentions and tried to escape three times. Each time Bedlow caught up with her and dragged her back to his side. Inside the brothel, Bedlow took off his coat and tore at her dress. Bedlow muffled Sawyer's screams by laughing loudly and covered her mouth. To stop Sawyer's struggles, Bedlow placed his arm at her throat, almost choking her, and raped her. Sawyer tried to escape once Bedlow went to sleep, but the door and windows were locked.¹¹⁷

Henry Bedlow's extensive six-man defence team claimed that this was not a case of rape but seduction. Sentimental egalitarianism did not extend to rape trials. The defence claimed that Sawyer put herself in this position upon meeting Bedlow. She picked him out, engaged in a happy conversation with him, and met with him once more before making formal plans. Although the defence acknowledged that Bedlow gave her a false name, they suggested that this indicated Bedlow's intent to seduce her. The defence referenced that Sawyer's neighbour informed her of Bedlow's identity. Bedlow was an accomplished seducer; why else should a rich man engage with

¹¹⁶ *Report of the trial of Henry Bedlow, for committing a rape on Lanah Sawyer. Final arguments of the counsel on each side. In court of Oyer and Terminer, and goal delivery for the city and county of New-York, held 8th October, 1793*, (New York: Printed According to Act of Congress, 1793), 1-4.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

a seamstress and stepdaughter of a seaman? Since Sawyer knew of Bedlow's rakish reputation, it was her responsibility to avoid the meeting and be more vigilant of rakish characters.¹¹⁸ The intent to seduce and the intent to rape were mutually exclusive; as Sawyer was a "willing participant," the "concealment [of Bedlow's identity] is consistent with an intention to seduce, and we cannot suppose without doing violence to our reason, that Mr. Bedlow at that instant mediated rape."¹¹⁹ After fifteen hours of trial and only fifteen minutes of deliberation, the jury found Henry Bedlow not guilty of rape.¹²⁰

Post-war sex narratives reflected a heightened societal sensitivity to decorum and the distinctions of rape and forced sex. Pre-revolutionary concerns about female vanity and lustfulness created obstacles to women's efforts to bring rapists to justice. Christine Stansell states that Bedlow's trial drew on old beliefs about men's rights to women's bodies. Men's sexual aggression stemmed from their superior authority, reason, and intelligence. In contrast, women's sexuality struggled between virtue and its chief vice, passion. Because of Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden, women could experience passionate desires at any age.¹²¹ A 1770 broadside distills womanhood to time and money wasted on "Jewels and Rings, and heaps of Ruffs."¹²² The author claims that women will soon receive their doom for practicing the Devil's wicked art.¹²³ The nationalization of womanhood was restricted into two conflicting images of the moral chaste virgin and the wicked, lustful wanton.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 21-3; Stansell, *City of Women*, 24.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *Report of the trial of Henry Bedlow*, 62.

¹²¹ Stansell, *City of Women*, 24-5; Kelly A. Ryan, *Regulating Passion: Sexuality and Patriarchal Rule in Massachusetts, 1700-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

¹²² Joseph Hopkins, "A line to the Modern Ladies: Found Among the Writings of Joseph Hopkins, late of Farmington, deceased," Connecticut, 1770.

¹²³ Ibid.

The New York trial of Richard Croucher for the rape of Margaret Miller (1800) demonstrates how pre-revolutionary rape conceptions worsened in the new republic.¹²⁴ Thirteen-year-old Margaret Miller accused Richard Croucher—who later married Margaret’s guardian Mrs. Stackhavers—of raping her three times in March 1800. At the time of the rape, Croucher came to Mrs. Stackhavers’ house every day to sell stockings. One night he asked Mrs. Stackhavers if Miller could accompany him home to scrub his room before potential clients came the next morning. Miller would sleep with a servant girl in another room. Miller testified that after arriving at Croucher’s boarding house around nine in the evening, he told her to go up to the third floor and locked her in a room. A short while later, he reappeared, entered the room, and locked it from the inside. After undressing Miller and himself, Croucher raped her three times and went to sleep. Miller told the court that she screamed until Croucher threatened to kill her. Miller left the next morning when it was light enough to see where Croucher hid the key.¹²⁵

The trial rested on Margaret’s consent. The Attorney General prosecuting Croucher reminded the jury that rape “committed *even with her consent*, and such consent is extorted from her through fear, or by duress, it is the same thing in the eye of law as if done against her will.”¹²⁶ The defence tried to prove that Miller consented and that, according to the law, consent nullified the rapes of girls over ten years old.¹²⁷ The defence for Richard Croucher tried to cast Miller as a sexual being with passions beyond her years. Henry Brockholst Livingstone, one of Henry Bedlow’s lawyers, argued that Miller’s age should not even be a factor:

Who that is acquainted with the dissolute morals of our city does not know that females are many of them to be found living in a state of open prostitution at the

¹²⁴ Stansell, *City of Women*, 23.

¹²⁵ *Report of the Trial of Richard D. Croucher, on an Indictment for Rape on Margaret Miller; On Tuesday, the 8th Day of July, 1800. Taken in Shorthand.* (New York: Printed by George Forman, 1800), 4-6, 9-10.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 17.

early ages of 12 and 13 years? Such in truth is the little care which we take of our youth, and such our ill-judged mode of educating the sexes together in our public schools, that it would not cause much wonder to see young girls turned upon the town as young as this witness.¹²⁸

Testimonies state that Croucher told people of the assault but claimed Miller was a willing participant. Croucher told Mrs. Stackhavers of the act after he had tried to kick Miller out and called her a whore. A tenant of Croucher's claimed that he routinely complained of Miller's "sauciness" before his marriage. The tenant also said he found Croucher and Miller together with her hands on his thighs "in an improper way" three weeks before Croucher's wedding.¹²⁹

Margaret Miller also did not tell anyone about the attack for two months. Since no one heard her cries during the rape and she kept silent after that assault, Miller was seen as a victim of seduction, not rape. Livingstone even referenced Henry Bedlow's trial stating that despite there being more evidence to convict Bedlow than Croucher, the jury still found Bedlow innocent. The rape accusation and the tears that Miller shed during her testimony were part of an elaborate plot to get rid of her stepfather. The jury deliberated for four minutes and found Croucher guilty. The evidence presented during trial convinced the jury of Croucher's criminality but based on the "humanity of the modern code of this country," Croucher was sentenced to life in prison.¹³⁰

A woman's reputation continued to sway the course of rape proceedings. Margaret Miller had to prove that she was not a sexually deviant thirteen-year-old. During the Bedlow/Sawyer trial, Henry Bedlow's defence team routinely mentioned Matthew Hale's *Historia Placitorum Coronae* and his infamous quote—"rape is a most detestable crime...but it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved"—to cast doubt on Sawyer's character.¹³¹

¹²⁸ *Report of the Trial of Richard D. Croucher*, 18-19.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7, 13-14.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19, 27-8.

¹³¹ Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Coronae*, 2 vols (London, 1736), I, 635.

Unlike the victim of a robbery, a woman who complains of rape puts her reputation at risk. The defence claimed that charges of sexual coercion and rape from “any woman [who] is not an abandoned Prostitute, will appear to be averse to what she inwardly desires; a virtuous girl upon the point of yielding, will not appear to give a willing consent, though her manner sufficiently evinces her wishes.”¹³²

Although Lanah Sawyer’s character witnesses overwhelmingly testified to her modesty and prudence, the defence questioned why she did not immediately return to her house following the assault. Sawyer testified that she hesitated to return home immediately because she feared a violent reaction from her stepfather and sought an opportunity to speak alone with her mother. The defence claimed that Sawyer’s desire for solitude indicted her complicity.¹³³ The defence’s witness, Mrs. Cary, testified that when Henry Bedlow and Lanah Sawyer first tried to get into her home, Sawyer was “in an agreeable mood.” When Mrs. Cary would not admit them, the pair cut through her garden to her back door. There she agreed to give them a room and a candle. Mrs. Cary testified that she heard the pair talk for about an hour, Sawyer laughing throughout the night, and her leaving at ten in the morning looking “composed and satisfied.”¹³⁴ Mrs. Cary was awake all night and did not hear any violence and told the court that there were no locks on the doors and windows. Mrs. Cary’s three-year-old family member who stayed in that room easily exited the following day.¹³⁵ Mrs. Cary’s testimony directly contradicted Sawyer’s. The prosecution argued that as a madam, Mrs. Cary and her ladies were disreputable, and their testimony could not be

¹³² *Report of the trial of Henry Bedlow*, 27, 31, 40; Stansell, *City of Women*, 24-5.

¹³³ *Report of the trial of Henry Bedlow*, 6-7, 18, 29.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

credited. As Sawyer was not a madam, her testimony was reliable.¹³⁶ The prosecution consciously employed the sexual double-standard entrenched in eighteenth-century America.

One month after the trial, the *Report of the Trial* was available for sale at various booksellers in New York. Ironically, Bedlow's defence team did not appreciate how the author questioned their characters—much like they did with Sawyer—and published a response to the printed report. They claimed that as professional men, they used every talent they possessed and defended their client with zeal. The team also did not use the same language used in the trial report, which they believed, purposefully manipulated the records to show the defence lambasting Sawyer's character. The defence accused the author of using his imagination to dramatize the larger discussions of prostitution.¹³⁷ Unlike many female rape victims, the defence team was able to challenge attacks on their characters without destroying their reputations.¹³⁸

Rape continued to be regarded as an assault between men. After the trial, a mob of six hundred men converged on Mrs. Cary's and several other bawdy houses and ransacked them. The mob seemed to be protesting aristocratic sexual license. The protestors included boys, apprentices, sailors, and Black men who rioted against the verdict in support of Sawyer's stepfather. The protestors turned Sawyer's rape into a male conflict and an attack on a business run by a woman.¹³⁹ In his novel, Brown portrays Fidelity's abuse as an assault against the patriarchal social system. When Wilson stole Fidelity, "the young men [of the town] enraged at the insult, arm themselves

¹³⁶ Ibid., 56-7.

¹³⁷ Richard Harrison, et. al, "For the Daily Advertiser," *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), Nov. 11, 1793; "Just Published, A Report Of The Late Trial of Henry Bedlow," *Columbian Gazetteer* (New York, NY), Nov. 14, 1793.

¹³⁸ Henry Brockholst Livingston would go on to prosecute America's first murder case, *The People vs. Levi Weeks*, with Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton.

¹³⁹ "Assault and Battery!" *Columbian Gazetteer* (New York, NY), Oct. 17, 1793; Stansell, *City of Women*, 25-6.

and pursue the robber.”¹⁴⁰ Like wartime rape, post-revolutionary rape was a conflict between men.¹⁴¹

With the New York riot, “Justitia,” a highly educated and literate woman, wrote to *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* to denounce the trial’s verdict and the brothel’s patrons. Justitia said the riot against Mrs. Cary’s brothel was of great importance to New York’s male citizens who have spent many comfortable hours there away from their families. She calls Bedlow “a wretch” whose character is “too vile to be pourtrayed.” Justitia suggested that policing the city’s vices would be more effective if the magistrates were not also patrons.¹⁴² Justitia’s article sparked outrage, with many male citizens writing back to her. Correspondents condemned Justitia’s article, claiming that her libellous work threatened to undermine support for law and order and tarnish the reputations of good men. The respondents—including one man whose pseudonym, Justitius, seemed intended as a mockery of Justitia—overwhelmingly suggested that Justitia should write about topics “more fit for a lady to handle.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*, 51.

¹⁴¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s influential monograph highlights how male bonds and interactions are not exclusive and impact entire social structures. Sedgwick delves into sexual and feminist theory such as Gayle Rubin’s analysis that patriarchal heterosexuality is contingent on trafficking women as unchangeable and symbolic property which cements the bonds between men. Analyzing eighteenth and nineteenth-century English literature such as Tennyson’s *The Princess*, Sedgwick proposes that homosocial desire and heterosexuality are on an unbroken continuum that can mark historical differences in the structure of male relationships. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 30th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 3, 25-7; Peter Erickson, review of *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* vol. 85, no. 3 (July 1986): 461-464; Michael Lynch, review of *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 1 (September 1988): 129-131.

¹⁴² Justitia, “For the Diary,” *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), Oct. 18, 1793; Stansell, *City of Women*, 26.

¹⁴³ Ibid.; Civis, “For the Diary,” *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), Oct. 21, 1793; Candidus, “For the Diary,” *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), Oct. 21, 1793; Justitius, “For the Diary,” *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), Oct. 22, 1793; “Citizens and Printers,” *The Diary or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), Oct. 25, 1793. *The Diary* apologized for publishing Justitia’s first article. Because the article “came from the hand of a Female author, [they] could not refuse indulging her.”

Early American concerns about sexual virtue were limited mainly to upper-and-middle class white republicans. With the growth of republican ideology, Americans used sexual depravity, in addition to gender, as a classist division. During the mid-1780s and 1790s, republicanism encouraged the upper classes to portray the poor and African Americans as “vulgar” and represented their poverty as coming from moral weakness.¹⁴⁴ As Lyons points out, the frequency of arrests at bawdy houses depended on the individual’s class and occupation. The upper and middle classes associated non-marital sexual license with the lower classes.¹⁴⁵

Throughout the eighteenth century, female servants and slaves were coerced into sex or raped. Unlike surprise attacks, masters could coerce sexual relations by virtue of their positions.¹⁴⁶ Kelly Ryan suggests that female servants often waited until they suffered physical complications to protest their sexual abuse.¹⁴⁷ As Croucher’s dependent, Margaret Miller was too frightened to tell someone about her rape. The prosecution mentioned that Croucher’s status, his threats, and a recent murder in the city prompted Miller to remain silent.¹⁴⁸

Scholars of slavery suggest that routine sexual exploitation shaped a Black woman’s status. Many white Americans saw black bodies as evidence of sexual deviancy. White society concocted racialized myths and used euphemistic language such as Jezebel (a Black woman obsessed with sex and carnality), concubine, or prostitute to justify abuse of enslaved women. Black women’s sexuality did not need to be protected.¹⁴⁹ William Bradford, the Second Attorney General for the

¹⁴⁴ Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 225, 229.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 74; Kelly A. Ryan, *Everyday Crimes: Social Violence and Civil Rights in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 43-4.

¹⁴⁷ Ryan, *Everyday Crimes*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ *Report of the Trial of Richard D. Croucher*, 22-3. The prosecution was referring to the infamous Levi Weeks trial.

¹⁴⁹ Rachel Feinstein, *When Rape was Legal: The Untold Story of Violence During Slavery* (Abingdon: Routledge Press, 2019), 6, 20; Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 46; Jennifer L. Morgan, “Some could Suckle over Their Shoulder’: Male

United States, observed that “the laws consider the violation of a female slave of little moment” as Black women were not able to testify to their abuse.¹⁵⁰ The lack of records about sexual violence against women and girls of colour and the lower classes indicates that a high degree of sexual violence was tolerated in early American society.

Sexual violence and women’s sexuality continued to drive Revolutionary ideals, even after the war. The nationalization of white women’s sexual virtue held them to a higher standard than prior to independence. In addition to pre-revolutionary legal standards, women had to prove that their rapes were not cases of seduction. Post-revolutionary writers stressed the connection between republican virtue and the dangers of seduction. If women were unable to protect themselves from the evil powers of seduction, female sexual propriety would once again be at risk.¹⁵¹ In a letter written shortly after the Revolution, Thomas Jefferson differentiates between American and European self-control. In Europe, a young man

is led by the strongest of all the human passions into a spirit for female intrigue destructive of his own and others happiness, or a passion for whores destructive of his health, and in both cases learns to consider fidelity to the marriage bed as an ungentlemanly practice and inconsistent with his happiness; he recollects the voluptuary dress and art of the European women and pities and despises the chaste affections and simplicity of those of his own country.¹⁵²

To protect themselves from European deviancy, American women had to uphold their virtue and educate others about the dangers of sexual misbehaviour. Rape’s metaphor continued to evolve at the core of the Republic.

Travelers, Female Bodies, and Gendering Racial Ideology,” in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie H. Camp, eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 25.

¹⁵⁰ William Bradford, *An Enquiry How Far the Punishment of Death Is Necessary in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1793), 29-30; Marietta and Rowe, “Rape, Law, Courts, and Custom in Pennsylvania 1682-1800,” 96.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, “Republican Wife,” 695.

¹⁵² “From Thomas Jefferson to John Banister, Jr., 15 October 1785,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 25 February–31 October 1785, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 635–638; Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 226-7.

Conclusion

On August 29, 1763, John Adams published “An Essay on Man’s Lust for Power.” In the essay, Adams suggests that all men would be tyrants if they could. In direct opposition to their consciences, men would “oppress, mangle, burn, butcher and destroy their fellow man” if their passions remained unchecked.¹ Power, Adams states,

is a Thing of finite Danger and Delicacy, and was never yet confided to any Man or any Body of men without turning their Heads.—Was there ever, in any Nation or Country, since the fall [of Rome], a standing Army that was not carefully watched and controlled by the State so as to keep them impotent, that did not, ravish, plunder, Massacre and ruin, and at last inextricably enslave the People.²

Adams predicted the violence that would come with the American Revolution.

Rape had an indelible effect on the American Revolutionary period. Gendered colonial preconceptions of rape shaped societal and legal reactions to rape claims, which in turn shaped how rapists conducted their attacks. The eighteenth-century definition of rape, “carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly against her will,” dictated that only women could be victims of rape. Women had to prove in court that penile penetration and male ejaculation occurred to prosecute their attackers. The chaste, white, young woman had to resist the assault and seek help immediately after. These protocols did not disappear during the war. As exhibited through the depositions of Mary Campbell, Abigail Palmer, Sarah and Elizabeth Cain, Rose Luke, and Christiana Gatter, enemy soldiers isolated their victims in barns and backrooms, threatened physical harm if they resisted, and violently raped American women and girls.

¹ James Adams, “VII. An Essay on Man’s Lust for Power, with the Author’s Comment in 1807,” *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 1, *September 1755–October 1773*, ed. Robert J. Taylor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 81–84.

² *Ibid.*

Wartime publishers and propagandists used rape to justify political independence from Britain. Publishers printed letters, articles, and rape depositions outlining the savage atrocities by the British and exacerbated fears of enslavement. Like pre-revolutionary authors, wartime writers used rape narratives to caution Americans about the dangers of immorality. The rapes committed by British and Hessian soldiers demonstrated England's tyranny. Sexually charged publications and language conflated the success of the Revolution with freedom from sexual abuse. The rape of America became an important metaphor.

Rape continued to impact post-revolutionary America. Influenced by wartime propaganda, Revolutionary historians used rape as an example of British immorality, suggesting that sexual assaults were synonymous with war. Artists and writers memorialized the Revolution through explicitly sexualized narratives, such as the murder of Jane McCrea. Americans refashioned Jane's tragic death into stories that prioritized her youth and beauty. Sentimental literature exacerbated the nationalization of female sexual virtue. Ideals such as republican motherhood placed women's virtue at the heart of the republic, and sentimental novels educated Americans about the dangers of unchecked passions and sexual misbehaviour.³ If Americans were seduced into immorality like the British, the new Republic would fail. Seduction, not rape, became the cautionary crime in early America.

Rape was a consequence of eighteenth-century intersectional circumstances. Dependent upon patriarchal power, rape helped mould conceptions of gender, class, and race. Masters could sexually coerce their servants through economic and violent threats. Conceptions of the lower classes' sexual debauchery prohibited many lower-class women and servants from bringing about

³ Dana C. McClain, "Regulating Feeling in the First American Novel: Sympathy, Sensibility, and Sentiment in William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*," *Studies in American Fiction* 45, no. 2 (2018): 160-1.

charges against their abusers. American society prohibited Black women from seeking justice for their systematic abuses, citing racialized ideas of superiority and virtue. American fears of slave revolts and black sexual licentiousness encouraged aggressive white violence. American patriarchal power institutionalized silences about black sexual violence in the archives.

In 1807, Adams revisited his essay on lust, adding one last paragraph which argues that no simple government can secure men against power's violence. Just as monarchies were doomed to become despotic:

Democracy, will soon degenerate into Anarchy, such an Anarchy that every Man will do what is right in his own Eyes, no Mans life or Property or Reputation or Liberty will be secure and every one of these will soon mould itself into a system of subordination of all the moral Virtues, and Intellectual Abilities, all of the Powers of Wealth, Beauty, Wit, and Science, to the wanton Pleasures, the capricious Will, and the execrable Cruelty of one of a very few.⁴

A government cannot superficially demand its citizens to act morally and in an egalitarian way. Rather, the people and their characters had to desire virtue for egalitarianism to take hold. Democracies collectivized the virtue of the individual. Rape became an important metaphor for America's history and its future. To avoid the Republic's downfall, Americans had to prove themselves to be better than the British.

⁴ Adams, "VII. An Essay on Man's Lust for Power."

A Note on Sources

Much of the information for this thesis came from well-known archival databases such as:

American Antiquarian Society

Early American Imprints Series I: Evans, 1639-1800

Early American Newspapers Series I: From Colonies to Nation

Fold3 by Ancestry Archives

Fordham University

Founder's Archive

Gale Primary Sources: Eighteenth Century Collections Online

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

HathiTrust Digital Library

Internet Archive

JSTOR

Liberty Fund Online Library

Library of Congress

National Archives

Papers of the Continental Congress

Project Muse

ProQuest Ebook Central

Old Bailey Proceedings Online

Oxford Scholarship Online

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspaper Collection

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