

The “Campus Rape Culture” Consequences of *Meaningless Words*

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College campuses in North America are claimed to have a rape culture. The term has made its way into common parlance and some have gone as far as to say that Western culture as a whole is a rape culture. The fact that “one-in-four” women will be raped or sexually assaulted in their lifetime is now oft-repeated in political as well as common discourse. However, analysis of how this number was arrived at reveals the ideological underpinnings of these studies and to which the authors of these studies subscribe. The following paper is concerned with the ideological background of these studies as well as the political and psychological motivations of those who believe in a rape culture.

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In December of 1945, George Orwell's seminal essay *Politics and the English Language* was first published. It remains one of the finest essays written about the use or abuse of language in politics. Now, in 2015 (or is it 1984?), we find ourselves constantly exposed to political language via our mass media. Certain recent cases stand out in the media, as when Dick Cheney recently defended the CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" during his time as Vice President, which to my good sense sounded an awful lot like torture. Cheney's political motive is to avoid an international war crimes trial and it is accomplished by this twisting of language. However, he will not be the one on trial in the present discussion. My analysis is aimed at the definition of rape and how it has been used politically by certain activists and politicians.

Since this is a sensitive subject, it bears clarifying a few points from the beginning. Rape is a wretched, violent crime and in no way does this essay intend to show that it is not. It does intend to show that when the definitions of words are inflated or redefined by a certain person or groups of people, it is proper and ethical to take a look at why that might be happening and its consequences. More expressly this will be done with the term "rape" as I have come to understand its political application in the United States of America, most expressly when used in the phrase "rape culture." The term "feminist" will also be used in this paper quite a bit and this also needs some clarification. If the reader of this paper considers themselves a feminist, you may be nonplussed by the present essay. I assure you my aim is not to disparage the fine women and men of Feminism who desire equality between the sexes, but most assuredly I am writing about those who may be defined as radical or ideological feminists. As ideological feminist ideas have made their way into the mainstream it is important to clarify which feminist ideas have egalitarian merit and which are sexist.

For the purpose of this essay I am interested in one specimen of the English language that Orwell points out as being one of our "mental vices." He refers to this particular vice as *meaningless words*. By this he means words that completely lack meaning for some reason or another, such as when movie advertisements tell us that films are "spectacular" or "awesome." When every movie from the past five years has been called "spectacular" or "awesome" the words cease to have meaning. As Orwell pointed out in his time, "Many political words are similarly abused. The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies 'something not desirable.'"¹ When no longer used in a definitive way to describe a political regime such as in Mussolini's Italy, the word began to be used politically to denigrate political opponents or undesirable forms of government. Contemporarily we may look to those who call President Obama a "Socialist" or "Communist." Judging by the general level of education in America it is doubtful that most who levy those claims against him know what those words mean in their greater historical context, but it signifies that he is undesirable, as he is an enemy of "Democracy" or "Capitalism", words that may be as vague to these same people as the aforementioned, but they are important insofar as they signify being desirable.

What is important in this example is that it is not a mistake, but may be part of political manoeuvring. As Orwell points out at the beginning of his essay:

[I]t is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and pro-

ducing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely... It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.²

The cycle begins, I believe, with the intention of the user of the *meaningless words*: “Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.”³ The Tea Party candidate may tell his potential voters that Obama is a “Socialist”, but this only signifies his being undesirable, not that he actually subscribes to Socialist political beliefs. The candidate knows he can gather support for election by portraying his opponent as undesirable.

In most cases it benefits the user of these *meaningless words* to conceal their intentions, even from themselves. In showing the connection between politics and the debasement of language Orwell states:

A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly? But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it simply by throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you – even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent – and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear.⁴

Thus the politician who rattles off political slogans to his constituency is not so different from the writer who uses jargon at the expense of constructing his own way of writing, much like postmodern academics. Without reflection he repeats slogans or talking points about “important issues” that rile the crowd, who are unable to discern the gruel they are being fed from caviar, due to their debased understanding of language and inability to think. For my generation, the Obama campaigns were masterworks in this kind of thoughtless sloganeering (Yes We Can [still wait for that change]). All the while the politician commits the bad faith of concealing his own intentions, portraying himself to himself and others as the Hero of Change or the Keeper of Democracy, while concealing the grasp for power, the winning of the election that was the original intention.

This whirlwind diversion into contemporary politics was to set the stage for our understanding of what is going on with the term “rape” in our country, for the term is the minefield in which the gender warriors have invested quite a bit of their efforts. This paper must address a few major points in order to adequately elaborate on the topic: (1) What are the current controversies in the country that make this an issue? (2) What is the history of these controversies? (3) How are these political issues related to the debasement of language? (4) Why might this debasement be politically

motivated? (5) What is the psychology and motivation of the people who have created this issue? As Orwell pointed out about the connection between language and politics, it is hoped that in addressing each issue the interconnection between all of these points will become clear.

The most pressing issue in the national spotlight in regards to rape is the oft quoted statistic that one-in-four or one-in-five college women will be sexually assaulted during her time on campus.⁵ This is coupled with the 2012 study on *Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence* by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in which it was claimed that 1.3 million women were raped in America in 2010 alone, putting America on par with the Congo. Both of these studies are the intellectual descendants of the *Ms. "study"* from 1988 which begat the belief that one-in-four American women will be raped in their lifetime. We will look at that study later on. These statistics are the backbone of the ideological feminist claim that America is a "rape culture." By this it is meant that America is a patriarchal culture where men use their sexuality in order to oppress women. In effect male sexuality is characterized as a form of terrorism. They see sex as about power, not psychologically or biologically established motivations such as pleasure or procreation. These studies are supposed to confirm that there indeed is a "rape culture" and one cannot pass through an American university or surf the Internet without hearing about this idea.⁶ However, it may be truer that these studies assumed a rape culture and then got creative with their criteria in order to confirm their own biases.

College rape and sexual assault entered the national stage as a political issue with the establishment of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault in January of 2014 and with the subsequent report in April of that year entitled *Not Alone*. Press conferences surrounding the creation of the task force made wide use of the one-in-five statistic. The report called for college campuses to establish kangaroo courts in order to prosecute those accused of rape or sexual assault. Lest we think that these courts will be run fairly with a blind eye to the sex of the offenders and complainants, we need look no further than a very large-fonted quote from Joe Biden at the beginning of the *Not Alone* report:

Freedom from sexual assault is a basic human right... a nation's decency is in large part measured by how it responds to violence against women... our daughters, our sisters, our wives, our mothers, our grandmothers have every single right to expect to be free from violence and sexual abuse.

Freedom from sexual assault is a basic human right, if you happen to be a woman. (Violence against men, well, America has industries dedicated to that.) It is clear that when we see the word "students" used in regards to this issue, the speaker or writer means female students, indicating that it is already assumed who will be the offender and who the victim.⁷

However, as *Rolling Stone Magazine*⁸ recently found out, not everyone is telling the truth about the issue. The lie begins with the actual statistic itself.⁹ The statistic is based on the Campus Sexual Assault Study, commissioned by the National Institute of Justice and carried out from 2005 to 2007. The study is poor, even by advocacy research standards. James Alan Fox, the Lipman Professor of Criminology, Law, and Public Policy at Northeastern University, and Richard Moran, professor of sociology at Mount Holyoke College, investigated the study. In their breakdown of the study

they found it was conducted at two large four-year American universities, which should immediately raise concerns due to the small sample size. It gets better, as Fox and Moran indicate: “In addition, the survey had a large non-response rate, with the clear possibility that those who had been victimized were more apt to have completed the questionnaire, resulting in an inflated prevalence figure.”¹⁰ What will be a recurring theme in dissecting these statistics is brought forth in the following:

Moreover, the definition of sexual assault used in this and other studies was too broad, including unwanted touching and sexual encounters while intoxicated. A small percentage actually rose to the level of forcible rape. By lumping uninvited advances and alcohol/drug-influenced encounters together with forcible rape, the problem can appear more severe than it really is, creating alarm when cool heads are required.¹¹

The language used to define rape and sexual assault in the study was too broad, our first hint that the debasement of language for political purposes is occurring with this issue. Suddenly unwanted touching is equated with forcible and unwanted penetration. Much like currency becoming inflated, the word rape begins to become meaningless.

Far from being a harmless word-game, we have already seen a White House task force established while American colleges and universities are coming under State pressure to accept their recommendations for dealing with rape on campus. As we have seen with the Duke Lacrosse case and more recent events at the University of Virginia, guilty until proven innocent is the way it goes for the young men accused of rape on the college campus. It is a perversion of justice and indicative of the hostile attitude - the misandry - that is being shown towards young men on college campuses in the United States.¹²

Next we must look at the CDC report to see if something similar is happening as occurred in the National Institute of Justice study. Sure enough, as Christina Hoff Sommers found out by looking at the report, we see the same thing as before: an inflated definition of rape and sexual assault. In 2010 the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ National Crime Victimization Survey reported 188,380 rapes or sexual assaults on males and females in the United States. The same year the CDC claimed that 13.7 million rapes and sexual assaults had occurred against males and females in the United States. This is not a small discrepancy. Even accounting for rape being an underreported crime, is it possible that it is so egregiously underreported as that? Or is the language in the report more indicative of what is going on? Sommers shows in the study:

[S]urveyors, rather than subjects, determine what counted as an assault. Consider: In a telephone survey with a 30 percent response rate, interviewers did not ask participants whether they had been raped. Instead of such straightforward questions, the CDC researchers described a series of sexual encounters and then they determined whether the responses indicated sexual violation. A sample of 9,086 women was asked, for example, “When you were drunk, high, drugged, or passed out and unable to consent, how many people ever had vaginal sex with you?” A majority of the 1.3 million women (61.5 percent) the CDC projected as rape victims

in 2010 experienced this sort of “alcohol or drug facilitated penetration.”¹³

Here we see that being drugged or passed out is equated with being drunk or high. In each case the surveyor determined the respondent to be raped if sex occurred, the former being lamentable, the latter meaning just about every woman I know has been raped at some point!¹⁴ The study passes into lunacy at this point, but it does not end there:

Other survey questions were equally ambiguous. Participants were asked if they had ever had sex because someone pressured them by “telling you lies, making promises about the future they knew were untrue?” All affirmative answers were counted as “sexual violence.” Anyone who consented to sex because a suitor wore her or him down by “repeatedly asking” or “showing they were unhappy” was similarly classified as a victim of violence. The CDC effectively set a stage where each step of physical intimacy required a notarized testament of sober consent.¹⁵

Sex without express written consent has become rape.

Sommers later surmises that the report appears to be done in part under pressure of the women’s lobby (feminist lobbyists) who had already pressured the FBI into expanding the definition of rape and had pushed Vice President Biden and Attorney General Eric Holder towards a focus on women’s issues, which more than likely resulted in the focus on campus sexual assault. It is probable that the White House Council on Women and Girls, which developed the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, is replete with ideological feminist ideas, if not with ideological feminists themselves. As with the bogus statistics used in the campus sexual assault report, with an expanded definition of rape and sexual assault by the CDC, the United States finds itself in exalted company with the Congo. The political intention will become clearer as we examine the history of feminist advocacy research.

The mother of all advocacy researchers among feminists is Mary Koss. Her 1985 report in *Ms.* magazine was the starting point of the “one-in-four” statistic that still persists in public consciousness today. Before being asked to undertake the study, she was a professor of psychology at Kent State University where she gained some notoriety for publishing a paper in which she claimed that “rape represents an extreme behavior but one that is on a continuum with normal male behavior within the culture.”¹⁶ If we look between the lines of this statement we see what she is really saying, in essence: “All men are potential rapists.” She was then invited by Gloria Steinem, she of fish and bicycle fame, to undertake a national rape survey on college campuses. Before we turn to Christina Hoff Sommers’ expert dismantling of this study, an important point needs to be made. Koss’ ideological feminist leanings, which can also be found in the CDC and National Institute of Justice reports, are such that men are assumed to be rapists or that it is “on a continuum with *normal* (emphasis mine) male behavior” to rape women. This is the ideological undercurrent of the studies we have examined so far and will be seen again in Koss’ study. My contention is that the expanded definition of rape found in these studies is meant to put forth an extremist position disguised with an air of scientific validity for political gain.

Sommers writes about the study:

Koss and her associates interviewed slightly more than three thousand college women, randomly selected nationwide. The young women were asked ten questions about sexual violation. These were followed by several questions about the precise nature of the violation. Had they been drinking? What were their emotions during and after the event? What forms of resistance did they use? How would they label the event?

...Koss and her colleagues concluded that 15.4 percent of respondent had been raped, and that 12.1 percent had been victims of attempted rape. Thus a total of 27.5 percent of the respondents were determined to have been victims of rape or attempted rape because they have answers that fit Koss's criteria for rape (penetration by penis, finger, or other object under coercive influence such as physical force, alcohol, or threats). However, that is not how the so called rape victims saw it. Only about a quarter of the women that Koss calls rape victims labelled what happened to them as rape. According to Koss, the answers to the follow-up questions revealed that "only 27 percent" of the women she counted as having been raped labelled themselves as rape victims. Of the remainder, 49 percent said it was "miscommunication," 14 percent said it was a "crime but not rape," and 11 percent said they "don't feel victimized."¹⁷

Already the vaunted number begins to fall apart.¹⁸ In the next example we see that acts without intercourse can be rape according to Koss:

In line with her view of rape as existing on a continuum of male sexual aggression, Koss also asked: "Have you given in to sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?" To this question 53.7 percent responded affirmatively, and they were counted as having been sexually victimized.¹⁹

A familiar question from the CDC report also appears in the *Ms.* study, "Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol and drugs?"²⁰ Sommers objects to the validity of the question. She questions,

If your date mixes a pitcher of margaritas and encourages you to drink with him and you accept a drink, have you been "administered" an intoxicant, and has your judgement been impaired? Certainly, if you pass out and are molested, one would call it rape. But if you drink and, while intoxicated, engage in sex that you later come to regret, have you been raped? Koss does not address these questions specifically, she merely counts your date as a rapist and you as a rape statistic if you drank with your date and regret having had sex with him.²¹

Clearly the opinion of the women interviewed did not matter. We also encounter a dangerous thread of thought within ideological feminism, that of the infantilized and helpless woman. It is truly a

marvellous example of “doublethink” to watch an ideological feminist try and blame men and the patriarchy for women’s subordination and infantilization while at the same time absolving women of all responsibility for their actions. In this case, the majority of those interviewed took responsibility for themselves, but their responsible actions did not matter to the interviewers.

Removing the alcohol question and the respondents who did not think they were raped from the study, the infamous “one-in-four” number drops to between one-in-twenty-two and one-in-thirty-three. However, this rather reasoned investigation into the study did not have the same impact that the glaring “one-in-four” headline had on America. Sommers speaks to the impact of the study:

“One in four” has since become the official figure on women’s rape victimization cited in women’s study departments, rape crisis centers, women’s magazines, and on protest buttons and posters. Susan Faludi defended it in a *Newsweek* story on sexual correctness. Naomi Wolf refers to it in *The Beauty Myth*, calculating that acquaintance rape is “more common than lefthandedness, alcoholism, and heart attacks.” “One in four” is chanted in “Take Back the Night” processions, and it is the number given in the date rape brochures handed out at freshmen orientation at colleges and universities around the country. Politicians, from *Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, a Democrat*, to Republican Congressman Jim Ramstad of Minnesota, cite it regularly, and it is the primary reason for the Title IV, “Safe Campuses for Women” provision of the Violence Against Women Act of 1993, which provides twenty million dollars to combat rape on college campuses.²²

Clearly Joe Biden’s association with the White House Council on Women and Girls and the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault is not solely a PR move. It seems that the championing of ideological feminist ideas has been part of Biden’s long term political strategy. His status as a “useful idiot” has helped propel him to the Vice Presidency and he is doubtless involved in the constant pandering and fear-mongering geared towards women that are common in the Democratic Party.²³ Campaign strategists must be aware that women made up more than half of all voters during the last election. Whoever wins the female vote most likely wins the election. Conveniently these issues have been thrust into the national spotlight again in time for a presidential run by Hillary Clinton and to help bolster the careers of Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, and Claire McCaskill. Ideological feminism has parlayed its coveted victim status into influence in the offices of the most powerful men and women in America.

The three studies examined above are examples of poor social science. However, their results are now accepted as common knowledge. The common thread between them is the expanded definition of rape apparent in the questions used to obtain outlandish numbers. Here we return to Orwell’s *meaningless words*. The definition of rape is stretched to such an extent as to become semantically meaningless. It is not meaningless in that the word is politically useful for stirring the passions of voters or college students, but meaningless in defining what the crime is and when it has actually happened. However, the debasement of the word has achieved its desired effect: It has made masses of people incapable of being critical of the numbers put forth by the studies, leaving them able only to interpret sex relations through the ideology that has co-opted the word, ideological fem-

inism.

Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge have an analogous term to *meaningless words* in their book *Professing Feminism*²⁴, an exploration of the field of Women's Studies. They use the term "Accordion Concepts" which refers to cases when "concepts are stretched so widely that crucial distinctions are obliterated."²⁵ When analysing the ideological feminist idea that all men are potential rapists, we see the political machinations involved in making these concepts fungible:

Mystification begins as feminist alchemists go to work on it. Here's the trick. First they capitalize on the ambiguity of *potential rapist*. What might this possibly be construed to mean? On one reasonable interpretation, *potential rapist* could be used to describe a man who says he would enjoy forced penetration if he thought he could get away with it, and there is indeed a substantial minority of male undergraduates who have checked this response on surveys of campus attitudes. But most men, contrary to the apparent meaning of the claim that they are all rapists, do not in fact express a desire to rape. When confronted with this objection, feminist theorists quickly deny that they think all men have such a yearning. Instead, they say, they are thinking of the masculine *zeitgeist*, which supposedly determines our cultural milieu so extensively that it makes every man a prospective rapist.²⁶

One feels compelled to add to the last sentence, "and so much the better if our audience confuse the two." Here we see ideological feminist theorists using fluid definitions with direct application to politics. The first statement is made to define all men as potential rapists, but when called out, ideological feminists will shift to a definition which merely states that men grow up in a patriarchal culture in which rape is normal. Either of these definitions is politically useful, both for making men a scapegoat, the latter for appeasing the "good" men (male feminists) who don't rape, and either for scaring women. Scapegoated men will drop out of participating in society, "good" men will fall in line ideologically and elect popular candidates who support women's issues or risk losing sexual and emotional access to women, and women will flock to candidates who make them feel protected from all the potential rapists. I leave it to the personal observations of the reader to determine if these outcomes are idle speculation.

At this point I would hope that the political motivation behind the debasement of the word "rape" has become clear. Politically it has helped to garner national attention for politicians and has given them the illusion of appearing progressive instead of fear-mongering. It also keeps the Women's Movement relevant during a time in America where studies from across the sciences and social sciences show many women are equal to or better off than men, unless someone told them they were not or are harboring psychological reasons for envying or hating men. And who might be telling young women that they are suffering under the yoke of a patriarchal culture in which every man wants to rape them?²⁷ As a wise man once said, "follow the money." Millions of state and federal dollars are poured into college campuses, which have become the focal point of the debate, to establish programs such as outlined in *Not Alone* to combat rape. Who will most likely advise and run these programs? More than likely the Women's Studies and feminist professors who continue to propagate

the myth of rape culture. Cui bono? The rape hysteria bolsters the careers and bank accounts of campus ideological feminists and the administrators who support them.

However, I am rarely satisfied with monetary explanations of cultural phenomena. While important, I think analysing certain players in this political drama is equally pertinent. Susan Brownmiller's 1975 book *Against Our Wills* introduced the idea that America has a rape culture and begat the idea among radical feminists. However, for insight into its political application here we turn to Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, the ideological architects of the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA. They typify the ideological feminist mindset in both similar and unique ways. One can trace the idea that all sex between men and women is the rape of women back to their thinking. Their initial expansion of the definition of rape - that all heterosexual sex is rape of women - can be seen in the questions of the three studies looked at above. Male sexuality is an original sin in the ideological feminist dogma and, as a sentiment, has infiltrated the thinking of college campuses and society at large.

What would make these women vilify male sexuality? In an article for *Playboy*, and anthologized in *Vamps and Tramps*²⁸, Camille Paglia turned her glare on MacKinnon and Dworkin, giving us insight into the kind of woman who demonizes male sexuality. She juxtaposes MacKinnon's positive contribution of having sexual harassment established as a legal category with the negative one of creating the sexual hysteria within American feminism. She attributes it directly to MacKinnon's character:

MacKinnon is a classic WASP who painstakingly builds huge rigid structures of words in complete obliviousness to the organic, sensual, and visual. She is a twentieth-century puritan whose upbringing - a stern Minnesota judge as a father, Episcopalian and conservative Republican - seems straight out of Hawthorne.²⁹

She embodies the puritanical and sex-averse heritage of American culture. Paglia also exposes her political tendencies:

MacKinnon is a totalitarian. She wants a risk-free, state-controlled world. She believes rules and regulations will solve every ill and straighten out all those irksome problems between the sexes that have been going on for five thousand years. As a lawyer, MacKinnon is deft and pragmatic. But as a political thinker, cultural historian, or commentator on sex, she is incompetent. For a woman of her obvious intelligence, her frame of reference is shockingly small. She has the dull instincts and tastes of a bureaucrat. It's all work and no play in MacKinnon Land. Literature, art, music, film, television - nothing intrudes on MacKinnon's consciousness unless it has been filtered through feminism, which has taught her, she likes to say, "everything I know." There's the rub. She is someone who, because of her own private emotional turmoil, locked on to Seventies-era feminism and never let go.

MacKinnon has a cold, inflexible, and fundamentally unscholarly mind. She is a propagandist and casuist, good at constructing ad hoc arguments from expedience

for specific political aims. But her knowledge of intellectual or world history is limited, and as a researcher she has remarkably poor judgement in evaluating sources. She wildly overpraises weak feminist writers and has no feeling whatever for psychology, a defect that makes her conclusions about sex ridiculous. She is a Stalinist who believes that art must serve a political agenda and that all opposing voices are enemies of humanity who must be silenced. MacKinnon and Dworkin are fanatics, zealots, fundamentalists of the new feminist religion. Their alliance with the reactionary, antiporn far right is no coincidence.³⁰

MacKinnon's desire for control and order, most notably sexual order, led her to use the State as the means of controlling sexuality, most notably male sexuality. We can judge her success by the successes of VAWA and the political attention to women's issues today. She was seeking to establish control over sexuality in line with her Puritan ancestors. She is the godmother of the Women's Studies student, uneducated save for indoctrination into ideological feminist beliefs, able to silence dissenting voices; she was the prototype for the ideological feminist activist of today. In her eyes, State power, much like a cold, domineering father,³¹ must have control over male sexuality as it attempts to surge through puritan propriety.

We then meet Andrea Dworkin:

Dworkin, like Kate Millet, has turned a garish history of mental instability into feminist grand opera. Dworkin publicly boasts of her bizarre multiple rapes, assaults, beatings, breakdowns and tacky traumas, as if her inability to cope with life were the patriarchy's fault rather than her own. She pretends to be a daring truth-teller but never mentions her most obvious problem: food. Hence she is a hypocrite. Dworkin's shrill, *kvetching*, solipsistic prose has a sloppy, squalling infantilism. This attracted MacKinnon, with her dour background of Protestant high seriousness, which treats children like miniature adults. MacKinnon's impersonal prose is dry, bleached, parched. Her hereditary north-country, anal-retentive style, stingy and nit-picking, was counterbalanced by Dworkin's raging undifferentiated orality, her buckets of chicken soup spiked with spite.

Dworkin, wallowing in misery, is a "type" that I recognize after twenty-two years of teaching. I call her The Girl with the Eternal Cold. This was the pudgy, clumsy, whiny child at summer camp who was always spilling her milk, dropping her lollipop in the dirt, getting a cramp on the hike, a stone in her shoe, a bee in her hair. In college, this type – pasty, bilious, and frumpy – is constantly sick from fall to spring. She coughs and sneezes on everyone, is never prepared with tissue and sits sniffing in class with a roll of toilet paper on her lap. She is the ultimate teacher's pest, the morose, unlovable child who never got her mama's approval and therefore demands attention at any price. Dworkin seized on feminism as a mask to conceal her bitterness at this tedious, banal family drama.³²

Dworkin is the "confessional" feminist. No stage is too big for her to declare all of her physical and

existential misfortunes. She represents the other half of the psychological birth of rape hysteria, the attention-seeking ever-victim. She is the perfect complement to MacKinnon's puritanical hatred of sexuality in that she helps to disguise that hatred as a righteous crusade against rape. However, we know better than this. Both women characterize male sexuality itself as rape. Dworkin was the loudest voice in the room, making her own personal issues the political issues of the day, she enacted the psychodrama of her past on a grand stage.

Think of the girl whom Paglia describes in the second paragraph. I went to a college with a few of these "Girls with Eternal Colds." They are ripe for the picking for ideological feminist thinking. No responsibility need be taken for their melancholia. The stock bogeyman of patriarchy now exists to explain all manner of depression, panic disorder, eating disorder, self-esteem issue, problems with boyfriends, etc. That most of these young women are white and from the suburbs is no coincidence. Growing up in the crucible of the isolated and now desiccated nuclear family, their family dramas incubate until they get away from home for the first time at college. Workaholic Mom and Dad were never around to provide the love and attention needed in childhood and now everyone needs to know.

Paglia identifies MacKinnon and Dworkin's hatred of pornography with their hatred of sexuality in general. It also speaks to the plight of the suburban girl, divorced from nature and her body, who easily falls for this kind of radical feminist ideology:

MacKinnon and Dworkin detest pornography because it symbolizes everything they don't understand and can't control about their own bodies. Current feminism, with its antiscience and social constructionist bias, never thinks about nature. Hence it cannot deal with sex, which begins in the body and is energized by instinctual drives. MacKinnon and Dworkin's basic error is in identifying pornography and society, which they then simplistically define as patriarchal and oppressive. In fact, pornography, which erupts during times of personal freedom, shows the dark truth about nature, concealed by the artifices of civilization. Pornography is about lust, our animal reality that will never be fully tamed by love. Lust is elemental, aggressive, asocial. Pornography allows us to explore our deepest, most forbidden selves.³³

I see male sexuality fitting into this description as well. Everything they can't understand about male sexuality is considered rape. Only when it plays by the rules and conforms to soporific television and movie scenarios is male sexuality acceptable. Everything chthonic about it, which makes both man and woman reckon with primordial force, must be controlled, preferably by the State if people like Catharine MacKinnon have their way. But now we do not seem far off from that time.

MacKinnon and Dworkin are embodiments of certain American, perhaps white American, cultural attitudes towards sexuality and males. Their hatred of sex, symbolized by the penetrating aspect of male sexuality, assertive and overwhelming, led them to characterize all male sexuality as rape, and was neatly disguised in rationalizations about patriarchy and misogyny. Their attitude was not introduced by feminism, but can be traced back to the Puritan founders of the American

colonies. After a time of sexual freedom, adventure, and misadventure in the 20th century, the reactionary push towards more sexual control has become apparent.

In order to begin concluding it behoves me to summarize my five points and ask whether they have been adequately addressed:

(1) *What are the current controversies in the country that make this an issue?* The current political climate surrounding college campuses and rape was discussed and shown to be the result of political rhetoric based on faulty research methods. This leads to: (2) *What is the history of these controversies?* It was shown that Mary Koss' infamous *Ms.* magazine study was based on similar faulty research methods and was responsible for introducing the "one-in-four" rape number into public discourse. (3) *How are these political issues related to the debasement of language?* It was shown that rape had been defined in such a way in all of the studies as to immediately define all gray-areas and awkward sexual situations as rape, especially in regards to alcohol, leading to the word becoming meaningless. Thus people have difficulty thinking of the word apart from its political usage. We then questioned: (4) *Why might this debasement be politically motivated?* It seemed the issue was not more complicated than matters of political prestige and monetary benefit. However, we also asked: (5) *What is the psychology and motivation of the people who have created this issue?* It was hypothesized that the characters of ideological feminist figures Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin are indicative of certain psychological "types" who have different, but over-lapping, motivations for vilifying male sexuality. It is hoped that I was able to show in a coherent manner that MacKinnon and Dworkin's original debasement and expansion of the word rape for political reasons has had the consequence of bringing forth the current rape hysteria in the United States.

Sensationalizing rape statistics will achieve nothing for humanity in the long term. It has thus far furthered the careers of a few politicians, activists, and academics, while frightening women and vilifying men. Insofar as feminists helped to achieve this, ideological or not, they have done terrible damage to the relationships between men and women in our country. As Paglia realizes, "When it defines men as the enemy, feminism is alienating women from their own bodies."³⁴ The oppression or vilification of one sex harms the other; we exist in a fundamental state of interrelation and interdependence. In the interest of harmony between the sexes I make this humble request to free ourselves from the political brainwashing of ideological feminism. Paglia once again:

An enlightened feminism of the twenty-first century will embrace all sexuality and will turn away from the delusionalism, sanctimony, prudery, and male-bashing of the MacKinnon-Dworkin brigade. Women will never know who they are until they let men be men. Let's get rid of Infirmary Feminism, with its bedlam of bellyachers, anorexics, bulimics, depressives, rape victims, and incest survivors. Feminism has become a catch-all vegetable drawer where bunches of clingy sob sisters can store their mouldy neuroses.³⁵

It is only when both sexes have the strength to let one another become who they are that we are really going to see change. Allowing young men and women freedom to explore their sexuality, with its tragedies and triumphs, and without interference from abstractly parental structures such as the

State and university administration is a necessary part of moving from prolonged childhood to adulthood. Authoritarian control of sexuality recapitulates the infantilizing psychic space of the family.

We need to separate the wheat from the chaff of what political figures and the media are feeding us in an age of twenty-four-hour news cycles and anarchic, but unrefined, access to information via the Internet. Not only do the politicians lie to us, but a seemingly endless stream of websites and bloggers can regurgitate it back to us, obfuscating, in the virtuality, our ability to trust our own senses and experience of life. I think it all starts with our being cognizant of language and how it is being used, especially in a political context. As Orwell warned us:

Political language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists – is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase – some *jackboot*, *Achilles' heel*, *hotbed*, *melting pot*, *acid test*, *veritable inferno*, or other lump of verbal refuse – into the dustbin where it belongs.³⁶

So I nominate the political usage of the phrase “rape culture” to be tossed into the dustbin. It will serve both sexes better in the long run to be able to talk openly and honestly about sexuality and will be a starting point for the dialogue between the sexes we so desperately need.

Footnotes

¹ Orwell, G. “Politics and the English Language.” *Essays*. Selected by John Carey. New York: Everyman's Library, 2002. 959.

² *Ibid.* 954.

³ *Ibid.* 959.

⁴ *Ibid.* 962.

⁵ Sometimes this is said to be not just on college campuses, but the United States as a whole.

⁶ On a personal note I can't have sex with a girl who went to college (especially if they took one or two gender studies courses) without getting some sort of spiel about dominating her. It's like Michel Foucault is haunting my sex life.

⁷ The implication being that only men are rapists.

⁸ <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405>

⁹ Mark Twain once remarked something along the lines of there being “lies, damned lies, and statistics.” I inaugurate ideological feminist statistics as the fourth head of that deceitful Mt. Rushmore.

¹⁰ Fox, J.A. & Moran, R. (2014, August 10). Sex assault surveys not the answer. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Often young men on campus will laugh off the idea they are being discriminated against. Unfortunately, this is where manly bravado and not voicing their feelings comes to do them a disservice.

¹³ Sommers, C.H. (2012, January 27). CDC study on sexual violence in the U.S. overstates the problem. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from www.washingtonpost.com.

¹⁴ As will be elaborated on later in the paper, this may be one of the desired effects of these studies, to show that all heterosexual men are rapists and all heterosexual women victims.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Koss, M. & Oros, C. (1982). "Sexual Experiences Survey: A Research Instrument Investigating Sexual Aggression and Victimization." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 50(3), 455.

¹⁷ Sommers, C.H. (1994). *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 210-11.

¹⁸ In one heated argument with a feminist young woman I was told that I had to accept every individual woman's definition of rape. What about these women who told Koss they were not raped? Apparently acceptance only counts when it helps the cause.

¹⁹ Sommers, C.H. (1994). *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 211.

²⁰ Ibid. 211.

²¹ Ibid. 212.

²² Ibid. 212. Emphasis mine.

²³ One could argue that both parties do this with the women in their respective constituencies, but for this particular matter it seems more common among Democrats.

²⁴ Patai, D., & Koertge, N. (1994). *Professing feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies*. New York: BasicBooks.

²⁵ Ibid. 126.

²⁶ Ibid. 128.

²⁷ I put no stock in psychopathology, but that sounds an awful lot like paranoia or narcissism.

²⁸ Paglia, C. (1994). "The Return of Carry Nation: Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin" *Vamps & Tramps: New Essays*. New York: Vintage Books.

²⁹ Ibid. 108-109.

³⁰ Ibid. 108.

³¹ Sylvia Plath's *Daddy*, perhaps? The absence of the Father in American society looms in the background.

³² Paglia, C. (1994). "The Return of Carry Nation: Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin" *Vamps & Tramps: New Essays*. New York: Vintage Books. 109.

³³ Ibid. 110.

³⁴ Ibid. 111.

³⁵ Ibid. 111.

³⁶ Orwell, G. "Politics and the English Language." *Essays*. Selected by John Carey. New York: Everyman's Library, 2002. 966.



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