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Rape, Trauma, Justice, and Their Aftermath in Alice Sebold's *Lucky*

Abstract

This essay delves into the relationship between legal justice and the lived experience of trauma following sexual violence, using Alice Sebold's memoir, *Lucky*, as its central case study. Through a detailed textual analysis of the narrative, this study investigates the efficacy of the judicial system in providing meaningful recourse for rape survivors. It examines the journey of seeking legal justice, from the initial reporting of the crime and the subsequent investigation to the emotionally taxing courtroom trial and the ultimate verdict. The analysis pays close attention to the methods employed by defense attorneys, the pervasive influence of societal rape myths on the jury's perception, and the ways in which the victim's identity and experiences are scrutinized and often delegitimized within the legal framework (drawing on insights from scholars like Jordan and Rich). Furthermore, the essay extends its scope beyond the courtroom to explore the long-term psychological and emotional aftermath of the rape on Sebold's life, even after her assailant's conviction. By integrating the author's personal reflections with scholarly sources on trauma (such as Wolbert and Marchetti), the limitations of legal redress (as discussed by Clark and Daly), and the potential of narrative and artistic expression as alternative avenues for healing and empowerment (as suggested by Alcoff and Sebold herself), this paper critically assesses whether legal victory can truly equate to justice for survivors of sexual violence or if other forms of validation and recovery hold greater significance.

Keywords: rape, trauma, Sebold, memoir, justice, trial, gender equality, law

1. Introduction

On May 8th, 1981, Alice Sebold, a then eighteen-year-old student at Syracuse University, was raped by a stranger in a tunnel close to the campus. Her virginity was taken from her, and she was robbed and beaten, but when she reported her story to the police, she was told she was “lucky” in comparison with another girl who had been raped, killed, and dismembered in the same tunnel (Sebold, *Lucky* 2-4). *Lucky* is also the title of the memoir Sebold published in 1999, which recounts the experience of being raped, the court trial, the victory, and the aftermath of the supposed “justice is done.” The memoir is not just a way to place the “material reality of her rape in the public realm” but also a means to reflect on “the shattering impact of sexual violence” (Bufacchi and Gilson 29).

When it comes to defining rape as a crime, many commentators agree that it is mainly an act of aggression toward women, “essentially a nonsexual act whose function is to keep women (...) subjugated to men, in general” (Lalumiere et al. 105) using sex as a weapon to express “anger, to control, degrade, humiliate and hurt the victim” (Hall 7). The gendered meaning of sexual violence is made possible, and permissible, because an entire culture supports and excuses it (Macaulay Millar 27).

A glance at the statistics on sexual assault shows that rape is commonplace in the United States (Rich 17), with one in three women having experienced some form of sexual violence. Not having suffered it directly does not make the condition of the remaining two better since “the fear of rape is a daily reality for many women, limiting their freedom of movement and reducing their quality of life” (Bohner et al. 41). Despite these numbers and the wide diffusion of the phenomenon, sexual assault remains the most underreported crime (Klemmer et al. 2), even if the recourse to the law might bring at least validation to rape survivors and legal justice. Yet this latter proves inconclusive in empowering sexual violence victims, often “failing to adequately consider the complexities and individuality of sexual violence experience” (Flynn 92), centering on cavils—such as what ‘real’ rape looks like or what consent is. Such minutiae, as Sebold’s memoir clearly shows, make the path to justice—in the few cases that obtain it—an ordeal paved with emotional tortures stemming from the necessity to relive the trauma in front of a jury, plied by the fast-paced questions of the defendant’s attorneys.

The aim of this essay is to walk such a path through Lucky and the extensive account of Sebold's victorious court trial to try to answer these questions: can a "guilty" verdict erase or at least ease the trauma of being violated and brutally beaten by a stranger? Did the verdict make Sebold's life easier afterward? This study of the memoir is intended to respond to each of these inquiries.

2. Trauma

The mental and emotional state after sexual violence—the "Rape Trauma Syndrome"—is the "acute and long-term reorganization process" that follows such a violent and life-changing experience (Wolbert and Marchetti 25). The set of symptoms displayed by rape victims may vary widely and usually includes sleeping disorders, outbursts of rage, difficulty concentrating, exaggerated startle response (Lauer 143), feelings of detachment and constriction, lack of interest in the surroundings, change in heart rate or appetite, body image disturbance, sexual problems, self-blame, low self-esteem and fear of being alone (Purdy 171).

After the rape, Sebold decided to temporarily come back home, in Philadelphia, to her parents and sister, suffering the first expected reactions within a supposedly 'safe' familiar environment. The first sign of her trauma is the thought of being forever marked by the event, so as to claim that "[she] share[d] [her] life with the rapist. He [was] the husband of [her] fate" (Sebold, Lucky 48). The ineluctable character of the experience in the tunnel is something that—in the immediate aftermath—appears as an insurmountable obstacle, a curse that has created a somewhat unbreakable traumatic bond between the victim and her assailant. The macabre "marriage" between these two people rechristens the victim as "all those horrible words used for rape": "changed, bloodied, damaged goods, ruined" (62). The feeling is heightened by the fact that such a violent act was Sebold's first sexual experience, which is consistent with one of the rape myths, that if a woman's value is related to her sexuality, "rape decreases that value" (Wolbert and Marchetti 32).

In the presence of men, the writer believes she can be "seen" by them. She has the feeling that each man knows about what happened and that, somehow, they are all violating her again: "I knew

the old men hadn't raped me. I knew the tall black man in a green suit, sitting on a bus-station bench, hadn't raped me. I was still afraid" (Sebold, Lucky 47).

Sebold was physically injured during the rape, but once she recovered, the deepest wound was the emotional one. The trauma produces a mixture of fear, rage, and hate toward her assailant. These feelings explain the reason why rape is not only physical violence but, most of all, a "soul murder" or a "spiritual murder" (Sanyal 67), given the set of lasting consequences that linger in the victims' psyche. "In my mind"—writes Sebold—"the rapist had murdered me on the day of the rape. Now I was going to murder him back. Make my hate large and whole" (Sebold, Lucky 102).

The trauma of rape hits victims with its symptoms; nonetheless, not only is it an individual experience, but it also affects families and significant others. These people are often referred to as "co-survivors," but despite the shock they may experience vicariously, they are considered "an essential factor in the recovery process, and they are invested with a role and power to help the rape victim overcome the trauma" (Szczesniak 71-72). Yet, sometimes, they might be too shocked to act rationally and be of much help. In Sebold's family, the person who seems most changed by the experience is her father. The writer describes the first reaction of the man when he refers to a group of black people as "animals" (Sebold, Lucky 48), as his daughter's rapist was an African American. Sebold's father, a university professor who usually abhors racism, condemns the entire race of the rapist, but his immediate reaction of shock and rage turns into the will to understand the dynamic of the assault. During a conversation with his daughter, they mention the weapon the rapist had used to threaten her (a knife), which was found with her glasses, not in the same area where the rape had taken place. This detail does not convince the man:

"You mean he didn't have the knife in the tunnel?" my father asked.

"No," I said.

"I don't think I understand."

"What's there to understand, Bud?" my mother asked.

(...) "How could you have been raped if he didn't have the knife?" (...) "How could he have raped you unless you let him?"

"That would be like saying I wanted it to happen."

"But he didn't have the knife in the tunnel."

"Dad," I said, "think about this. Wouldn't it be physically impossible to rape and beat me while holding a knife the whole time?" (...) "So most women who are raped," I said, "even if there was a weapon, when the rape is going on, the weapon is not in her face. He overpowered me, Dad. He beat me up. I couldn't want something like that, it's impossible." (...) I had a desperate need for him to understand. If he didn't—he who was my father and who clearly wanted to understand—what man would? (53-54)

Sebold's father's reaction combines the natural rage of a parent with rape myths—which will be discussed further on—along with the general assumption that a rape victim must demonstrate her credibility and give plausible justifications for her actions. The moral anger elicited in parents by the event provokes a reaction that aims at justifying an "irrationally produced emotion" (Giner-Sorolla and Russell 72). The man tries to rationalize his anger through one of the myths connected with rape: the assumption that a woman cannot be raped against her will (Maybrey 27). This myth seems to be confirmed by the man when he asks his daughter how she could have been raped if the assailant was not carrying his weapon anymore. He refuses to believe, at a conscious level, that fear and physical strength alone might have been sufficient to overpower her. So, he succumbs to rape myths' reliability and blames—albeit not explicitly—his daughter for what happened to her. This is an extremely common demeanor which, nonetheless, proves extremely counterproductive since "victimizing a survivor further is not only downright irrational, but it cruelly aggravates an already dramatic situation and intensifies the victim's sense of helplessness" (Szczesniak 71). However, such a reaction is typical when parents feel they were not able to protect their children (Lauer 129).

Sebold decides eventually to go back to Syracuse, defying her fears and the consequences of trauma still haunting her "because the rapist had already taken so much from [her]. [She] was not

going to let him take anything more” (Sebold, Lucky 83). This is a choice that proves to be extremely wise because not only does she resume her normal life—struggling against the possibility of an emotional revictimization connected to the return to the place where the rape happened—but almost five months after the event, she bumps into her rapist on the street. Gregory Madison, the man who raped her in the tunnel months before, recognizes her and laughs “because he had gotten away with it” (94). This encounter allows Sebold to give a face and a name to her assailant and to report him to the police, commencing the process toward the achievement of legal justice.

3. The Trial

The experience of a rape trial is often described as “being raped twice” (Peterson 216). Victims are indeed questioned about the details of the event with the aim of ascertaining whether what happened was really rape or consensual sex. But the specifics of the event itself are often not enough because what the jury investigates is also the “character” of the victim: her past, her habits in terms of dressing and drinking, more generally, if she “asked for it.”

Sebold’s case was no different. Her trial, which was carried out at the Onondaga County Courthouse, occupies the central part of the memoir and is the most elaborate one. Many details are retrieved by the author to show how an apparent crystal-clear rape as hers was put into question and doubted to force her to not only hold fast to what she knew to be true but also to perform as a heightened version of the character she really was: “the virgin coed the grand jury would expect” (Sebold, Lucky 107). But why was it necessary to study and plan every move to appear as something she knew she was? Because rape is “the only serious crime in which victims may be held responsible for their own assaults” (Wolbert and Marchetti 5) since the concept of “consent” can be a very subjective one. Moreover, according to Australian professor Jan Jordan, there is another factor to consider: rape most often takes place only in the presence of the victim and the assailant, so the dialectic of the trial is “your word against mine,” “the word of a woman against the word of a man” (Jordan 2), and historically the latter has been worth more than the former. Such a disparity is not only caused by the eternal gender gap between men and women but is also sustained by the presence of the already mentioned rape culture, which is, in turn,

sustained by the so-called “rape myths.” These myths are presumptions about what a typical rape should “look like” or how a rape usually develops. Quite often, rape myths construct the image of the ideal rape victim. American scholar Karen Rich produced a list of rape myths, which assume that rape is “real” only when victims are physically attractive but sexually inexperienced; their rapists are unknown to them; the assailants belong to devalued races and classes; they are mentally ill or in the grip of uncontrollable sexual drives; they rape their victims outdoors, using a weapon and provoking severe bodily injury to the victim (Rich 21). Obviously, Sebold’s case fits in all the above rape myths. According to Bohner et al., there are four more general types of myths that make it somewhat difficult for a victim to prove the authenticity of her rape before a jury when the tendency is to: blame the victims for their rape; express disbelief in claims of rape; exonerate the perpetrator; allude that only a certain type of woman is raped (42). The existence of rape myths is kept vital by rape culture—the social attitude that makes it “socially acceptable for men to inflict violence against other women and against other men” (Wilz 53)—but they are also part of a psychological mindset that helps people “understand and explain events in their social world” and maintain “cognitive consistency” (46). The fact that rape can only occur in certain circumstances contributes to creating a sort of “order” of things where exceptions and deviations from the norm do not exist. Of course, the rigidity of rape myths’ assumptions also affects the members of the jury and makes the evaluation of each individual case difficult and biased by preconceived ideas. That is why details become crucial during the cross-examination of victims.

In Sebold’s case, the attorneys representing Madison focus on the timeframe of the incident, on whether there was a moon out or not, or how she fought him (with open-handed or close-fisted blows), and how much money the rapist took from her (Sebold, *Lucky* 107). They also mention that she needs to use corrective lenses because she is nearsighted, and, thus, having lost her glasses at a certain point during the rape, she might have had problems identifying her rapist (109-10). Afterward, the other detail brought about is the kiss that Madison gave her at the end of the act, to which he forced her to respond. The mentioning of such an intimate detail is perceived by Sebold as a calculated “hateful overdrive” the attorney has switched, realizing that he has not been able to get the “best” from her (111). The author relives the trauma in the courtroom because “what

happened to [her] in that tunnel was now something [she] would not only have to say aloud, but that others would sit and read and reread" (107).

The repeated questions of the attorneys aim at analyzing the witness's passive or ineffectual behavior in spite of 'options' (for instance the possibility to escape) since they might constitute evidence of consent. Also, there are specific techniques that lawyers use to defend their clients, among which law professor Andrew Taslitz recognizes the continual questioning about the details of a rape to locate inconsistencies or revisions and to undermine the general character of the victim (23-24). That is why cross-examination is described as a "struggle" (94), where the logic of victory at all costs compels lawyers to willfully discredit a witness whom they know is telling the truth, using the mentioned tactics. As for Sebold, the outcome is a feeling of fear that being in the relatively safe environment of a courtroom cannot stop (Sebold, *Lucky* 111).

Another detail mentioned in cross-examinations is the clothing of victims, as it becomes relevant "to provide reasons for the sexually aggressive behavior of men" (Gorman 46). A provocative outfit, according to such logic, would justify the inability of a man to hold back from his arousal. Sebold declares she was wearing Calvin Klein jeans, a blue work shirt, a heavy cable-knit cardigan sweater, moccasins, and underwear (Sebold, *Lucky* 112). Apparently, not provocative clothing at all. Yet, later, the brand of her jeans becomes a detail the attorney can stress to highlight the social, racial, and economic privilege of the woman who is white, comes from a good family, and can afford a pair of Calvin Klein jeans.

The racial issue, the rapist being black and the victim being white, is usually a myth that favors the victim since such a situation suggests "a deep seated white male fear of black male sexuality as a challenge to white male power, including white men's control over white women" (Rich 31). A similar case has been presented recently in the Netflix miniseries *When They See Us* (2019), directed by Ava DuVernay, which retells the famous case of the Central Park jogger: a woman who was raped and beaten in New York in 1989. Five young men (four African Americans and a Hispanic) were wrongfully convicted despite the lack of evidence. Only in 2002 were they cleared after the confession of the actual rapist (Hinton). What the miniseries shows is a totally different demeanor toward the five boys, who are treated like beasts and forced to confess to crimes they have not committed, in a tangle of lies and shifting responsibilities. But in Sebold's case, the race

of the rapist rather seems to suggest an idea of white privilege that automatically invests her with guilt. “I was guilty for the race of my rapist,”—she writes— “guilty for the lack of representation of them in the legal profession in the City of Syracuse, guilty that he was the only black man in the room” (Sebold, *Lucky* 165-66). As observed by scholar Tanya Serisier, Sebold’s performance eventually twists the racial disadvantage and exploits it. Her testimony relies on the “racialized semiotics of ‘All-American’ identity that implicitly highlight her whiteness and the blackness of the man who raped her” (83), automatically reminding the jury of the above-mentioned myth of the black rapist/white victim. Serisier writes that the criminal trial “is an institutional and discursive framework within which the most effective, or even only, way for women to counter a narrative of them as liars or blameworthy for the violence enacted on them is to make use of other harmful narrative tropes” (87), thus also one involving color lines and racism.

Sebold becomes perfectly aware over the course of the trial that “if you tell the truth and nothing else, you lose” (*Lucky* 127), so she decides to enhance all the strong points of her case, first and foremost her virginity. It turns out to be her most precious asset since, as claimed by German academic Mithu Sanyal, a woman’s honor has always been from ancient times “located in her body, in her virginity,” hence she “possessed something that could be stolen or destroyed by rape” (43). Even though it is no longer mentioned explicitly, honor “still haunts court cases and reports of rape, especially where a victim’s honesty is concerned” (61). Moreover, as maintained by Giner-Sorolla and Russell, “if virginity is seen as an element of a woman’s social value, then under the patriarchal concepts of woman as property, rape detracts from her value” (83). But this is not only a mindset involving courts because institutions, in general, want women to be virginal, pure, and innocent, “a designation for those who fit into what a certain standard of women, especially younger women, are supposed to look like” (Valenti 300).

Sebold is told that the probable strategy deployed by the other side will be to go with the story that she had lost her virginity voluntarily that night and was sorry about it, so she eventually would blame “any black man that ran into [her] on the street” (Sebold, *Lucky* 125). For this reason, she needs to develop her own strategy and rationalize her assets to make jurors empathize with her. She is determined, in her performance as a witness, “to become the ‘worst’ nightmare of the man who raped her” (Serisier 82), which works when she realizes:

They winced. They felt pity. Throughout the remaining questions some of the jurors, and not all of them women, fought back tears. I was aware my loss that night was my gain today. Having been a virgin made me look good, made the crime appear worse.

I did not want their pity. I wanted to win. But their reactions pushed me to think about what I was saying, not just tally it up as a pro or con in terms of the chances for a conviction. The tears of one particular man, in the second row, felled me. I cried a little then. The reality was that this, too, made me look good. (Sebold, Lucky 126)

At the end of the hearings, she is informed by the agent investigating her case, Detective Lorenz, that “most of rape cases never get this far” (128), and she later gathers that in rape cases, “it was almost expected that the victim would drop out of the process even if she originally initiated it” (141). This is an unsurprising statement, given the stress and potential revictimization that a court trial may bring. Moreover, as claimed by jurist Teresa Scalzo, “rape cases are typically the most difficult cases to successfully prosecute because jurors’ beliefs in common rape myths cause them to question victim credibility” focusing “on the victim and any of the victim’s flaws or vulnerabilities” (363). Additionally, defendants are not easy to cross-examine because “they have a substantial interest in lying and may actually believe their own lies” or “minimize and rationalize” (374).

Sebold’s case ended with a favorable sentence: Madison was declared guilty and remanded to jail. She was even asked by the probation department of the County of Onondaga for input on the sentencing recommendation (Sebold, Lucky 170). The successful outcome of the trial seems to mark a new period in Sebold’s life, providing her with a “very solid and heavy back door to the whole thing” (172). The experience is described by the writer as a “death-and-rebirth” one, and the conviction of her rapist makes her assert that “now the land was new and I could make of it anything I wished” (172-73). But is legal justice really “a solid and heavy back door?” Are the beneficial effects of winning a rape trial permanent, or at least long-term ones?

4. The Aftermath

Two years after the end of the trial, Sebold's roommate Lila gets raped in their apartment. The event is, of course, a revival of the author's personal drama. But the incident also implies a new and unpleasant feeling of being rejected by her friend, who does not want to be helped, comforted, and consoled by someone who has lived the same experience. Lila's resolution is totally opposite to Sebold's because she decides she is not going to pursue her rapist. "I want my life back. I watched what it did to you" (193) is her motivation. Moreover, the police speculate that Lila might have been raped by one of Madison's friends out of revenge for his incarceration. This is further evidence of the fact that, as Sebold tells her friend, even if she wants it to be over, "you can't just will it away" (194).

Despite her best intentions to resume a normal life, Sebold's account of the years after the rape shows how "the enduring aftermath of such violence is a profound part of the wounding done in those acts" and the experience is an indeterminate one since "the ripples of violence that follow from the initial act continue long after the act itself" (Bufacchi and Gilson 36-37). She keeps having very vivid nightmares involving images of the Holocaust (Sebold, *Lucky* 196); she daydreams about being attacked again, and for years frequently changes apartments and boyfriends; she starts overeating and not caring about her physical appearance (202). She also uses heroin (199), which fits in the list of possible addictions that a victim can develop in the aftermath of sexual violence, along with the risk of suffering from clinical depression (Purdy 171). The trauma has not been erased by legal justice, but the only thing that, at a certain point, seems to bring some solace to Sebold after so many years, is reading about other people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder—even caused by other traumas such as taking part in the Vietnam war—and especially writing about her own. Encouraged by poet Tess Gallagher—one of her college instructors at the time of the rape—she decides to write about the event that happened a long time before, first in an article published in *The New York Times* and then in the memoir. It is actually an activity that she took on after she started writing the novel *The Lovely Bones* (2002), which was made into a movie directed by Peter Jackson in 2009. The protagonist, the teenager Susie Salmon, is raped and dismembered, like the girl who had not been as "lucky" as Sebold herself. But in an interview with Katharine Viner for *The Guardian*, right after the publication of the novel, the author explained that she had stopped writing *The Lovely Bones* to devote all her efforts to *Lucky*, to "make sure that

Susie wasn't saying everything that [she] wanted to say about violent crime and rape" (Viner). Nonetheless, in the same interview, she declared she did not believe that everything a rape victim writes must have a therapeutic value or must necessarily be linked to the rape. Also, she did not reckon that *The Lovely Bones* was a way to "work out" her rape. She admitted, though, that something of the mysterious unlucky girl, unconsciously, might have become a part of Susie Salmon's character. What she was sure about was that rape had given her "a feeling that [she] could write a scene of violence with authority. It is extraordinary that knowing [she's] been raped should lesser [her] achievement in anything" (Viner). In the same fashion, she declared that she believed in the necessity for rape survivors to tell their story and not keep it hidden or anonymous. "I'm a big believer that the names of women who've been raped should be published," she told Viner, "Why should they be cloaked in shame? It's a story of survival, which is actually heroic. The stereotype is that you're always weak or passive or falling apart. So you don't talk about it because if you do, people will change their opinion of what you're capable of. When the truth is that you're probably capable of a lot more if you survived rape" (Viner). Her idea about first-person storytelling is that it is useful not only for the survivor producing it but also for other women going through the same ordeal; to convince them that the idea that "if you're raped, your life is basically over" is totally false, because "rape is a brutal experience, and it does change your life. But it sure doesn't kill you, and I'm sure not dead" (Viner). Sebold's testimony shows how "first-person narratives are powerful, and irreplaceable" (Bufacchi and Gilson 36); thus, *Lucky* might have the same function for other victims—encouraging them to make their voices heard.

5. Conclusion

The last few years have seen an increasing number of women deciding to speak up and reveal their past as victims of rape and sexual harassment, especially within the work environment. Global movements such as #MeToo have been founded, and the careers of powerful men, such as film producer Harvey Weinstein and others in the world of publishing, journalism, and the tech world, have been destroyed after having been exposed as sex offenders (Gay 8). Sexual violence and bullying among teenagers were also the main subject of the popular TV series *13 Reasons Why* (2017-2020), based on the novel by Jay Asher, which is connected to a website

(13reasonswhy.info) with a crisis text unit that victims of violence can reach out to. Another recent TV series, *Unbelievable* (2019), created by Susannah Grant, Ayelet Waldman, and Michael Chabon, narrates the story of a teenager who is charged with lying about having been raped. Apparently, there is wide openness on the topic these days, and speaking up as a survivor is not a mark of shame that must be kept hidden anymore. The interest shown by the media in sexual abuse and rape “has promoted an awareness of sexual violence and its psychological impact” (Healicon 2); nonetheless, as claimed by Powell et al., “victim-survivors continue to face insurmountable obstacles in seeking justice through the criminal law in the aftermath of sexual violence” (3). Furthermore, even when victims are able to obtain legal justice, is that justice really a recognition of a wrong, or “is justice something far more ephemeral or nebulous to victim-survivors of this harm?” (3). A rape trial, as Sebold’s experience shows, can be a highly distressing event where rape myths and victim blaming are deployed ruthlessly, often revictimizing the person who is trying to gain justice. Yet, winning a trial might have a cathartic and empowering effect (Taslitz 138) since what victims look for is “participation, voice, validation, vindication and offender accountability” (Daly 139). But is the legal arena the right place to obtain them? According to scholar Haley Clark, nothing could undo what has been done to victims, “and no process would be fully able to compensate for the crimes,” thus, what trials provide are “symbolic gestures of ‘justice’” (20). Law, write Powell et al., “may bring some satisfaction and other therapeutic gains to victim-survivors and the community more generally,” but “it can never fully erase the injury or long-term impacts of violence” (5). This is, again, something that Sebold’s story fully confirms. She declared, indeed, that it took her about 15 years to get over the rape, “a lot longer than if [she] hadn’t intellectualized everything, denied that it should have had an effect on [her]” (Viner). Considering all these factors, literature—and arts in general—can be considered an alternative form of reparation where victims tell their stories and can be of great help to other victims. There is always the risk, as already mentioned in Sebold’s declarations, that telling one’s story of rape “might contaminate and disallow one’s authority to tell other stories” (Clark 61), given the strength of the raped woman archetype. Yet, as claimed by philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff, “the critical force behind the social revolution we are witnessing is the voice of survivors” (12), and hopefully, one day, it will contribute to dismantling rape culture inside and outside of the courtrooms.

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