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Abstract

“The Child I Had Been Was Gone”
Critiquing Rape Culture in Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*
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Recent scholarship on Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) emphasizes the subject of rape. While Laura S. Patterson¹ breaks down the rape narrative and Laura Di Prete² analyzes the effect of a traumatic experience, scholars have yet to examine Allison’s resistance to rape culture. To address this gap, I look at *Bastard* and its significance within the context of rape culture, considering how Allison’s work is a scathing indictment of it. Her heroine, Bone Boatwright, beaten and raped at the hands of her stepfather, Daddy Glen, suffers from the proliferation of rape myths. These myths encourage victim blaming and slut shaming, allowing men to remain guiltless and perpetuating the pernicious assumption that women “want” rape and enjoy it. At first, it appears that Bone reinforces rape culture, punishing herself for Daddy Glen’s actions when she fantasizes about annihilation. However, her retreat into fantasies also represent her testimony, validating her trauma as real. Through Bone, Allison redefines the dirty and ruined raped body, usually perceived with disgust, as a source of power, ultimately critiquing the persistence of rape culture.

¹ Patterson, Laura S. “Ellipsis, Ritual, and ‘Real Time’: Rethinking the Rape Complex in Southern Novels.” *The Mississippi Quarterly* 54.1 (2000): 37-58. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 29 Aug. 2015.

² Di Prete, Laura. “‘Corporeal Fantasies’: Trauma and the Body in Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*.” *Foreign Bodies: Trauma, Corporeality, and Textuality in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 109-123. Print.