

Adrienne rich's rape: the theme of distrust of male authority

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Rape by Adrienne Rich Adrienne Rich's blatant poem, Rape, speaks a strong theme of a distrust of male authority. She establishes a male audience in the first stanza (the phrase " brothers" indicates male bonds), in order to show them what one of their brethren - a cop, a figure of authority perverted to one of death (" machinery to kill you") - has a sexist attitude, not in despite of his morals, but because of them. Rich's portrait of the cop is one that shifts from a physical description to a much deeper " moral" description, the clues of which are very subtle, like the fact that his hand is always resting on his gun, ready to kill those who cross him. The poem introduces his dark character and hardly even focuses on the rape victim, who expresses automatic distrust (" you have/to turn to him", line break emphasizing the have). The following stanzas follow a pattern, beginning with the victim illustrating her rape experience first and ending with the unsympathetic and backwards reactions of the cop; he is pleased by her hysteria, she is the one guilty of the crime of being forced, and takes your report as just another business file. The final stanza broadens the situation to an overall distrust of authority and reliability to other rape victims (also enforced by the use of second person). The allusions to the death machinery are less specific and she cites the precinct as sickening rather than the sole cop. The poem ends with the desperate question of whether the victim will be forced to lie to the cop, which, ironically, represents the truth of the situation - that she truly was assaulted and did not invite such an attack. The poem skillfully displays a rape victim's feelings of blame and doubt, as well as that lack of sympathy from male figures.