Rape as Resistance: Examining the Narrative of “Arthur”

Living within a white society which exercised complete control over their lives, slaves have often been viewed as submissive and powerless. This stereotype has been refuted on many occasions by scholars who have shown slaves breaking out of white control through rebellion to the usage of religion.¹ This scholarship includes John W. Blassingame’s 1972 work *The Slave Community*, which covers many elements of slave resistance. There are other forms of resistance, however, which have not been covered adequately by scholars and thus warrant scholarly treatment. A case which represents this lack of treatment involves a slave named Arthur who committed rape and other crimes. Arthur’s story has largely been ignored, except for a small number of brief references. This lack of interest in Arthur and his narrative seems surprising when one examines his acts within the context of eighteenth-century New England society. Arthur’s life and narrative are deserving of analysis for they represent an intriguing profile of African-American resistance. In order to truly understand his acts as a form of resistance, one must examine the factors behind Arthur’s crimes. The meager scholarship which has been done on him, essentially robs Arthur of his humanity, as his actions are stripped of motive and reasoning, which further undermines his existence as a human being.

The brief treatments of Arthur include *To Tell a Free Story* by William L. Andrews. Although Arthur and his narrative are mentioned, the discussion fails to offer an explanation as to why Arthur may have turned into a criminal. Instead it simply describes his narrative as

criminal in nature. This paper, however, shall delve into why Arthur committed these crimes; it is less concerned about the narrative as a genre of black testimony and more concerned with its content and meaning. Lorenzo Greene's book *The Negro in Colonial New England* deals with Arthur in a fashion similar to Andrews. Although Greene recites the entire narrative, he too does not consider in depth why Arthur committed the crimes he did. However, Greene does mention that sex crimes by "Negroes" in New England had a way of making their masters fearful. This seems insufficient, although possibly partly true. This paper will build on Greene's original scholarship to bring it into sharper focus. This view of Arthur's narrative as lacking in historical importance make Arthur's actions further seem meaningless, and more importantly lacking in elements of resistance.

This paper also positions Arthur within the time and place of eighteenth-century New England. It employs two main sources, which contrast with one another in terms of their views. William D. Piersen's *Black Yankees* portrays the Northern slave experience as relatively milder than that of the South, which is contributed to the living situation that placed slaves in close contact with white masters. Robert K. Fitts, in his article "The Landscapes of Northern Bondage," directly addresses *Black Yankees*. Fitts argues that the Northern slaves living situations were indeed damaging, creating difficult situations for them. When one examines Arthur's narrative with regards to these two works, it seems that issue of Northern bondage conditions is best seen as a mix of these two dominant ideas. There are certain pieces of information within Arthur's narrative which support Piersen's argument, and thus it will be used.

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However, Fitts’ argument will be used more in explaining Arthur’s actions for the harsh conditions demonstrated within Fitts’ argument help explain Arthur’s action more effectively.

The paper will also examine theories of rape, particularly and interracial rape. “The Racial Patterning of Rape,” by Scott J. South and Richard B. Felson, discusses the “conflict model” with regard to why interracial rape occurs. This model frames rape as a way for black Americans to strike revenge against their white oppressors. Other historical sources, such as Eldridge Cleaver’s autobiography show that this way of thinking was not necessarily a new topic. Despite the fact that Arthur’s narrative fits within the conflict model an attempt will be made to look at it from other perspectives, such as examining the relationship with his mistress, which may or may not support the conflict theory.

This paper seems not to disagree with previous scholars, as there will be the blending of opposing scholarly works. Arthur’s narrative simply does not lend itself to the usage of one perspective as it is both vague and complex. Differences can be seen within the actual topic of Arthur as his narrative is built upon and an image is constructed which explains his extreme act of resistance to his condition within slavery. Thus, Arthur will be taken out of the narrow context of an unusual slave narrative or unexplainable criminal slave; the paper constructs him as a mere human being. When one considers the many events in Arthur’s life which led him to commit rape, this act becomes a symbol of resistance against the many factors of oppression within his life.

In order to understand Arthur and how he resisted white oppression, it is important to first examine his narrative. The official title of the narrative is The Life, and dying Speech of Arthur, a Negro Man; Who was executed at Worcester, October 20, 1768. For a Rape committed on the body of one Deborah Metcalfe. The majority of the narrative describes Arthur’s criminal rant but

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it begins by briefly mentioning his time in bondage. Arthur states that he and his enslaved mother lived with his master Richard Godfrey and his wife. Early on in the narrative, Arthur explains how his master was generally kind, and even taught him how to read and write. However, it was Arthur’s mistress who treated him cruelly, and ultimately was the reason why he ran away. There are no details provided as to the nature of their relationship, but this important fact will be examined as one attempts to uncover motive for his act of resistance. Arthur then goes on to describe his “notorious deeds” in detail which include running away from his master, stealing, drinking and fornicating. His tale includes running away from authorities multiple times and resisting arrest until his execution. Arthur also takes shelter with Native Americans and even travels outside of the country to the West Indies, which shows that he was living outside the realm of the eighteenth-century New England society.

To make sense of Arthur’s resistance, it is important to understand the landscape of his bondage. Arthur was born into slavery in Taunton, Massachusetts in 1747. In the middle of the seventeenth-century, blacks constituted only 3% of the total New England population. This 3% of the population was not, however, characteristic of the entire region, and instead formed clusters near large cities and coastal towns such as Boston. Although the majority of blacks in Massachusetts lived in Boston, a large proportion lived in other counties such as Suffolk, Essex, and Plymouth. William Piersen argues that the clustering of blacks in these areas led to the development of a black subculture. By simply examining these areas, one can see that Arthur

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7 Arthur, “The Life, and dying Speech of Arthur, a Negro Man; Who was Executed at Worcester, October 20, 1768. For a Rape Committed on the Body of one Deborah Metcalfe” (Boston: Milk-Street, 1768).
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Piersen, Black Yankees, 14.
12 Ibid. 15.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
may have taken part within this subculture as Taunton is located within Bristol County, which
according to a population map, had around 25 black slaves within its area around the time of
Arthur's birth. Although the population was not as large as some of the other Massachusetts
cities, it certainly could have provided Arthur with some sense of community, sparing him from
living in complete isolation.

It is equally important to examine slave life within the households of their masters. Most
scholars agree that slaves in New England generally lived within their owners houses. However, how this shared space affected the lives of slaves draws debate as cases have been
made which portray slave life both as a rather benign lifestyle and as physically and mentally
harsh. The special case of Arthur and his narrative further this debate as he seems to embody
both view points. Arthur mentions in his narrative that his relationship with his master was
genuinely amiable. This comment is supported by William Piersen who states that slaves and
masters built strong relationships when slaves were around their masters since birth, as was
Arthur's case. Other aspects of Arthur's slave life are supported by Piersen's research such as
the fact the Arthur knew how to read and write which was seen as a common practice within
New England at the time. The practice of learning how to read and write can also be connected
with the fact the Northern slaves were said to have expected certain rights from masters. Certain
slaves expected not be flogged or sold by masters who they had been with for an extended period
of time. Given how Arthur briefly describes his relationship with his master it seems that many
of the characteristics of New England bondage are supported by his narrative. However, there
were other factors at play which depict a darker picture of New England slavery.

15 Ibid 16-17.
16 Fitts, "Landscape of Northern Bondage," 55.
17 Piersen, Black Yankees, 26.
18 Ibid, 28.
19 Ibid, 30.
Arthur’s narrative does not completely support all of Piersen’s conclusions in *Black Yankees*. For example, slaves were said to develop strong loyalty to their masters, and although Arthur says their relationship was civil, his actions certainly do not suggest any real loyalty to his master. Instead, they show a complete disregard for his master’s wishes, and a refusal to be a part of the common order of the eighteenth century New England society. Further, a noted practice in New England was the separation of a newborn slave from his mother who was also in bondage. However, Arthur seems to have been with his mother throughout his time in bondage. This practice was meant to integrate slaves into their white master’s family and hurt the development of an independent black family. This rare relationship with his mother must be noted as it presents another example of how Arthur’s life differed from the majority of New England slaves. Although Arthur’s life seemed to resemble that of a typical New England slaves, his actions distanced himself from this general depiction. Thus, other factors must be taken into account as one examines why Arthur resisted this seemingly comfortable lifestyle.

Other evidence shows that the New England slave system was truly oppressive, thereby truly contradictory to the generally civil institution which Piersen and Arthur’s narrative suggest. Arthur’s life can be constructed into a fuller picture as one sees that the life in bondage was not one which created equal relationships and treated slaves as humans. This oppression is rooted within the fact that slaves shared space with their masters. Sharing this space, argues Robert K. Fitts, allowed masters to exercise complete control and thus denied slaves the ability to form an independent identity and culture. It must be noted that Fitts’ work is based in Narragansett, Rode Island which had a slightly higher number of slaves than Arthur’s Bristol County.

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21 Ibid.
22 Fitts, "Landscapes of Northern Bondage," 57.
However, Narragansett is situated in close proximity to Bristol County. Essentially, the lack of research in this area allows for Fitts’ study to apply to Arthur’s narrative.

Living in Bristol County furthered a slave’s inability to create their own culture. Thus, living with their masters further crippled slaves’ chances of forming an identity outside of that of a slave. Another way of examining the effect of these living situations on slaves is to conclude that slaves found it very difficult to resist their bondage. Obtaining a culture and identity which differed from a slave status was a popular form of resistance, and was seemingly non-violent. However, if Arthur was unable to create this culture, other means of resistance may have seemed more appealing to him. Seeing as he could not resist the system of slavery, Arthur had to go outside of the system in order to truly resist in eighteenth-century New England.

Essentially, a New England slave’s time in bondage could be defined by the experience of intense isolation. Although they lived in close proximity with their master and his family, slaves were treated as complete outsiders. Fitts argues that slaves were incorporated into society as “aliens,” who can be defined as people who lack kinship ties within their society.\(^{23}\) This status was assigned slaves in order for masters to be able to keep a distance from their slaves who they shared so much space with.\(^{24}\) Slaves were then continuously marked as inferior, both physically and mentally, as they were given special clothes, tattoos, and names.\(^{25}\) The intended outcome of labeling was for slaves to accept their inferior status and become submissive. Thus, New England slaves were part of a contradictory system which forced them to be in close contact with white society while making them complete outsiders. This dehumanizing, contradictory system seemed to be enhanced for Arthur as he seemed completely isolated with his mother being the only other slave within the household. Despite an overall bleak situation, this New England slave

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
system seemed to allow certain freedoms which gave slaves control and temporary freedom from bondage.

New England segregation was filled with flaws which allowed slaves freedom. Church services serve as a great example of this as they were meant as one of the most impressive means by which masters could internalize the feeling of submissiveness within their slaves. Slaves were forced to sit in the upper balconies of churches, away from their white owners.\(^{26}\) Here they were completely away from their master’s surveillance, free to socialize with other slaves as they ignored the sermon’s which attempted to reinforce their degraded status.\(^{27}\) Outside of churches, slaves found even more ways to separate themselves from their masters. Slaves were said to congregate at free black’s households where information could be passed along and events planned.\(^{28}\) There is even evidence which also points to slaves being able to congregate in taverns.\(^{29}\) Finally, a less formal way of escaping masters was to meet in wooded areas surrounding their master’s house.\(^{30}\) Thus, there certainly were outlets for New England slaves to experience life outside of bondage, and even transmit ideas which could challenge their status as a slave. In a world which balanced intense surveillance and control with closeness to white society and freedom, it comes as no surprise that frustration could build and manifest itself in violent means.

Understanding the context which Arthur lived in eighteenth-century New England provides certain understandings for his actions. However, it is clear that although most New England slaves experienced these same conditions, they all did not commit the same acts Arthur did. In fact, there are only a few narratives which specifically tell of slaves committing such acts

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 61.  
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 62.  
\(^{28}\) Ibid.  
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 65.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
in New England. These include *Sketches of the Life of Joseph Mountain*, by Joseph Mountain, and *The Last Words and Dying Speech of Edmund Fortis, a Negro Man*, by Edmund Fortis. Comparing their stories with Arthur's narrative shows the differences which led these two to commit the act of rape. Ultimately their narratives do not serve as true acts of resistance against slavery, furthering the ability of Arthur's narrative as a symbol of true resistance.

Edmund Fortis' narrative tells of a slave who committed acts of stealing, gambling and drinking throughout his entire time in bondage. Edmond eventually found his way to New England as he ran away from consecutive masters and seemed to be living the life of a free man with a wife and kids. However, he too committed the act of rape in Exeter, Maine. While the majority of his time in bondage was spent in the much different slave system of Virginia, Edmund Fortis' narrative still speaks possibly to the social structures which were at play within New England. Although not in bondage at the time of his crime, Fortis lived within New England, certainly experiencing racism and segregation while living a different life from the southern plantations, creating tensions and frustrations similar to that which Arthur could have felt. However, Fortis still was not under bondage and even experienced life outside of the United States as he sailed to England during his time as a runaway. Thus, his life was markedly different from Arthur's in that he experienced possibly more freedoms and lived a different life under bondage.

Joseph Mountain was born a slave near Philadelphia but soon was forced to travel to London by his master which led to him committing acts of stealing and drinking with a group of other criminals, both black and white. When he finally found his way back to the United States,

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31 Edmund Fortis, "The Last Words and Dying Speech of Edmund Fortis, a Negro Man" (Exeter, ME: N.P, 1795).
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
he landed in the New England Boston area and raped a woman in New Haven, Connecticut. Mountain’s narrative speaks possibly to the social forces with New England in the same way Fortis’ does. However, the freedom’s he experienced were even greater than Fortis.’ Thus, these two narratives further the understanding of Arthur’s narrative as they show that certain forces created situations where rape could happen in New England, while making Arthur a true example of resistance towards these forces as he was in bondage for a longer period of time and truly experienced the bondage conditions of eighteenth century New England.

Although all of these narratives consist of accounts which tell of many different crimes being committed, the crime of rape deserves the most focus as it can possibly be considered the truest act of resistance against slavery. Thus, it is important to examine rape within American history to truly understand Arthur’s act and the meaning attached to it. Rape has been a part of American society for its entire history, with its definition being changed to fit certain perceptions of gender and race relations. The racial implications of rape within the eighteenth century play an important role in viewing Arthur’s actions.

In the seventeenth-century, before Massachusetts had a large slave population, rape was viewed with the view that only white people could be committing these crimes. White males were then allowed to dominate females within this society. This led the view that rape was simply not happening despite the filing of reports by women as white men maintained control within this patriarchal society. Massachusetts was also based within Puritan beliefs which stressed purity and chastity. Men in power, thus, had further reason to disregard accusations of rape within Massachusetts as their belief system disapproved of sexual deviance. This view of

35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
rape can be seen outside of Massachusetts also, as accounts from seventeenth century Virginia further show the difficulty women faced in bringing their rapist to justice.\textsuperscript{38} Clearly, Arthur's crime was viewed as heinous and threatening as he was swiftly hung in order to possibly deter other black men from doing the same.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, the increased profitability from slavery and the subsequent increased number of slaves in New England changed definitions and perspectives on rape.

White society's view of rape did not change, however, when the perpetrator remained white and committed a crime against a black female. Rape was again made to seem like it did not happen and that there was always sexual consent.\textsuperscript{40} However, New England was the first to signal change in rape prosecutions. Perhaps because of their strong belief in gendered morality, a high number of cases in the eighteenth century prosecuted males for sexual attacks upon white women.\textsuperscript{41} The fact that New England differed from the rest of the U.S in their sensitivity towards rape cases must be noted for this was the environment Arthur lived in. The increased prosecution of rape cases is also rooted within the racialization of rape. Forty percent of identifiable sexual assaults incidents were said to be committed by blacks, a disproportionate number.\textsuperscript{42} The reason for such a high number is rooted in white fears of black slaves, which led to the myth of black hyper sexuality.\textsuperscript{43} As time progressed the prosecution of rape became divided not only along racial lines, but also along class lines. Without fear that their attacker had power within their community, female victims were especially likely to not give in to their attacker's threats and

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\textsuperscript{39} Arthur, The Life and Dying Speech.
\textsuperscript{41} Sharon Block, Rape and Sexual Power in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 81.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 207.
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more likely to report them. This was especially true for attackers who were of slave status as they held the lowest possible status within white communities. Thus, slaves were especially likely to be the face of rapists within white society as their skin color left them hurt by rules keeping slaves subordinate and their social status non-existent.

For Arthur to commit the act of rape during this time period means his act was a direct threat to white society. The change in definition and prosecution of rape clearly shows the alarm found within the white community over blacks and their perceived ability to challenge white society. Thus, one begins to see the resistance element within Arthur’s act. White society clearly saw rape as a threat to their power and took means to make sure blacks would be prosecuted under stricter terms than white males would be. Whether or not Arthur raped Deborah Metcalfe in order to directly challenge white society, the act remains at the very least a symbol against the legal and social forces which were being used to enslave him and keep his status as low as possible.

The fact that Arthur’s act was considered a threat to the white slave society of eighteenth-century New England shows the true element of resistance. However, understanding Arthur’s living environment does not truly attempt to uncover why he committed the crime he did. In trying to understand why Arthur committed rape a psychological approach must be taken, which attempts to explain the actions of rapists. Whereas applying these approaches to other criminal rapists has the effect of uncovering certain aspects within a rapist’s life which explain their actions, applying them to Arthur has the effect of truly showing him as a symbol of resistance against the New England slave system. Rapists who were not slaves may have been motivated to commit the crimes they did as a way of resisting forces or events from their past. However, with Arthur, his status as a slave seemed to define him, making his act only able to be explained by

44 Ibid., 99.
his bondage. Thus, as one examines these approaches, one sees his act as a direct response to being a slave. These psychological approaches frame a rapist’s actions within two different types models of “anger rape” and “power rape.” Both of these models provide meaning to Arthur’s actions, while giving his act an element of resistance given the circumstances of his environment.

The idea behind “anger rape” is based completely in the idea of anger as motivation for rape. This act is explained by the rapist describing feelings of great anger leading up to and during the rape. Ultimately, offenders feel that they have been harmed, wronged, put down, or treated unjustly in some way within their life. Although Arthur admits to being treated fairly by his master, the way of life within New England shows that Arthur may have had reason to have had feelings of anger. Another aspect of “anger rape” is the importance of relationships in the rapist’s past which may build feelings of anger or resentment. Specifically, it deals with the fact that the rapist’s actions enact revenge for what he perceives to be wrongs done to him by others, especially women. Thus, it is necessary to examine the women within Arthur’s life in order to further understand his act.

Although Arthur mentions the fact that he had sexual relations with numerous women, two women within his narrative serve as points of interest because of their assumed prominence within his life. These women are Arthur’s mother, who he spent time in bondage with, and Arthur’s mistress, whose relationship to Arthur is barely mentioned. Arthur’s relationship to his mother is questionable within his narrative. She is first mentioned in the beginning of the narrative as Arthur writes of her living with him as a slave within the same household. This is

46 Ibid., 16.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Arthur, *Life and Times*. 
his mother’s only mention, as she is not even mentioned at the end of Arthur’s narrative where he begs for forgiveness and writes of his apologies. Thus, anything regarding Arthur’s relationship towards his mother would be speculation. However, it must be examined in order to understand his actions. The absence of Arthur’s father must also be noted here, for it allows one to draw conclusions with regards to Arthur’s mother. Without his father’s true identity known, the possibility that Arthur’s mother was having sexual relations with her master must be considered. The fact that masters had sexual relations with their female slaves is well understood and documented.\textsuperscript{51} These sexual relations of course led to the conceiving of mixed-race children, who would be deemed of slave status because of their part-black skin tone.\textsuperscript{52} Whether or not Arthur was fathered by his master, is again, speculation. However, if true, it could explain certain things within his narrative such as his ability to navigate his way across the United States, drink in taverns, and have illicit sex for his possible lighter skin color may have gained him access to places other slaves were denied.

One, thus, has to consider this relationship further. Arthur clearly did not show any malice towards his master in his narrative, and thus possibly blamed his mother for certain things within their life. Running away from his mother also shows this lack of a meaningful relationship between the two. Further, if Arthur’s mother was having sexual relations with his master, the ill-treatment Arthur received from his mistress may have been caused by his mother’s relationship. His mistress may still have been enraged and jealous over the situation whether or not Arthur’s mother’s sex with her master was consensual. Thus, there is plenty of reason to believe that Arthur had feelings of anger directed at his mother. All of these help provide reason behind his act through supporting the “anger rape” model. More importantly, all of these reasons are a


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 85.
product of the slave system Arthur was a part of. Thus, although Arthur’s actions can be broken down through psychological perspectives, these perspectives allow one to see the resistance element within his act as his life was defined by slavery throughout.

Another model used to explain why men commit rape is termed “power rape.” This is defined by the rapist’s usage of sex as a means of compensating for underlying feelings of inadequacy.\textsuperscript{53} The rapist further expresses issues of “mastery, strength, control, authority, identity and capability.”\textsuperscript{54} As previously mentioned, feelings of inadequacy could very well be produced within the eighteenth century New England slave system. Arthur’s feelings were completely a product of this environment and thus the usage of “power rape” to describe his actions has the same effect of using “anger rape” for both describe rape as compensating for factors in the rapist’s life which leaves them feeling wronged or powerless within their society. Within this slave society there are other aspects which need to be addressed such as his relationship with his mistress.

Once again, most of the conclusions drawn about Arthur and his mistress will be based upon speculation for Arthur does not mention his mistress to a great extent. However, her mention deserves attention as her ill treatment of Arthur is given as the sole reason for Arthur to runaway.\textsuperscript{55} It remains unclear whether this mistreatment was sexual in nature. However, slaves and mistresses certainly had sexual relations creating tense situations, especially within the close quarters slaves were a part of in New England. Although there seems to be a societal belief that men are unable to be sexually abused by females, it seems that in Arthur’s case there may be reason to believe that some form of sexually based act took place. Within New England, the close contact slaves were living in lent itself to certain situations which were sexual in nature.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Arthur, \textit{A Life and Times}. 
For example, the slave Henry Bruce recalled being asked by his nude mistress to pour water for a bath. \textsuperscript{56} He noted being completely aware of her appearance while she stood completely nude in front of him, ignoring Henry. \textsuperscript{57} These kinds of situations could be seen as very sexual in nature, especially to an adolescent. Thus, while sexual coercion is certainly a possibility, it seems that Arthur may have also been subject to subtle sexual situations which could have sent confusing signals. While her ill treatment could have been simply unfair treatment, possibly typical physical punishment, the sexual nature of Arthur’s crime leads one to examine his relationship with his mistress from a sexual viewpoint.

While the entire New England slave system, which has been proven to leave slaves feeling powerless, would be evidence enough to support using the “power rape” model, this closer examination of Arthur’s relationship to his mistress also reveals deeper aspects within Arthur’s life which speak to his powerless status. Being sexually abused or manipulated by someone creates a relationship where one holds power over someone else. \textsuperscript{58} Thus, Arthur’s powerless state may have been compounded by his relationship with his mistress. That slavery was an emasculating institution is well understood. However, this idea of mistresses challenging a slave’s manhood furthers the ability of this process to truly take away a male slave’s identity within a deeply entrenched patriarchal society. The ideals which were pushed on to slaves, such as obedience and submission, were also ideals given to women within this society. \textsuperscript{59} Male slaves could be seen as closer to the female sex in this respect, further challenging their male identity. Arthur was unable to exercise control over his mistress, and may have even been controlled by herself, bringing his manhood into question and ultimately leaving him feeling powerless. In a

\textsuperscript{56} Fitts, \textit{Landscapes of Northern Bondage}, 58.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
slaves attempt to build identity, Arthur’s unique relationship with his mistress thus must be addressed within the “power rape” context, regardless of whether or not it was sexual, for the control she exercised over him challenged one of the last way Arthur was able to identify himself as a man.

Arthur’s act of resistance can be understood well enough within the context of New England slavery. However, his act as a form of resistance can be further understood when one examines rape and black experience outside of Arthur’s time period. Two centuries after Arthur’s death, Eldridge Cleaver wrote 1968’s *Soul on Ice*, directly in the midst of the black power movement. This movement represented a critical shift in thinking within the black community, as it expressed ideas of black self-respect and manhood. Ultimately, this movement challenged white social structures and the oppression which the black community faced. Essentially, Cleaver writes of his experiences as a rapist of white women and provides deeper understanding into the psychological perspectives.

Cleaver likens white women to “Ogres” who maintain the last form of control over his ability to be free. Cleaver admits to simply preferring white women over black women at one point in his life, deriving this preference from the indoctrination he had experienced throughout his life which told him that white women were more desirable. Although he equated white women with the evils of white society, Cleaver still had trouble reconciling his desire for white women. He ultimately turned into a rapist, starting by raping black women but “progressing” to white victims which delighted him for he saw his acts as directly countering the long history of white males abusing black females. He even goes as far to say that his act was a way of gaining

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61 Ibid., 14.
“revenge” for the history of white oppression. Cleaver’s explanation allows for the introduction of another model to study rape, known as the “conflict model.” This model explains interracial rape as a means for black rapists to serve up revenge on his white male oppressor. It further goes to use black economic deprivation as reason for this conflict. Although this way of examining economics applies to the twentieth century, it still speaks to the continual oppression blacks faced at the hands of a white society since slavery.

Many are not as introspectively precise as Cleaver was, and it cannot be expected that Arthur had this type of control over his inner-feelings. However, Cleaver allows one to look at Arthur in this introspective style. This concept of the “Ogre” helps to examine Arthur’s relationship with his mistress. His displeasure with her may have stemmed from this inner-turmoil he, and Cleaver felt, towards white women. Possibly being attracted to his mistress, or even engaging in sexual acts with her, may have created this conflict and ultimately led to the raping of Deborah Metcalfe, a white woman. It also seems that it is no coincidence that his time as a runaway slave, where he had no master, ended with this act of attempting to conquer the “Ogre,” serving as the capstone for his exercise in freedom. Both Arthur and Cleaver were caught within this contradictory world, and perhaps both lusted after white women at one point their lives which resulted in the raping of white women. Cleaver’s insight into the mind of black males leaves one with a better understanding of Arthur’s actions and ultimately shows the resistance element as black men seem to have continued to feel the oppression of a white society, and manifest these feelings in sexually violent methods.

The rape of Deborah Metcalfe by Arthur sent a direct message to the Massachusetts area of Taunton County that slaves had the ability to act outside of their masters oppressive forces.

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62 Ibid.  
64 Ibid.
While rape will always be considered heinous, it still continues to serve as an act of resistance. After constructing an image of Arthur’s possible experience in slavery he is instantly seen in a fuller light than in the works of Greene and Andrews, especially after using psychological models to explain the rape. Humanity is also given to Arthur as his resistance provides meaning behind his actions. Without examining any of these aspects, it would be impossible to truly understand the resistance element behind his actions as the act of rape can be easily disregarded because of its terrible consequences. Thus, by doing so, one can look at Arthur’s actions with a different perspective; that of a slave who broke out of his bondage and acted out against his environment in a way which directly resisted all that the New England slave system intended on instilling within their slaves.
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