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Abstract 1 – CNF

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In *The Only Girl in the Car* Kathy Dobie vividly portrays her own emergence from adolescence to young adulthood through her graphic sexual experiences. Struggling to define herself and find a place within her family, Dobie sought comfort and companionship in relationships with men. Because of her strong feelings of isolation and lack of any self esteem, these relationships were purely sexual. *The Only Girl in the Car* is written with graphic, literal details of Dobie's sexual exploitation when she was a very young girl.

The story is riveting. From the first paragraph where Dobie describes herself as “an unhealthy, crooked, runt among golden lion cubs”, to the scene in the car where she has sex with four young men in order to make her “boyfriend” happy, Dodie captures the misplaced sexual promiscuity of a young girl trying to define herself, in a lonely and overwhelming world.

One aspect of this story that puzzles me is the lack of any evidence of guilt. While common human emotions such as loneliness, lust, and the desire to “fit in” are thoroughly developed, no issues of guilt ever arise. Dodie offers no excuses for her wanton sexuality. She gives no explanation, no resolution, for her promiscuous acts. She also does not appear to place the blame on anyone else. There is evidence of her poor relationship with her family, but she doesn't place any guilt for her actions on her parents.

Dodie also does not seem to want an admittance of guilt or an apology from the men who abused her. She writes of her anger when she was a girl, and how she wanted to expose the cruel boys for the inexperienced virgins that they were, but she never explores what role these men were playing in the action, and what inadequacies of their own led them to seek the sexual attention of a teen age girl.

Perhaps the lack of guilt is in accordance with the overall literal tone of the story. Maybe Dodie recognizes the tendency for human needs to prevail over our sense of decency and sees these deviant acts for what they were, the fulfillment of basic human sexual and emotional needs. Maybe the issues of blame and guilt for what happened to her in her adolescence would a be a story unto itself.