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Editors Introduction

Sam Stuart-Booth

The second volume of *Studies in Testimony* returns to the theme of Latin American testimonial literature (*testimonio)*. Examined by Anna Forne in the first volume, in this issue Laura Webb addresses the definition of *testimonio* as well as 'the reasons for the assumption of hybridity in Latin American literature and the problems created by this assumption when discussing testimonial production, and the wider issue of labelling *testimonio* as a genre. Clíona Hensey, in her article '"Ghostly encounters": Haunting as postcolonial testimony in Zahia Rahmani's Moze and Saliha Telali's Les enfants des harkis', examines these two texts by daughters of harkis ('indigenous Algerian men who served as auxiliary soldiers in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence') in order to highlight the 'multivocal nature of these works', which 'ultimately positions the reader as an active witness who is called upon to take up the dialogues which are often foreclosed or interrupted within the confines of the texts.'

The third and fourth articles of this issue examine the subject of rape memoirs. Firstly is Marta Bladek's 'Moving On by Going Back: Spatial Figuration of Trauma and Recovery in Susan J. Brison's *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*'. Bladke's article '[i]nformed by a close reading of Aftermath [...] puts forward a spatial figuration of trauma as the paradox of simultaneous departure and return, taking leaving of and coming back to the site of a violation, metaphorically and literally.' Amanda Spallacci in her article entitled 'Rape Testimony in Contemporary Memoir' argues that there is a need to nuance the methodology used to read trauma narratives. Ultimately suggesting that: 'Testimonies about rape in memoirs demonstrate that memoirs about rape unsettle and dismantle hegemonic narratives, as well as create alternative ways of talking about and understanding testimonies about rape.' The two book reviews by Katherine Burn are written about Professor Alexander Laban Hinton's monologues 'The Justice Façade: Trials of Transition in Cambodia' and 'Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer'.

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Testimonio, the Assumption of Hybridity and the Issue of Genre

Laura Webb

Testimonio is a genre of literature whose indistinct boundaries have always proved problematic in terms of definition and criticism. In fact, the very definition of *testimonio* as a genre in and of itself is contended by the author. The subject of hybridity is a significant factor in this definition of genre and in particular in the restriction caused by the attribution of specific generic elements or literary concepts to one particular country or region. Whilst the term refers to Spanish and Latin American works in particular, the genre itself is by no means exclusive to these countries. There is no direct Western counterpart to *testimonio* although there are parallels to be drawn with Holocaust survivor literature and close links to the genre of autobiography. However, there is certainly a distinction between the two, despite their apparent similarity. The fact that one term has come to encompass a genre of such diversity is one of the major factors which complicate critical consideration of works of literature of this kind.

Many critics have attempted to define *testimonio*, yet these attempts at definition have often served not to demarcate the term but rather to highlight the breadth of its scope. It would appear that the term has a different meaning for different critics at different times.Some, such as Yúdice, have a relatively precise conception of what *testimonio* is:

> Testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasising popular oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experiences as an agent (rather than as a representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history.[1]

[1] George Yúdice, 'Testimonio and Postmodernism', in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 42-57 (p. 44).

Others, for example Beverley, who has written widely on the subject, recognise the variety of forms that *testimonio* may take:

> Testimonio may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, auto-biographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, *novella-testimonio*, nonfiction novel, or "factographic" literature.[2]

Even in these two examples, which are two of the most quoted, a difference in approach is evident. Beverley is concerned with the textual format, whilst Yúdice's definition takes into account other factors which focus on content rather than form. The fact is, the variety of works which may fall under the umbrella term of 'testimonial literature' is so vast that there is no single approach or universally applied method of reviewing this type of literature.

Testimonial literature is not a genre which appeared as an immediate response to one particular event or set of circumstances such as the Holocaust. In fact, works which concern themselves with the 'other' in terms of those who exist outside of the cultural hegemony, are very much a part of Latin American literary history and are often described as examples of *costumbrismo* or *indigenismo.* The main difference between works of this type and those classed as *testimonio* can be found in the terms themselves. Whilst *costumbrista* or *indigenista* literature is descriptive and informative and generally observational, a *testimonio* is a witness account which implies factuality and first-hand experience. In Spanish the term has a strong legal and religious connotation: the direct translation of the word itself means 'testimony', 'evidence', 'statement' or 'proof'[3], and therein lies the distinction. There is a shift in emphasis from the romantic and nostalgic to the political and social, with the added dimension of urgency. The definition offered by Yúdice, cited above, characterises early testimonial works such as *Quarto de Despejo* (Carolina Maria de Jesús, Brazil, 1958) and '*Si me permiten hablar', testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer, Mexico, 1977), that culminated with *Me*

[2] John Beverley, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 31.
[3] Collins Spanish-English Dictionary and Oxford Spanish-English Dictionary definitions.

llamo Rigoberta Menchú Y Así Me Nació La Conciencia (Elisabeth Burgos Dubray, Guatemala, 1983). The latter publication generated much controversy and marked a turning point in the study of Latin American testimonial literature.

Early *testimonio* criticism centred on questions of authorship and literary classification. Gugelberger examines the reasons why *testimonio* was so interesting to critics:

> It was at the crossroads of all the discourses of institutional battles in recent years: postcolonial and/versus postmodern; genre versus non-genre; interest in autobiography; the function of the canon; authenticity/realism; the debates on subalternity; othering discourse; orature/literature; dual authorship; editorial intervention; margin/centre; race/class/gender; feminisms (some apparently unjustifiably declare the testimonio women's discourse); minority discourse; Third world writing; the post-boom novel; Latin Americanism; questions of disciplinarity; and so on.[4]

The *testimonio* allowed previously unheard voices to speak, via an interlocutor in the form of a scribe or editor. These voices were previously unheard because they belonged to people who were lacking in the literary skill and the physical means to take their story to an audience. Such people were considered 'subaltern' i.e. groups of people existing outside of a society's hegemonic system, often because of poverty or ethnic discrimination. Beverley expands this definition of subaltern, claiming that 'testimonio-like texts have existed for a long time at the margins of literature, representing, in particular, those subjects – the child, the "native", the woman, the insane, the criminal, the proletarian – excluded from authorized representation when it was a question of speaking and writing for themselves'.[5] The proliferation and popularity of testimonial novels altered the position of *testimonio*, removing it from the margins of literature. For Lindstrom, this factor alone qualified

[4] Georg M. Gugelberger, 'Introduction: Institutionalization of Transgression: Testimonial Discourse and Beyond, in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 1-22 (p. 7).
[5] John Beverley, 'The Margin at the Centre: On *testimonio*', in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 23-41 (p. 25).

testimonio as a genre in its own right.[6] For Beverley, there were two particular developments which led to the 'sanction' of testimonio as a genre. Firstly, the 1970 decision of Cuba's Casa de las Américas to award a prize in this category in their annual literary contest, and secondly the reception in the late 1960's of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (published 1965) and Miguel Barnet's *Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* (*Biografía de un cimarrón*, published 1966).[7] Gugelberger concurs, stating that 'The genre comes into existence due to the Cuban Revolution, more specifically due to Miguel Barnet's recording of the life story of Esteban Montejo under the title *Biografía de un cimarrón*/*The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* (1966)'.[8]

Gugelberger's statement is somewhat misleading as Barnet did more than simply 'record' the life story of Esteban Montejo. His role was more than that of scribe or editor, and the production of the written text involved a process which Barnet refers to as 'decanting': 'el gestor de la novela-testimonio recoge los relatos de viva voz de sus informantes y luego los trasmite en forma decantada'.[9] This process consists of retaining those elements typical of oral discourse which it is felt lend the work authenticity, such as certain repetitions and conversational phrases, but eliminating those which interrupt the flow of the written text. More controversially, it includes the linking of certain episodes to actual historical events, which often necessitates the chronological re-ordering of the informant's story.

The *testimonio* author strives for factual and historical accuracy, authenticity and aesthetic and literary appeal. The problem is that often each of these components precludes the other. Millay states that 'testimonial narratives gain their authenticity by creating the effect of an eye-witness retelling his or her life story'[10], yet an editing process is necessary in order to make that story aesthetically appealing to a reading audience. This editing process compromises the authenticity of the narrative as highlighted by Beverley when he asks us to note that 'the assumed lack of writing ability or skill on the part of the narrator of the testimonio, even in those cases where it is written instead of narrated orally, also contributes

[6] Naomi Lindstrom, *The Social Conscience of Latin American Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 70.
[7] See note 5 above.
[8] Gugelberger, p. 8.
[9] Miguel Barnet, *La Fuente viva* (Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1983), p. 50.
[10] Amy N. Millay, *Voices from the Fuente Viva: The Effect of Orality in Twentieth-Century Spanish American Narrative* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1995), p. 122.

to the "truth-effect" the form generates'.[11] Moreiras states that whilst 'the attraction of testimonio is not primarily its literary dimension […] it remains true, of course, that the most successful testimonios are those that have a better claim to literary eminence'.[12] Millay goes so far as to claim that Barnet 'ultimately violates oral culture by extracting it from its context and imposing norms of written culture'.[13] So, which is most important – veracity, fidelity to the subject or literary eminence? Criticism of testimonial literature has focused on these elements and the tensions between them. There is a persistent trend amongst critics to evaluate *testimonio* within a solely Latin American context which has led to its comparison, often on tenuous grounds, with magical realism[14], postmodernism, ethnographic novels[15], the traditional epic and the picaresque.[16] It is precisely this desire to define *testimonio* as a uniquely Latin American narrative form that has restricted *testimonio* criticism to aesthetic, literary considerations and questions of authority and authenticity. The experiences of the subjects themselves, the actual content and purposes of these works are rarely considered, if at all. The importance and significance of *testimonio* has been judged in terms of its interest to the academic, intellectual community. The testimonial subjects themselves are subordinated once again by the academic community and the very people to whom their testimony appeals.

However, it would be incorrect to assume that the testimonial subject is entirely at the mercy of the interlocutor. The subject ultimately decides what to tell. Sommer draws attention to the last words of Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio* as an example of this: 'I'm still keeping secret what I think no-one should know. Not even anthropologists or intellectuals,

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[11] Beverley, 1996, p. 27.

[12] Alberto Moreiras, 'The Aura of Testimonio', in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 192-224 (p. 195).

[13] Millay, p. 133.

[14] Beverley references what he terms the 'excruciating detail' Rigoberta Menchú uses to describe the torture and murder of her brother and mother by the Guatemalan army, claiming it is 'a form of figuration that gives these episodes a hallucinatory and symbolic intensity different from the matter-of-fact narration one expects from testimonio. One could say this is a kind of testimonial expression or "magic realism"' (1993: 81) Sklodowska claims it is Barnet's perception of his subject Montejo that 'resembles the construction of the so-called magical realist narrative in that it frames the "other" as fantastically exotic' (1996: 93).

[15] Millay claims it is 'the ambiguous play between ethnography and literature that canonized *Biografía* as a revolutionary text' (1995: 149).

[16] Beverley notes an 'affinity with the picaresque novel' and how 'the narrator in testimonio […] speaks for or in the name of a community or group, approximating in this way the symbolic function of the epic hero' and offers a definition of *testimonio* as a 'nonfictional, popular-democratic form of epic narrative' (1996: 73-74).

no matter how many books they have, can find out all our secrets'.[17] There is a sense here of an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. The subaltern subject needs the skills and status of the intermediary who in turn attempts to represent the subject but often according to his or her own interpretation and personal agenda. Beverley suggests that *testimonio* is a form of 'global "alliance politics" of the left' which allows subaltern classes or social groups to form coalitions with intellectuals and professionals.[18] He goes on to suggest that even criticism and 'deconstruction' of the *testimonio* 'is still to give testimonio in effect status as a literary text comparable to, say, Rousseau's *Confessions*'.[19] This attitude based on the premise that there is no such thing as bad publicity overlooks the difficulties posed by the consumption of *testimonio* as either literary or documentary which has often led to it being discredited from both perspectives. Sklodowska makes the point that:

> By establishing an explicit interplay between factual and fictional, between aesthetic aspirations to literariness and scientific claims to objectivity, testimonio has consistently defied the critics by departing from a traditional system of assumptions about truth and falsity, history and fiction, science and literature.[20]

Rather than considering the ways in which *testimonio* defies criticism, critics have seemed stubbornly determined to interpret *testimonio* according to established disciplinary boundaries: ethnographical, sociological, Latin-American literary etc. rather than adopting an interdisciplinary approach. The focus on the tensions between author and subject and between fiction and fact has led critics to view *testimonio* somewhat unfavourably, as demonstrated in the language used by Millay when she writes that 'Writers of testimonial novels share with anthropologists the desire to faithfully represent non-Western cultural traditions. They invoke native voices as a means of reproducing life stories that purport to represent collective reality. *Testimonios* masquerade as scientific-discourses and appeal to

[17] Doris Sommer, 'No Secrets', in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 130-157 (p. 135).
[18] John Beverley, *Against Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 90.
[19] Ibid. p.91.
[20] Elzbieta Sklodowska, 'Spanish American Testimonial Novel: Some Afterthoughts', in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 130-157 (p. 85).

Western audiences'.[21] That *testimonio* 'purports' or 'masquerades' suggests, of course, that it is ultimately untrustworthy, a sentiment echoed by Kerr when she states: 'that documentary or testimonial novels are inherently duplicitous, in the way that narrative literature is itself always double or divided, may well be evident'.[22] Because these texts do not conform, they are regarded with suspicion and ultimately rejected.

The dismissal of *testimonio*

Gugelberger confidently asserts on the opening page of his collection of essays on testimonial discourse in Latin America that 'obviously the euphoric "moment" of the testimonio has passed'.[23] In what way has it passed? According to Gugelberger, it is the shift in its position from margin to centre.[24] Viewed in this way, it is the sanctioning and canonisation of *testimonio* of a genre which ultimately renders it impotent, echoing Gayatri Spivak's polemical question of whether the subaltern can speak at all[25] Beverley interprets Spivak's argument thus:

> If the subaltern could speak- that is, speak in a way that really *mattered* to us, that we would feel compelled to listen to, then it would not be subaltern. Spivak is saying, in other words, that one of the things being subaltern means is not mattering, not being worth listening to.[26]

It would appear that upon producing a work of *testimonio* and entering into the literary canon and academic discourse, the testimonial subject surpasses his/her position of subalternity and in effect, loses his/her 'otherness', which is the very quality which makes the work so interesting to academics. If the subaltern subject is elevated from his/her

[21] Millay, p.166.
[22] Lucille Kerr, *Reclaiming the Author: Figures and Fictions from Spanish America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 47.
[23] Gugelberger, p. 1.
[24] Ibid, p. 2.
[25] Gayatri Chakavortry Spivak questioned the ability of hegemonic discourse to represent the subaltern other in her seminal work entitled 'Can the Subaltern speak?' (in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 271-313.
[26] Beverley, (2004), p. 82.

marginalised position, then he/she can no longer be representative of the people or situation he/she hopes to represent. This representativity is an essential element of testimonial writing and is what distinguishes *testimonio* from autobiography and ethnographic literature. Beverley acknowledges the use of 'I' as the 'dominant, formal aspect of the testimonio'[27] and refers to its status as 'what linguists call a shifter – a linguistic function that can be assumed indiscriminately by anyone'.[28] The 'I' in the text is a real person, representative of a wider group of people who appeal directly to the reader. This is important because, as stated by Nance, the ultimate aim of *testimonio* is 'not only to educate readers about injustice, but to persuade those readers to act'.[29]

In the opening passages of Rigoberta Menchú's 1983 *testimonio*, *Me llamo Rigoberta y así me nació la conciencia*,[30] the narrator, Rigoberta claims that her *testimonio* is the testimony of her people, the story of 'all poor Guatemalans'. Beverley disputes this, raising the point that her particular situation was neither typical or representative.[31] In fact, it has been claimed that in her quest to perform as a representative, aspects of her story have been altered to fit; others invented and still more left out.[32] The insinuation that there is something inherently untrustworthy in *testimonio* is apparent once again. In Menchú's case, it is the suggestion that the testimonial subject might attempt to intentionally manipulate the reader in order to achieve a specific purpose or in support of her claims or cause. This is a direct result of viewing *testimonio* with an anthropological or ethnographical bias, and with a focus on what the *testimonio* does for us as readers and critics, and how we can analyse it within an already established framework. When the established framework has proven to be insufficient, rather than recognising *testimonio* as a new kind of literature requiring broader critical analysis from a variety of disciplines as this thesis contends, it has instead resulted in the premature dismissal of *testimonio* as a 'moment' in literary history.

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[27] Beverley, (1989), p. 28.
[28] Ibid, p. 35.
[29] Kimberley A. Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice?: Trauma Narrative and Social Action in Latin American Testimonio* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), p. 19.
[30] Menchú was a Guatemalan political activist who told her story to the journalist and anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos Dubray. Menchú went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Her testimonio has been the subject of several works that have sought to undermine the credibility of her testimony and to disprove the 'facts' her testimony claims. Elisabeth Burgos-Debray and Menchu, Rigoberta, *Me llamo Rigoberta y así me nació la conciencia* (Barcelona: Argos Vergara, 1983).
[31] Beverley, 1995, p. 227.
[32] David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

When *testimonio* is referred to as a genre, there is an expectation that all works belonging to that genre have essential characteristics in common. Cairns states that 'every genre can be thought of as having a set of primary or logically necessary elements which in combination distinguish that genre from every other genre'.[33] Whilst acknowledging that every genre has multiple distinguishing traits which are not necessarily shared by each exemplar, Fowler states definitively that 'every work of literature belongs to at least one genre. Indeed, it is sure to have a significant generic element'.[34] The Oxford English Dictionary defines genre as 'a particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterised by a particular form, style, or purpose' (OED 2013). The challenge posed by *testimonio* is that it is difficult, if not impossible to identify the 'significant generic element' to which Fowler refers.

Testimonial works do not follow one particular form or style and often do not share the same purpose. Earlier testimonial works were easier to group as a genre as they were similar in many ways and largely conformed to the criteria outlined above. However, this is not true of later and continuing testimonial production. The assimilation of *testimonio* as a genre into the Western canon is restrictive: as Fowler points out, the idea of the canon itself 'implies a collection of works enjoying exclusive completeness'.[35] This is not the case for Latin American testimonial literature which has flourished and evolved in the last two decades in particular. Sklodowska recognised this in 1994 when she wrote:

> Nevertheless, seeing testimonio as a seamless monument of authenticity and truth deprives it, in my opinion, of the ongoing tension between stories told and remaining to be told. More to the point, perhaps it also diminishes its potential as a forward-looking discourse participating in an open-ended and endless task of re-writing human experience.[36]

[33] Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), p. 6.
[34] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 18-20.
[35] Fowler, p. 214.
[36] Sklodowska, p. 98.

It is precisely the 'tension' referred to by Sklodowska and other uncontainable, indefinable elements of *testimonio* from which critics must not shy away. Not only the tension between stories told and remaining to be told, but the tension between truth and fact, between literary and non-literary, and between remembering and forgetting.

There is an 'extraliterary' element to *testimonio* that loses its force in the hands of *testimonio* criticism, according to Moreiras.[37] He identifies this 'extraliterary' element as solidarity between the reader/critic and the testimonial subject - a solidarity that he claims is elusive at best and is continually threatened by attempts at literary representation.[38] Moreiras warns that 'the testimonial subject, in the hands of the Latinamericanist cultural critic, has a tendency to become epistemologically fetishized precisely through its (re)absorption into the literary system of representation',[39] and that *testimonio* has come to be a Latinamericanist 'aesthetic fix'.[40] These hypotheses depend upon the relationship between the subaltern subject and the critic or consumer, but what if the aim of *testimonio* is not solidarity between the testimonial subject and the critic, not a hierarchical relationship but a linear relationship between the testimonial subject and those they represent? Beverley acknowledges that 'that question, the way in which subaltern groups themselves appropriate and *use* testimonio [...] has not been addressed adequately in the discussion on testimonio that has gone on among ourselves in the metropolitan academy'.[41]

Initial definitions of *testimonio* are a useful starting point for identifying examples of contemporary testimonial literature in Argentina. They are, however, inadequate criteria against which to evaluate contemporary *testimonio* further. This is due, not least, to the inevitable evolution of other disciplines which are so intimately tied to the study of testimony, such as memory studies, trauma studies, psychoanalysis and literary criticism. Memory studies in particular is a rapidly expanding field, with the introduction of relatively new concepts such as post-memory (Hirsch 1992), prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004) and multi-directional memory (Rothberg 2009). These new ways of exploring memory both influence the way we read and interpret testimonies and are themselves influenced by new forms of testimonial production - there is a symbiotic and ever-evolving relationship

[37] Moreiras, pp. 204-4.
[38] Ibid, p. 198.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Beverley, (1995), p. 281.

between the representation and memory of events and the study of these representations and memories. This renders it almost impossible to establish a stable and static definition of *testimonio*, as all *testimonios* are the representation of events and are reliant upon memory and personal experience. This is true regardless of the 'type' of *testimonio*, whether it is a fact- or interview- based *testimonio*, or a fictional memoir. *Testimonio*s are inextricably bound to and influenced by a number of variable factors, which include but are not limited to: the nature of the events testified to; the motivation of the author; literary styles/movements/trends; censorship; cultural background/heritage/history/traditions; knowledge/skill/ability of the author; means/country of publication. Each of these factors in turn is similarly neither static nor stable. Therefore, any definition of *testimonio* must be fluid.

Despite a change in times, in literary trends and knowledge in related fields, *testimonio* criticism has not evolved and early conceptualizations of *testimonio* still apply. Given the subject matter upon which *testimonio* is based, it cannot be regarded as a static genre. It is in this regard that the consideration and labelling of *testimonio* as a genre, in and of itself, is restrictive and has actually hindered critical thinking in this area. How are we able to consider and explore new and experimental examples of testimonial literature if we are bound to a set of outdated norms and standards? Crucially, the question must be asked, why has critical theory not evolved as testimonial literature has?

The responsibility for this lies heavily with academia, and those who work with and write about this kind of literature. This thesis proposes several reasons for this. One of those reasons is engendered by the very transformation of testimonial writing itself - as it is no longer constrained within easily recognised boundaries, how can a work be identified as a *testimonio*? The multi-faceted nature of contemporary testimonial works means that they can be difficult to categorise, complicated further by the obvious tensions between truth and fact, history and fiction, and the fusion of genres, sometimes even within one text.

Literary genre, 'outlaw genre', or the ends of literature itself

Testimonio is unquestioningly referred to as a genre, even from its earliest origins. Whilst critics from Miguel Barnet, one of the 'fathers' of testimonial literature, to the most prominent names in testimonial criticism such as Beverley and Gugelberger, deal with the

various intricacies of *testimonio* and the dilemmas posed by *testimonio*, whether it is indeed a genre or not does not enter the discussion. This may be due to the fact that earlier testimonial publications had more cohesive factors making it easier to identify works of this kind as belonging to one particular genre. However, given the diversity which is now to be found in testimonial works, to identify *testimonio* as a genre is contentious at best.

It is clear that *testimonio* is not restricted to literary production. The boundaries between literature, music and art often merge in testimonial production. Renowned former CDCs (*Centros de detención clandestinos*) such as the ESMA Navy Mechanics School in Buenos Aires have been converted into museums and preserved as sites of memory and large-scale public memorials such as the Parque de la Memoria (also in Buenos Aires) demonstrate the variety of ways in which the act of bearing witness is multisensory. Therefore, if *testimonio* is defined by function and the act of bearing witness, rather than form, then *testimonio* cannot be simply a literary genre alone. However, it is not 'antiliterary' or 'against literature' as Beverley posits',[42] and although his term 'extraliterary' seems more apt, it does not apply in the sense in which he employs it, at least not to contemporary *testimonio*. His basis for suggesting these terms is the fact that *testimonio* cannot be considered literary as it traverses two realms which Beverley, amongst others, considers incompatible: the public and the private. That is, the broader social context and the function of the text mean that, for Beverley and his followers, *testimonio* cannot be viewed as a novel or even as literary. This is yet another definition based upon class distinction and social boundaries which contemporary *testimonio* defies. Beverley explains:

> If the novel is a closed and private form in the sense that both the story and the subject end with the end of the text, defining that auto-referential self-sufficiency that is the basis of formalist reading practices, the *testimonio* exhibits by contrast what Jara calls a "public intimacy" (*intimidad pública*) in which the distinction between public and private spheres of life essential in all forms of bourgeois culture and law is transgressed.[43]

[42] Beverley, (1989), p. 25.
[43] Ibid.

Similarly, Beverley's implication that *testimonio* has been 'appropriated by literature' [44] is problematic, as central to this idea is the concept of *testimonio* itself in a subaltern position, similar to or perhaps viewed as an extension of its subject, in a position of weakness, and at risk of being subsumed into or even consumed by the canon. The suggestion here is that *testimonio* is vulnerable, and testimonial works unable to stand alone as works of literature in their own right. Beverley's criticism is preoccupied with the concern that, to consider *testimonio* as literature, jeopardises or negates its political or social function: that the two are indeed incompatible. It appears that this preoccupation with distinguishing between fact and fiction and literary and non-literary genres is a Western issue, projected onto a literature which consistently defies the boundaries that critics have attempted to apply. Critics working within the cultural and social contexts from which *testimonio* is produced, such as Sklodowska and Strejilivich, do not express the same concern that one element precludes another. They seem to understand that the nature of memory and, in particular, of traumatic recollection from which testimonial works are produced, means that they cannot be read through the lens of a single genre. Less concerned with categorising *testimonio*, Strejilevich and Sklodowska emphasise the inconsistencies and incongruities presented by *testimonio*, as Sklodowska explains, 'The discourse of a witness cannot be a reflection of his or her experience, but rather a refraction determined by the vicissitudes of memory, intention, ideology'.[45] The concern that *testimonio* will be subsumed into literature is not relevant to contemporary Argentine *testimonio* for it is literature in its own right, and it is able to hold its own within this category. It is no longer marginalised in the way that *testimonio* was at the time critics such as Beverley were writing. However, it remains indefinable in terms of generic classification. If it transgresses the laws of culture and literature, and is literary but not a literary genre, is it perhaps an 'out-law' genre?

A literary out-law?

Kaplan includes testimonial literature in her list of 'versions of the discourse of situation: expansions or revolutions of generic boundaries that rework and challenge conventional

[44] Ibid.
[45] Sklodowska, p. 379.

notions of critic and author'.[46] Whilst Kaplan's discussion of genre is primarily focused upon a feminist interpretation of autobiographical practice (incidentally, the kind of approach that this paper rejects in terms of *testimonio* criticism and the practice of viewing *testimonio* through one particular lens such as feminist discourse or exile literature), the points that she raises which address the inadequacy of genre boundaries, or their inability to encompass or contain certain literary works is relevant. It is important to note that Kaplan does make reference to 'expansions or revolutions of generic boundaries', recognising the restrictive nature of generic classification. Kaplan draws on Derrida to emphasise her point that genre imposes limits:

> As soon as the word "genre" is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: "Do", "Do not" says "genre," the word "genre," the figure, the voice, or the law of genre…. Thus, as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity.[47]

Therefore, if genre is law, and *testimonio* defies this law, then it satisfies the criteria for Kaplan's notion of an out-law genre. The problem of classification persists, however, and Kaplan's definition falls short as even within its description of an 'out-law' or 'counter-law' genre, there is the implication that *testimonio* is a coherent, cohesive body of work, which it is not. To describe *testimonio* as any sort of genre, even an out-law genre, still binds it to a set of norms or 'lines of demarcation,' to quote Derrida. There is an expectation set by the term itself, and as this thesis demonstrates, *testimonio* can and does take many different shapes and forms and consistently challenges, thwarts and denies attempts at classification. However, classification must not be confused with recognition. Whilst *testimonio* may not be easily classified, it does not follow that without generic norms and boundaries it is impossible to recognise a work of *testimonio*. At least not if it is the function of the text that is considered, as this thesis suggests should be the case.

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[46] Caren Kaplan, 'Resisting Autobiography: Out-law Genres and Transitional Feminist Subjects', in *De/Colonizing the Subject*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Warson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 115-138 (p. 120).
[47] Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. by Avital Ronell, *Critical Enquiry*, 7 (1980), 55-81 (p. 56).

To analyse literature without or outside the framework that Kaplan describes as 'Western literary structures'[48] is challenging, but it also enables and is perhaps a prerequisite to the expansion of the study of *testimonio* and other works which defy established norms. It is particularly pertinent to the study of *testimonio* which is not restricted to literary production and therefore cannot be considered a solely literary phenomenon. Bearing witness assumes many forms and an exploration into and acceptance of this fact paves the way for greater understanding of post-traumatic literary and artistic production. This understanding is not focused upon how this production fits into rigid, prescribed, predominantly Western structures. It is instead open and interdisciplinary in nature, reflecting the intricacies of this particular type of production and the inter-relationship between personal experience, politics, cultural background, history, memory, social context and the many other factors which both influence and are influenced by testimonial production. In its rejection of genre, which, according to Derrida, risks 'impurity, anomaly or monstrosity',[49] and its challenge to conventional notions of critic and author as stated by Kaplan, does *testimonio* then herald the end of literature?

Dislocation, transgression, hybridization and the ends of literature

Attempts by critics to locate *testimonio* within a predominantly western literary framework have proven divisive at best and futile at worst. It is often described in negative, even destructive terms. Levinson goes so far as to state that *testimonio* 'dislocates literature and indicates its passing',[50] whilst for Maier, analysis of testimonial literature can only take place within a postmodern context and, in particular, within that of the 'collapse of the distinction between elite and mass cultures, collapse of master narratives, fragmentation and decentering of the subject and affirmation of alterity'.[51] Whilst both of these descriptions have merit, each of them fails to recognise that it is precisely within such dislocation and collapse that *testimonio* finds its power. Far from being hindered by dislocation and collapse,

[48] Kaplan, p. 119.
[49] Derrida, p. 56.
[50] Brett Levinson, *The Ends of Literature: The Latin American "Boom" in the Neoliberal Marketplace* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 155.
[51] Linda S. Maier, *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 7.

it finds freedom in them. Levinson cites two clearly defined reasons why *testimonio* is not literature:

> The claim that testimony is irreducible to literature is by now a common one. The assertion is made via two logical premises. One is rather obvious: literature, as a culturally and historically grounded concept/institution, consists of a series of genres (novel, autobiography, poetry, essays, and so on), none of which captures the nature of testimony. The other premise concerns one of literature's modern cultural functions, the production of signs that aid the formation of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. This function, clearly, is resisted rather than adopted by narratives such as Menchú's.[52]

If we accept Levinson's explanation, then perhaps *testimonio* is the end of literature as we know it, at least literature as a privileged, metropolitan, western, bourgeois concept – which is not necessarily a bad thing. However, *testimonio* as interpreted and understood here does not concur with Levinson's theory in regard to what the end of literature actually means. In the introduction to his work. Levinson explains:

> [Similarly] the end of literature does not mean that literature desists. It signifies that literature, which once occupied a privileged position within the institutions of civil society, and therefore within the state itself, must now battle for that rank and legitimacy with other forms of creation, above all, mass and popular culture.[53]

Testimonio certainly does not desist, nor does it do battle for rank and legitimacy with other forms of creation. Rather it incorporates and utilises other forms of creation such as pop music, rock, art, theatre and film. *Testimonio* is not concerned with rank or legitimacy; these matters reflect the concerns of academia, and *testimonio* is a unique form not only of literature but also of expression. The personal and social aspect of *testimonio* is as

[52] Levinson, p. 154.
[53] Levinson, p. 2.

important, if not more so, than any academic value. This is one of the factors which makes *testimonio* criticism so difficult.

Testimonio is inseparable from the personal, political, cultural and social context within which it is produced. Therefore, whilst *testimonio* is discussed in particular as a Latin American phenomenon, in actual fact, the production of *testimonio*, the act of bearing witness is, of course, universal and the observations made here can be applied to other personal, political, cultural and social contexts. This move away from viewing *testimonio* as an essentially Latin American construct is important as it allows works of contemporary Latin American literature to stand alone, free from the constraints of preconceived genres and literary styles. *Testimonio* does not occupy a neat slot somewhere between the Latin American 'Boom' and contemporary postnationalism. In fact, it traverses the boundaries of both these literary genres and others in-between. However, some would argue that the hybrid nature of *testimonio* is inextricable from a Latin American context, that it exists only because of this very same context and history, which in turn is inextricable from a discourse of race, as explained by Lund:

> It is no exaggeration to say that for the past five hundred years, the geographical land-mass that we today call "Latin America" has been theorized as a space that compels writers to produce "mixed" forms and genres. Hybridity (and by extension, Latin America), then, should be precisely that which trumps the racialization of culture by transgressing and overcoming the purism of generic restrictions, static traditionalism, and strict formalism. Moreover, hybridity seems to indicate a decentering and even displacement of the purist standardization and canonization of culturally authentic artifacts established in the name of colonial or national authority.[54]

This paper argues that the hybridity seen in testimonial literature in particular is rather related to the nature of the events themselves that compel authors to write - events which are usually of a traumatic nature, and trauma is by no means confined to Latin America. Therefore, the discourse of race is not central to the notion of hybridity in testimonial

[54] Joshua Lund, *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 4.

literature. We cannot say that it is entirely irrelevant as some *testimonios* are of course concerned with trauma inflicted as a result of racial, ethnic or social biases, such as Menchú's *Me llamo Rigoberta y así me nació la conciencia* or Barnet's *Biografía de un cimarrón*. However, the hybridity seen in testimonial literature, where hybridity is the mixing of genres, does not centre on a discourse of race. Furthermore, the linking of hybridity to racial discourse restrains testimonial criticism in the same way as viewing *testimonio* as purely subaltern production, not least because viewing hybridity as racial discourse establishes the same hierarchical boundaries as viewing *testimonio* as subaltern production.

Literature in general, but *testimonio* in particular, should be judged on its merits and not on the basis of racial, cultural or social status. Lund pays particular attention to Canclini's equation of hybridity with impurity.[55] The idea that literature which mixes genres is somehow impure is imbued with negative connotations that Lund suggests are based on racial biases, with roots in the question of racial purity and intercultural mixing. 'Hybridity' is a term loaded with preconceived ideas, but perhaps most significant amongst them is the notion of culture. Lund states that 'in contemporary humanistic criticism, *hybridity* usually indicates the dynamics and implications (political, aesthetic,) of intercultural mixing *in general*. Yet in Latin Americanist fields, *hybridity* – as the name for a paradigm of culture mixing – stands as the sign of Latin American cultural production *in particular*'.[56]

The hybridity seen in contemporary Latin American literature is not necessarily a mixing of cultures or a direct result of this. It is the mixing of genres, which may be employed intentionally by the author or may be an inherent factor of *testimonio* which necessitates the employment of alternative modes of expression to describe or bear witness to extraordinary events or circumstances. This mixing of genres is not indicative of a mixing of cultures. Nor is it a Latin American phenomenon. If it is taken for granted that hybridity is simply a sign of Latin American cultural production, then the mixing of genres found in testimonial works will not receive the attention it deserves. Perhaps contemporary testimonial production challenges not only the concept of *testimonio*, but also other concepts that have hitherto been closely associated with a Latin American context, including hybridity.

[55] Lund, p. 11.
[56] Ibid, p. 5.

It is clear that defining *testimonio* as a genre, even as a generic variation or type of non-genre such as Kaplan's outlaw genre, or even as a hybrid, is more than problematic. *Testimonio* confounds definition and, in so doing, generates considerable unease amongst critics who situate it within a context of de-centering and collapse, of impurity and anomaly, of the end of literature. The question of genre, and certainly of *testimonio* in particular as a genre, focuses on the stylistic elements of a given work and on academic response to it. This undermines the very foundations of testimonial works which are concerned with social response and impact, perhaps more than any other genre.

Is *testimonio* a genre? Does it matter? For once this question is off the table, we are able to receive *testimonio* as participants, rather than consumers and analysts, for that is what *testimonio* requires of us. This does not, of course, mean that the role of the academic is obsolete. It does mean that this role has to evolve in response to the evolution of the *testimonio*. Part of this role is to understand the circumstances that attend the emergence of *testimonio*. In this respect, academic specialism in a particular field, in this instance Latin American Studies is relevant, but *testimonio* is no longer a strictly Latin American phenomenon, for it has broken the confines of generic restriction and established a definition and its principles extend beyond borders, physical and metaphorical. *Testimonio* is not the story of 'a people' as defined by religious, cultural or geographical criteria, but of 'people'.When this is recognised and accepted, the enduring significance of this type of production, literary or otherwise can be truly appreciated.

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‘Ghostly encounters’: Haunting as postcolonial testimony in Zahia Rahmani’s Moze and Saliha Telali’s Les enfants des harkis

Clíona Hensey

While prescriptive definitions of trauma tend to centre upon individual processes of repression and latent re-enactment, with the transformation of ‘unspeakable’ affect into testimony accordingly proceeding from first-person lived experience, two aspects which complicate the definitions and categories developed by traditional trauma studies, introducing further layers and intersections of painful affect, are the ‘postgenerational’ condition and the legacies of colonialism. In this article, I propose that the stylistic and thematic tropes of haunting which recur in contemporary writing by daughters of *harkis* – indigenous Algerian men who served as auxiliary soldiers in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) – represent a productive mode of processing and testifying to the ‘unfinished business’ associated with colonial histories. In spite of the heterogeneity and generic hybridity of texts published by female descendants of *harkis* between 1993 and 2017, aspects of ghostliness, whether they are employed explicitly as plot devices or appear as implicit allusions to the transgenerational endurance of haunting histories, orient these narratives’ ‘postgenerational’ quests for personal closure and collective justice. As such, this article examines the prevalence – and productive, dialogic potential – of spectres, revenants and the uncanny in literature dealing with the legacy of colonial pasts, through a reading of Zahia Rahmani’s *Moze* (2003) and Saliha Telali’s *Les enfants des Harkis: Entre silence et assimilation subie* (2009). The multivocal nature of these works allows their authors to instigate textual and extratextual dialogues which challenge traditional notions of trauma as both unspeakable and potentially curable through testimony. Modes of haunting are shown to complicate Freudian binarisms, such as mourning and melancholia and acting out and working through, reconfiguring testimony as not simply an individual process of achieving closure, but, rather, a dynamic speech act in which the rules and roles of the testimonial encounter are continually questioned. Such a

revised conception of the testimonial encounter would allow these 'postgenerational' individuals to imaginatively confront their own (inter)subjective relationships to traumatic pasts, while simultaneously revealing the ongoing traumatising post-and neo-colonial power structures which prevent comprehensive dialogues from taking place. The reader is ultimately positioned not simply as the passive recipient of testimony, but rather as an active witness who is called upon to take up the dialogues which are often foreclosed or interrupted within the confines of the texts, transforming one-dimensional, decontextualised forms of bearing witness into more ethically-attuned, historically-situated reciprocal speech acts.

Testimony's postmemorial and postcolonial turns

Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' has been of particular value in addressing the ways in which descendants of individuals who experienced historical traumas process, and potentially 'work through', the tangled strands of individual, familial and collective affect associated with their 'postgenerational' status. As theories of trauma and witnessing have established that testimonial narratives of individual trauma rarely appear as straightforward representations of the original event, but are rather imaginatively re-created in what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub consider to be performative speech acts,[1] members of the postgeneration are similarly engaged in a creative dialogue with the gaps, traces and fragmented stories which they have inherited. In this sense, the 'imaginative investment'[2] which Hirsch identifies as central to this pluralistic dynamic of mnemonic reconstruction implies the presence of elements of distance and mediation, simultaneously recalling and complicating traditional, deconstructionist trauma theory's insistence on the inherent unspeakability of trauma, and the attendant primacy of fictional, non-linear modes of representation. Perhaps most significantly, the analytic frameworks developed around postmemorial narratives of trauma allows us to conceive of models for the delivery and reception of testimony which transcend individualistic notions of bearing witness to, and coming to terms with, trauma. This turn towards considering the interplay between various

[1] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 5.
[2] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*: *Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 247.

levels and processes of memory beyond theorisations of individual responses to traumatic events has played an important role in foregrounding the historical specificity, and ongoing legacies, of past trauma, thus signalling a potential synthesis of psychoanalytic approaches to testimony and a situated understanding of its ethico-political potential.

This reorientation of the paradigm of testimony beyond individual affect has been extended in recent years in the context of a postcolonial turn which has further challenged the egocentric, event-based foundations of trauma theory. Despite the emphasis placed by early proponents of trauma studies, such as Cathy Caruth, on the interwoven connections between traumatised peoples, and the ethical, empathic potential of this understanding of our 'catastrophic age'[3] as founded on and defined by trauma, critics such as Stef Craps, Michael Rothberg and Ranjana Khanna have demonstrated that the traditional approach of defining trauma as a sudden, overwhelming psychological blow proves insufficient in explaining the ongoing legacies and repercussions of complex sociopolitical structures such as colonialism and, as such, precludes productive readings of narratives inflected with postcolonial traumatic affect.[4] While Western-centric trauma theory has often tended to reify unspeakability, positing that trauma's latency is a symptom of its initial repressed impact and that strategies for the communication of trauma are necessarily limited to repetitions, re-enactments and oblique representational strategies, the enduring effects and affects of postcolonial trauma introduce an ethical imperative to bear witness to the suffering of wider groups, communities and generations. Furthermore, texts by authors writing from a postcolonial standpoint challenge the tendency to conceive of experimental stylistic devices such as non-linearity, plurivocality and self-reflexivity as postmodern narrative modes symptomatic of trauma's unrepresentability. Such authors frequently invoke non-Western modes of storytelling and mythological narrative, not only as a means of connecting to their ancestral heritage, but also of constructing creative dialogues between temporalities and subjectivities in a deliberate reconstructive and interpellative endeavour. In this reconfigured understanding of creative representations of 'insidious'[5] postcolonial

[3] *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 204.
[4] See, for instance, Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Michael Rothberg, 'Between Auschwitz and Algeria: Multidirectional Memory and the Counterpublic Witness', *Critical Inquiry,* 33.1 (2006), pp. 158–184; Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[5] Maria Root quoted in Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, p. 26.

trauma, which, owing to its pervasive, transgenerational nature, also frequently involves the dynamics and affects of postmemory, the stakes of representing the multiple intersections between individual and collective memory differ from those associated with personal testimony of one-off events 'outside the range of human experience'.[6] A consideration of authors of narratives of postcolonial trauma as historically-situated political and ethical agents who employ hybrid forms of literary testimony not simply as a means of working through individual and familial traumas, but also of drawing attention to the multiple forces which continue to restrict the narrativisation of traumatic histories, thus also calls for new readings of the possibilities of their reception.

While the Freudian binarism which opposes mourning and melancholia has been criticised for prioritising the 'healthy' introjection of losses, leading to a revalorisation and even reification of melancholia as 'an ethical response to loss' and a politicised 'act of resistance that thwarts erasure',[7] haunting serves, in writing by daughters of *harkis,* to problematise the binarism itself. In this sense, haunting occupies a fluid, shifting space identified by Lucy Brisley as an iteration of 'working through' which is closely aligned with Adorno's conception of 'a sustained process of "working upon" history that seeks to unearth unconscious elements of the past that threaten to re-emerge hauntingly as the return of the repressed'.[8] This 'unearthing' of the past in order to reconstruct and come to terms with unassimilated affect operates on a postgenerational level, allowing authors and narrators to reject monolithic notions of History in favour of giving a voice to plural, interwoven histories, while also confronting the structures which continue to uphold and inflict postcolonial trauma. Rather than offering full closure or straightforward palliatives, then, narratives of postcolonial haunting recognise the value of working through – or, in Suzette Henke's terms, 'writing through'[9] – individual painful affect, while refusing to rebury the phantoms which they have conjured, instead offering them up to the reader as the remnants of a collective past which continues to haunt the present. Dualisms of past and present, reality and the imagination and even life and death exist in uneasy yet productive tension, allowing for

[6] DSM – III, cited in Laura Brown, 'Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 100.
[7] Lucy Brisley, 'Detective Fiction and Working Through: Investigating the (Post) Colonial Past in Boualem Sansal's *Le Serment Des Barbares* (1999) And Yasmina Khadra's *La Part Du Mort* (2004)', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 16.1 (2013), (91-112), p. 92.
[8] Ibid, p. 93.
[9] Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. xii.

complex expressions of memory, trauma and identity beyond the constraints of either psychoanalytic or juridical modes. These spectral testimonial platforms may be seen to facilitate what Mireille Rosello has termed 'performative encounters', a framework which she outlines in the context of Franco-Maghrebi relations as 'a type of encounter that coincides with the creation of new subject-positions rather than treating pre-existing (pre-imagined) identities as the reason for, and justification of, the protocol of encounter – whether it is one of violence or trust, respect or hostility'.[10] Authors whose works imagine such encounters are positioned as 'skilled tacticians who are created as historians through a personal and collective quest',[11] and this vertical and horizontal engagement with memories, histories and spaces is particularly conducive to 'ghostly encounters', in which the dead are exposed rather than simply (re)buried,[12] as a means of highlighting the impossibility of laying these ghosts of the past to rest under current conditions.

The double wound

In his anthropological study of the *harki* community in France, in particular its second generation which has been instrumental in breaking historical silences through social activism, court actions and the collection and publication of testimonies, Vincent Crapanzano notes that these descendants frequently use the term 'trauma' to describe the experiences of the first generation and its repercussions on their own generation.[13] These descendants are thus 'doubly wounded', as they suffer from both the stigmatic identity which they have inherited, and the absence of full knowledge of their parents' experiences, due to pervasive societal and familial silences.[14] Crapanzano concludes that descendants of *harkis* are, despite their efforts to heal this 'double wound' through activism, unable to construct narratives which move beyond what he terms '*the* Harki story'.[15] While

[10] Mireille Rosello, *France and the Maghreb: Performative Encounters* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2005), p. 1.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, pp. 163-164.
[13] Vincent Crapanzano, *Les Harkis: Mémoires sans issue*, trans. by Johan-Frédérik Hel Guedj (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), p. 127.
[14] Ibid, p. 129.
[15] Vincent Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound that Never Heals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 10 (emphasis in original).

acknowledging that this *harki* story is, by necessity, dialogic, resulting from a need to bear witness to layers of traumatic affect, Crapanzano's study suggests that the community's particular strategy of testimony is insufficient in healing individual or collective wounds. Repeated stories, crystallised around organising events and symbols such as massacres by the victorious Algerian nationalist forces after the ceasefire, and the surviving members' subsequent relegation in transit camps and 'forestry hamlets' in France, are aimed at the French, inciting them to bear witness to this abandonment and discrimination. Yet, following Crapanzano, this re-enactment of static collective narratives strips these stories of both their rhetorical and reparative potential, serving only to deepen the community's futile or even destructive anger, as the members of the French authorities and public to whom they address these narratives rarely fulfil the desired role of active witness.[16] As such, the community's recourse to testimony is configured as an unproductive and even negative endeavour, as the 'duty of memory' experienced by children of *harkis* towards their parents' pasts is frequently structured and restricted by oppositional, competitive discourses framed by references to fidelity to the French nation and to the notion that the *harkis* deserve recognition for their victimhood based on this loyalty, which reinforces stereotypes without targeting the colonial structures which oversaw and perpetuate systems of discrimination. This stultifying effect of static discourses of victimhood informs Crapanzano's hesitancy to use the term 'trauma' in relation to the experiences of the *harki* community, a decision which, he explains, reflects his desire to 'steer as clear as possible of the articulation of their suffering in a psychiatric idiom that deflects its political dimension'.[17] While Crapanzano's approach is laudable, reflecting the productive impulse to transcend pathologising, and frequently individualising, discourses of traumatic victimhood and to instead envision more ethical, historically-situated frameworks of testimony and witnessing, I will argue, in what follows, that writing by daughters of *harkis* productively engages both psychoanalytic and political impulses, and thus provides a contrast to the activism and oral testimony described by the anthropologist.

[16] Crapanzano, *Les Harkis*, p. 131; p. 135.
[17] Crapanzano, *The Harkis*, p. 218.

While certain works by daughters of *harkis* at times reproduce narratives of loyalty and abandonment which Giulia Fabbiano has termed 'saturated memories',[18] their writing may be broadly characterised as representing plurivocal, reconstructive quests which move beyond normative, state-sanctioned structures of commemoration and frameworks for recognition and reparation. Rather than reiterating 'frozen – lifeless – discourse',[19] these works reinvest static narratives of *harki* memory and identity with new life, inserting the first generation's experiences of war, torture, exile and imprisonment into broader postcolonial structures and acknowledging that the intergenerational affect associated with the *harki* identity is not only the result of these identifiable collective events, but also of a less easily quantifiable, more deeply rooted postcolonial condition which continues to impinge, both psychologically and materially, on their subjectivity and agency. It is, I would argue, precisely through tropes of haunting – which do not reject repetition and re-enactment, but rather work with and reconfigure these as creative modes of expression – that such works succeed in performing transformative dialogues across and between temporalities, spaces and subjectivities. The dialogic potential of haunting, represented both thematically and stylistically by disembodied voices, conversations with spectral figures, obsessive quests for justice, circular narratives and a lack of closure, thus challenges traditional conceptions associated with trauma and testimony.[20]

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[18] Giulia Fabbiano, 'Writing As Performance: Literary Production and the Stakes of Memory', in *A Practical Guide to French Harki Literature*, ed. by Keith Moser (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), (17-35), p. 20.

[19] Vincent Crapanzano, 'The dead but living father, the living but dead father', in *The Dead Father: A Psychoanalytic Enquiry*, ed. by Lila J. Kalinich and Stuart W. Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), (163-174), p. 172.

[20] While beyond the scope of this study, the dialogic, ethical and political potential of aspects of haunting in postcolonial literature has also notably been contextualised within postcolonial Gothic theory, in which the traditional tropes of colonial Gothic literature, in particular the spectral presentation of colonial lands and their peoples, are (re)appropriated and subverted by authors writing from a postcolonial standpoint. Elements of ghostliness and horror which appear in such works are frequently drawn from indigenous spirituality and oral traditions, and thus perform productive, historically-situated contestations of the boundaries between binarisms such as centre and margin, self and other, and past and present. See, for instance, Ken Gelder, 'Postcolonial Gothic' in *The Handbook of the Gothic,* ed. by Marie Mulvey-Roberts (London: Palgrave, 2009); Alison Rudd, *Postcolonial Gothic Fictions from the Caribbean, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); Barash Ali, 'The Postcolonial Gothic: Haunting and History in the Literature after Empire' (PhD dissertation, SUNY, 2005); Gerald Gaylard, 'The Postcolonial Gothic: Time and Death in Southern African Literature', *JLS/TLW*, 24.4 (2008), pp. 1 -18, and Kathrin Bartha, 'The Specter of Landscape: The Postcolonial Gothic, Preternatural, and Aboriginal Spiritual in Alexis

While testimony appears in these works as an arduous, halting process, the authors' employment of elements of fiction and experimental stylistic devices may be read as not simply an expression of the impossibility of communicating 'unspeakable' traumatic affect through realistic modes of representation, but also as an engagement with their history and heritage which transcends the boundaries of the *harki* story. Similarly, the 'belatedness' evident in these works is not merely a pathological psychoanalytic symptom, but rather a deliberate stylistic choice intended to highlight the 'unfinished business' associated with haunting histories. The authors' position as members of the *harki* postgeneration allows them to perform 'the vital betweenness that arises across individual and collective memory', [21] while what Régis Pierret terms their 'triple belonging' ('triple appartenance')[22] – the fact that they may self-identify as belonging to three distinct yet interwoven 'communities': French, Algerian and *harki* – points to their capacity to create plural forms of bearing witness to complex history and identity. Just as memory is not merely transmitted along vertical lines, but is also constructed horizontally,[23] so the reparative power of testimony does not simply involve reconstructing familial narratives, but also implies the necessity of delving further into collective and shared pasts, and of performing 'multidirectional'[24] encounters with other groups. Reading these texts in their historical and sociocultural contexts, while not reducing them to a narrow description of writing about the *harkis'* history, may therefore allow us to envisage a more politically-engaged form of testifying and receiving postcolonial testimony, in which haunting is reconfigured as a deliberate, productive representational strategy rather than a static, passive re-enactment of a past that has not been effectively introjected.

Wright's *Plains of Promise*', *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 5.2 (2016), pp.189–212.

[21] Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, *The Mnemonic Imagination: Remembering as Creative Practice* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 9.

[22] Régis Pierret, *Les filles et fils de harkis: Entre double rejet et triple appartenance* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

[23] See Pickering and Keightley, 'Communities of Memory and the Problem of Transmission', *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 16.1 (2013), pp. 115–131.

[24] See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Moze

Zahia Rahmani has described her writing project as 'the writing of disinterment', and her three published texts – *Moze* (2003), *"Musulman": Roman* ('"Muslim": A Novel'; 2005) and *France: Récit d'une enfance* ('France: Narrative of a Childhood'; 2006) – accordingly explore diverse strategies of unearthing and bringing to light silenced stories at familial, collective and transnational levels.[25] The ghostly legacies of the *harki* identity are at the heart of *Moze*, a fragmentary, autofictional work which was published more than a decade after her father's suicide and is structured around the narrator's question: 'How does one emerge alone from assumed guilt? This life given at birth.'[26] While centred on the difficulty, and necessity, of bearing witness, the text departs from traditional conceptions of testimonial writing and may instead be read as a polyphonic ghost story in which haunting is appropriated by the narrator as a subversive force of resistance to neo-colonial power structures. The effects of intergenerational transmission are symbolised by tropes of possession, incorporation and melancholic re-enactment which are signalled by the title, a combination of the first name of the author's father, Mohammad, and her own given name, Zahia, and which refers to the name given to the unnamed narrator's father.

While the narrative deals with the aftermath of Moze's death by drowning, the titular character exists within its pages not simply as a distant spectral presence, but rather a 'deadsoldier' ('soldatmort')[27] who constitutes a member of the living dead, and is accordingly referred to in the present tense throughout the text. The narrator contends that history had already rendered her father a ghostly figure when he was alive.[28] As such, Moze shares the characteristics of the still-living *harkis* whom the narrator describes as 'half-dead' ('demi-mort'), immobilised by social stigma and mental illness and thus existing outside normative realms of justice and reparation.[29] The narrator's melancholic re-enactment of her

[25] Zahia Rahmani, 'Le "harki" comme spectre ou l'écriture du "déterrement"' in *Retours du Colonial?: Disculpation et Réhabilitation de l'Histoire Coloniale Française*, ed. by Catherine Coquio (Nantes: L'Atalante, 2008).
[26] Zahia Rahmani, *Moze* (Paris: Éditions Sabine Wespieser, 2003), p. 23. Original: 'Comment sortir seule d'une culpabilité endossée? Cette vie donnée au berceau.'
[27] Ibid, pp. 20-21.
[28] Ibid, p. 38.
[29] Ibid, p. 92.

father's death through the symbolism of drowning[30] and her description of herself as living in the company of ghosts[31] align her with this liminal position. This is, however, not simply the result of the narrator's inability to mourn her father, but rather constitutes a broader reflection on the destructive effects of the absence of meaningful dialogue on the *harkis*' experiences, which are transmitted to the members of the postgeneration, revealing the impossibility of coming to terms with their inheritance of the *harki* identity within the narrow context of discourses of loyalty and recognition.

Although the text is built around the narrator's impulse to testify to her father's experiences, which she describes as not simply a duty of memory but 'the duty of testimony',[32] she is initially reluctant to acknowledge that she is the daughter of a *harki*, and expresses a desire to rid herself of his haunting, possessive presence: 'I don't owe him anything. He owes it to me to leave me, to leave my mind; he owes it to me to leave. He owes it to me not to come back again.'[33] Significantly, it is during an imagined journey to Algeria undertaken with her sister, with the intention of attempting to rebury their father in his homeland, that the narrator comes to accept the necessity of confronting and testifying to the legacies of familial and collective pasts as a means of extricating herself from her father's identity. Yet, while Moze channelled his trauma and sense of abandonment into the demands for recognition and reparation which he obsessively sent to army officials and political representatives, the narrator considers this a futile exercise which merely perpetuates the *harki* community's subjugation within neocolonial power structures. Her reconfiguration of testimony as a more complex, comprehensive reparative force thus constitutes a critique of the *harki* community's recourse to frameworks of institutional recognition characterised by tokenistic, insufficient gestures which she considers to mask the necessary task of speaking openly and honestly about the *harkis'* experiences, and, ultimately, of confronting the broader legacies of French colonialism: 'No questions. Measures.'[34] She describes herself as an inheritor of a ghostly injunction to remember the *harkis*' history and to gain recognition for their suffering, claiming that she has even

[30] Ibid, pp. 84-85.
[31] Ibid, pp. 154-155.
[32] Ibid, p. 131. Original: 'le devoir de témoignage'.
[33] Ibid, p. 85. Original: 'Je ne lui dois rien. Lui il me doit de me quitter, de quitter mon esprit, il me doit de partir. Il me doit de ne plus revenir.'
[34] Ibid, p. 54. Original: 'Pas de question. Des mesures.'

inherited her father's writing and could 'rewrite all his letters, falsify them, change his life, make forgeries, continue to make him live, hound his superiors and his masters, write to his jailers. Become a ghost. A ghost that would understand what it had to do. A deadsoldier returned from the dead!'[35] Yet, her exploration of the vicissitudes of bearing witness allows her to come to the realisation that in order to effectively transmit her father's story, she must first disentangle herself from him as a means of asserting her own subjectivity, which had been displaced by her incorporation of his ghostly body.

The literary text, therefore, becomes a symbolic creative platform which facilitates the performance of silenced memories and histories, while transcending the static framework of the '*harki* story'. The site for this channelling of spectral familial and collective memory takes the form of a fictional tribunal, or 'National Reparations Commission' (*Commission nationale de réapration*), facilitated by the French state. Having been persuaded by her sister, the narrator agrees to testify before this tribunal on behalf of her deceased father, as a means of providing a voice for her him and for other absent *harkis* and, in so doing, separating herself from his identity in order to (re)construct her own self. In contrast to Moze's repeated attempts to gain recognition and compensation, however, she does not simply reproduce narratives of loyalty to France in order to reinforce the community's sense of abandonment. Rather, faced with a commission which seeks to define and limit her speech, and whose members refuse to accept testimony which strays beyond the pre-established boundaries of her father's experiences, the narrator reconfigures haunting as a productive force which allows her to subvert the commission's function and to reposition the balance of power in favour of the previously silenced *harki* community. Tropes of haunting allow her to perform plurivocal 'acts of memory',[36] as in her summoning of the wider community of 'living dead', absent yet present *harkis*, to whom she delivers a ghostly address: 'You, the former soldiers, you bear a much too heavy burden. You fought for a lost war, a shameful conflict and this State which does not want to be your voice forces you to

[35] Ibid, p. 77. Original: 'Je pourrais refaire toutes ses lettres, les falsifier, changer sa vie, faire des faux, continuer à le faire vivre, harceler ses supérieurs, ses maîtres, écrire à ses geôliers. Devenir un fantôme. Un fantôme qui aurait compris ce qu'il a à faire. Un soldatmort revenu de la mort!'

[36] Mieke Bal, 'Introduction', in *Acts Of Memory: Cultural Recall In The Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

bear the responsibility of its error, as long as it remains silent.'[37] As these spectral figures cannot engage in dialogue, the narrator's address obliquely interpellates the members of the tribunal and, by extension, the readers, highlighting the unfinished business which remains to be worked through in the context of colonial history both within and beyond the context of the Algerian War.

The subversive power of speech is further emphasised by the narrator's mimicry of the 'voices' of colonial authority, allowing her to 'resignify'[38] the insults and prejudices directed at *harkis* and their descendants. The destructive effects of melancholic incorporation demonstrated by her identification with her dead father are replaced by a more productive use of haunting in the form of her symbolic, politically-motivated decision to allow herself to become 'possessed' by the ghostly voice of the chairman of the tribunal, who comes to embody the silenced colonial underpinnings of the *harkis*' history: 'I address him and suddenly I get the desire, the urge to be him - the chairman of this tribunal. I turn my back on him, stare into space and I say, "Yes, it was so that he could kill his brother that he betrayed his brother for me. I, who was supposed to kill his brother, made him commit this crime. I made him kill his brother, whom I was supposed to kill".'[39] This creative iteration of haunting as a platform for transgressive speech allows her to place the burden of shame on the French state for its exploitative colonial rule which pitted brother against brother, facilitating a reversal of roles which may be aligned with Rosello's definition of 'performative encounters' as 'those rare and defining interventions when the dialogue between those who believe that they are the only legitimate participants in the conversation is interrupted by the voice whose story the community pretends is a form of noise'.[40] While Rahmani's work may, in this sense, be regarded as building upon the interpellative nature of the juridical action, activism and political mobilisation associated with the *'harki* community' more broadly, her subversive appropriation of the authoritative voice of the French colonial

[37] Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 116. Original: 'Vous, les anciens soldats, vous portez un fardeau bien trop lourd. Vous vous êtes battus pour une guerre perdue, un conflit honteux et cet Etat qui ne veut pas être votre voix vous fait porter tant qu'il sera silencieux la responsabilité de son erreur.'

[38] See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 244.

[39] Rahmani, *Moze*, pp. 140-141. Original: 'Je m'adresse à lui et me vient tout à coup l'envie, le désir d'être lui. Lui, le président de cette commission. Je lui tourne le dos, je regarde le vide et je dis, Oui, c'est pour tuer son frère qu'il a trahi son frère pour moi . Moi, qui devais tuer son frère, je lui ai fait commettre ce crime. Je lui ai fait tuer son frère que je devais tuer.'

[40] Rosello, p. 18.

system transcends discourses of loyalty to instead present the figure of the *harki* as a social and political construction rooted in colonial history.

This historically-attuned, 'multidirectional' approach to delivering her father's testimony allows her to simultaneously bear witness to her own complex identity. The dialogic structure of her imaginative, reconstructive memory work facilitates the confrontation of painful postgenerational affect and ambiguity, leading her to a more nuanced position in which she lives with her father's spectre, rather than allowing herself to be consumed by it by reifying melancholic incorporation in the repetition of static collective narratives of loyalty. The act of testifying to Moze's experiences is, therefore, imbued with a broader dynamic of postcolonial witnessing:

> Just as I don't know how one can live in the knowledge that one is the child of a torturer, I find the idea of wanting to identify mitigating circumstances for Moze's actions ridiculous. But you won't stop me from thinking that colonisation was a serious error, and that even today this country's violence should be considered in the light of the destruction caused by colonial policies.[41]

This reorientation of the '*harki* story' towards the pervasive structures of colonialism which permitted their exploitation leads her to suggest that testimony alone is insufficient, and that real, meaningful dialogue about France's colonial past is necessary in order to resist forgetting and the reburial of history: 'We talk about Vichy, 1941, the war and collaboration. We say that we need all these words so that we can put them to good use, and those who hear this do not understand that their story is being buried along with them.'[42]

The narrator's 'multidirectional' testimony thus transcends both juridical and psychoanalytic modes of bearing witness, instead constituting a pluralistic encounter in

[41] Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 135. Original: 'De même que je ne sais pas comment on peut vivre en sachant qu'on est l'enfant d'un tortionnaire, je trouve ridicule de vouloir trouver des circonstances atténuantes aux actes de Moze. Mais vous ne m'empêcherez pas de penser que la colonisation fut une erreur grave et qu'aujourd'hui encore il faut considérer la violence de ce pays au regard de la pulvérisation opérée par la politique coloniale.'

[42] Ibid, p. 109. Original: 'On parle de Vichy, de 1941, de la guerre et de la collaboration. On dit qu'il faut toutes ces paroles pour s'en servir en bien et eux, qui entendent, ne comprennent pas qu'on enterre leur histoire avec eux.'

which ghostly voices are summoned not in order to 'act out' historical traumas and fixed roles, but rather as a means of instigating reconstructive dialogues:

> What should be condemned when you condemn Moze is what allowed him to be what he was. We must say that, yes, a serious incident occurred in this country! We need to write it down. We must speak, speak about what happened!'[43]

Rather than continuing to wait passively for recognition and reparations from the French state, the narrator frames her demands in terms which transcend the conventional language of institutional commemoration: 'I want the ambitious truth and not just an inscription on the national calendar.'[44] History, memory and truth are presented in this reconfigured testimonial platform not as static, one-dimensional concepts over which dominant groups may claim ownership, but rather as elements which are subject to renegotiation and reappropriation, echoing Mieke Bal's description of cultural memory as 'something you actually perform'[45] and Marianne Hirsch's discussion of the potential of memory work to 'propose forms of justice outside of the hegemonic structures of the strictly juridical'.[46] The largely monologic nature of the narrator's creative testimony at once centres the importance of speech and questions its value in the context of circumscribed state-sanctioned discursive frameworks. The absence of successful communication with the spectral juridical figures within the confines of the text thus opens instead to a form of extratextual dialogue which, in alerting the reader to the ongoing need for comprehensive, constructive engagement with colonial pasts, suggests not only the necessity of an alternative conception of justice, but also of a renewed understanding of bearing witness.

The text's final 'act' stages another ghostly dialogue, in this instance involving the narrator and her dead father, suggesting that the delivery of her cross-temporal postcolonial testimony has allowed her to confront his haunting presence without fear of being

[43] Ibid, p. 136. Original: 'Ce qui doit être condamné dans la condamnation de Moze c'est ce qui a permis son existence. Il faut le dire, c'est vrai qu'il y a eu dans ce pays un acte grave ! Il faut l'écrire. Il faut parler, parler de ce qui a eu lieu!'
[44] Ibid, p. 114. Original: 'Je veux l'ambitieuse vérité et pas une inscription au calendrier national. Je ne veux pas de commémoration.'
[45] Bal, p. vii.
[46] Hirsch, p. 16.

consumed by it.[47] Yet, this 'return' complicates received understandings of effective mourning, pointing to the necessity of unearthing the dead in order to confront the legacies of colonialism. Moze's ultimate refusal to speak, even in death, of his experiences, suggests that his death cannot – and perhaps should not – be fully mourned. Although the narrator attempts to incite her father to speak openly, his ghostly manifestation does not offer closure or clear answers, reflecting Rosello's contention that 'ghostly encounters' do not involve epiphanies or revelations, but rather serve to emphasise the conditions which perpetuate structures of silencing:

> Neither the ghost, nor the body, nor the survivors have found (or will find) any rest or peace. […] The encounter shares with the ghost the determination to linger on and not be silenced. Something remains to be said, to be heard. Perhaps this is why cemeteries are not resting places.'[48]

The narrator's dialogue with her father does, however, offer a certain degree of closure on an intimate, familial level, allowing her to come to a new understanding of his overwhelming sense of shame as resulting not only from his actions, but also from his continued inability to speak of his experiences, which, in spite of his traumatised silence, were transmitted to his children and internalised along with the social stigma attached to the title of *harki*: '– They say that we are your children! – I am ashamed of this shame which I never told you about.'[49]

While such ghostly dialogues may facilitate reconciliation in the context of individual processes of mourning, Moze's ongoing inability to speak of his experiences, in addition to the circularity of the narrative, which repeats towards the end the words with which it begins ('I remember. Write that you remember. That you remember it'[50]), underlines the limits of testimony in the absence of active witnesses, and may instead be read as an interpellation to readers which proceeds from the haunting traces of the *harkis*' history. While the narrator defies the silent, subservient role traditionally assigned to the *harki* community, the text contains further examples of unsuccessful attempts to communicate

[47] Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 175.
[48] Rosello, p. 164.
[49] Rahmani, *Moze*, p. 179. Original: '– Ils le disent que nous sommes tes enfants! – J'ai honte de cette honte que je ne vous ai jamais dite.'
[50] Ibid, 175. Original: 'Je me souviens. Écris que tu te souviens. Que tu t'en souviens.'

with potential witnesses, notably in her dealings with the police inspector who questions the family after Moze's death, and in the refusal of the members of the *Commission de réparations* to accept her disobedient testimony. These individuals initially respond to the narrator's words with anger and evasiveness, then proceed to treat her with indifference, ultimately shutting down the dialogue with repeated interjections.[51] Yet, after these characters abandon the narrator to her testimony, one key, extra-textual witness remains in the form of the reader. Frequently interpellated as 'you' ('vous'), the reader is invited to read – in Gillian Whitlock's terms – 'in the second person',[52] following the narrator as she comes to acknowledge that Moze's silence, depression and outbursts of destructive anger were not only the result of specific painful events, but may also be traced to broader, 'insidious' structures of (post)colonial trauma which configured the *harkis* as traitors and pariahs, rather than uncomfortable reminders of the spectral legacies of colonialism. The narrator does not present testimony as a curative endeavour in itself, but rather suggests that fictional platforms for bearing witness to intergenerational postcolonial trauma represent a means of instigating dialogues which should be carried over into reality, providing an opportunity for the development of an ethical model of confronting and witnessing the wounds of history. In this sense, the rhetorical question which she delivers to the chairman of the *Commission* resounds beyond the confines of the text: 'I am telling of my shame. But who will tell of yours?'[53]

Les enfants des harkis

Saliha Telali's *Les enfants des harkis: Entre silence et assimilation subie* ('The Children of Harkis: Between Silence and Endured Assimilation', 2013) similarly moves between an individual and collective approaches to bearing witness to trauma beyond static iterations of memory. In spite of its title, which suggests a sociological or anthropological study of the *harki* postgeneration in the style of the works by Crapanzano and Pierret, the narrative is a deeply personal, experimental account of the destructive effects of familial silence and societal taboo on the author and, by extension, on the broader community of descendants

[51] Ibid, p. 143.
[52] See Gillian Whitlock, 'In the Second Person: Narrative Transactions in Stolen Generations Testimony', *Biography*, 24.1 (2001), pp. 197-214.
[53] Rahmani, Moze, p. 138. Original: 'Moi je dis ma honte. Mais qui dira la vôtre?'

of *harkis*. Like *Moze*, it is also structured around tropes of haunting which facilitate 'ghostly encounters', while also serving to avoid closure by interpellating the reader as an active witness to the 'insidious' effects of colonial power structures. While not discounting the value of commemoration and material recognition, the narrator's emphasis on the need for comprehensive dialogue on the *harkis*' history allows her to nuance fixed narratives of loyalty in favour of a critical discussion of the legacies of broader colonial structures, particularly in the context of the postgeneration's experiences of racial discrimination and social stigma. Her focus on structures of silencing and strategies of resistance is not restricted to the taboo surrounding the *harkis*' experiences, but extends to consider the silence of French authorities and wider society towards ongoing forms of postcolonial trauma, such as racial profiling, moving her testimony beyond discourses of victimhood to a position of critical agency.

While both *Moze* and *Les enfants des harkis* navigate the often fluid borders between individual and collective memory, it is a collective event – a public commemoration of the First World War which she attends in her role as a local councillor – rather than a specific personal trauma which impels Telali's narrator to address the legacies of the *harkis*' experiences. This task, in turn, alerts her to the need to work through her own buried memories, leading her to perform a belated process of memorial reconstruction and witnessing in which binarisms such as past and present, self and other, and acting out and working through are collapsed. Recounting her sudden realisation of the unequal treatment of memory groups by state and society, the narrator describes the 'strange impression' of feeling 'present and absent at the same time'.[54] This uncanny sensation leads to further imagery of haunting, as her family's past, which she had sought to 'bury' as a child and adolescent in an attempt to assimilate into French society, is depicted as a spectral presence which similarly oscillates between absence and presence and reflects the symbolism of disinterment and drowning employed by Rahmani: 'While parading that day, my origins and the history of the Algerian War which I had repressed resurfaced like an inanimate body.'[55]

[54] Saliha Telali, *Les enfants des harkis: Entre silence et assimilation subie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), p. 11. Original: 'Étrange impression que celle de se sentir présente et absente à la fois.'
[55] Ibid., p. 13. Original: 'En défilant ce jour-là, mes origines et l'histoire de la guerre d'Algérie que j'avais refoulées refaisaient surface tel un corps inanimé.' Original: ('Je me sentais Française et pourtant la pensée de mon père harki, dont l'histoire s'est diluée dans le silence, les non-dits, le tabou, m'imprégnait, telle une supplique venue du passé pour réveiller mes origines.'

She comes to realise that the silencing of her father's history troubled her not only in terms of its absence from public memory, but also in the context of her own sense of self: 'I felt French and yet the thought of my *harki* father, whose history had dissolved into silence, taboo and things unsaid, permeated me, like a supplication which had arrived from the past to reawaken my origins.'[56] Describing how the arduous process of breaking her own silence was made possible by the solidarity shown to her by other children of *harkis*, who corroborated the socio-historical aspects of her own story and inspired her to share this testimony with others, she reframes the potentially static conception of the 'duty of memory' as a 'need for memory'[57] which implicates both individual and collective processes of bearing witness to painful histories.

As in *Moze*, testimony is not merely a linear representation of experiences, but rather an arduous performance which presents more questions than answers, thus challenging curative discourses associated with bearing witness. Themes of haunting and the importance of dialogue are not only present in the narrator's discussions of the necessity of confronting the haunting traces of past trauma, but are also implicit in the text's form. Telali's reconstructive narrative is structured around a conversation between the narrator and her childhood self, which is primarily oriented by the child's insistent questions: 'That child is me. It emerged, without a sound, to ask me to lay down its burden, and my own!'[58] In a similar fashion to Rahmani's use of the juridical setting to stage a platform for the delivery of a dialogic, plurivocal form of testimony, the rhetorical figure of the child performs a subversive and potentially reparative dialogue between subjectivities and temporalities. While the narrator, at the beginning of the text, expresses the desire to share her story with this symbolic child as a means of allowing her younger self to reconstruct her subjectivity,[59] it is, in fact, the child who ultimately assumes the role of an analyst, bearing witness to her own testimony. This spectral figure – which is not a ghost in the traditional sense, but rather simultaneously represents both a 'revenant' and an 'arrivant' in the Derridean construction,

[56] Ibid, p. 12.
[57] Ibid, p. 100.
[58] Ibid, p. 16. Original: 'Cet enfant, c'est moi. Il a émergé sans bruit ni fracas, pour me demander de poser son fardeau, et le mien!'
[59] Ibid, p. 17. Original: 'C'est un voyage dans le passé qui le délivrera et lui restituera une identité entière.'

[60] and thus reflects Pickering and Keightley's description of the role of the 'mnemonic imagination' in bringing 'different temporal tenses […] to bear on one another'[61] – encourages the narrator to explore the source of her residual anger, in order to sublimate it into agency. The child leads the adult narrator through the arduous, ongoing process of working through, by posing questions and delivering strategically-placed deictic prompts and observations.

While this structure reflects the therapeutic value attached to testimony as a means of working through painful affect, the traditionally oppositional force of acting out is of equal importance in allowing both versions of the narrator to expose and confront their shared memories in a creative, reconstructive manner. The child frequently abandons its omniscient analytic position and instead acts out repressed trauma. In contrast to the resolute silence of fathers in these texts, the narrator describes how her mother insisted, for several years, on repeating to her children static memories of painful events which she had experienced. The figure of the child allows the narrator to explore the damaging effects of her internalisation of her mother's trauma in a process of transferential witnessing, describing in vivid, immediate detail the manner in which she experienced these memories as a force of possession: 'I'm scared! My memories are present. I feel as though I lived through this confrontation. The trauma has become mine. Her stories inhabit me'.[62] In this sense, the narrator also contributes to the process of reconstructive memory work, acting, in turn, as the recipient of the child's urgent testimony. The child's re-enactment of her forced reception of her mother's trauma prompts the adult narrator to explore her suppressed emotions regarding her family's story, and this provides the child with the necessary context, which she could not have possessed at that age, to understand and come to terms with her mother's desperate need for a witness to her trauma. The child thus succeeds in distancing herself from these memories which she had internalised and incorporated, as she recognises the suffering and lack of a suitable witness which prompted her mother to confide in her, and concludes: 'Your mother suffered a lot from solitude'.[63] As in *Moze*, melancholic

[60] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 175.
[61] Pickering and Keightley, *The Mnemonic Imagination*, p. 118.
[62] Telali, p. 34. Original: 'J'ai peur! Mes souvenirs sont presents. J'ai l'impression d'avoir vécu cette confrontation. Le traumatisme est devenu mien. Ses récits m'habitent.'
[63] Ibid, p. 63. Original: 'Ta mère a beaucoup souffert de solitude.'

incorporation is not valorised, as the narrator succeeds in detaching herself from her childhood self, a process symbolised by the change in pronouns which suggests that both adult and child have succeeded in coming to terms with their shared past, absolving the child of the need to continue haunting the adult narrator in the present.

However, Telali's narrative is not merely a forum for the confrontation and exploration of individual trauma, but also acts as a rallying cry that emphasises the need to confront these haunting traces of the past on a broader scale. Her interweaving of the effects of both personal and collective trauma calls for a form of witnessing which would be mindful of the ways in which destructive silence is generated and upheld not just within family environments, but also through social and political structures. Her conversation with the child demonstrates that the delivery of testimony is not only an individual curative strategy involving the re-enactment of past traumas, but should be employed to challenge French society's refusal to work through its history of colonial exploitation, which perpetuates the conditions for the discrimination and marginalisation which have defined the experiences of many members of the *harki* community. In this sense, the adult narrator resists the therapeutic incentive to gain full closure on the past, notably by leaving certain questions posed by the child unanswered, rather presenting these as rhetorical questions which invite further consideration and demonstrate the 'unfinished business' associated with the legacies of the French colonial past.

Working through the past, therefore, represents an ethical response to trauma which seeks to keep the memory of collective injustices alive, while not neglecting the importance of addressing the wounding effects of these painful pasts on one's own psyche. As the members of the tribunal in *Moze* represent textual manifestations of political and social resistance to meaningful dialogue on the legacies of colonialism, so the narrator of *Les enfants des harkis* encounters obstructions in the form of a disembodied silencing voice which periodically interjects 'SHH! SILENCE!' ('CHUT! SILENCE!'), interrupting her dialogue with the child, in particular at moments in which either character speaks of discrimination or poses an uncomfortable question such as 'Is equality a myth?'[64] Significantly, this rhetorical technique is used to subversive effect on the final page, in which the words repeated by this voice become a question rather than an exclamation: 'SHH? SILENCE?' ('CHUT? SILENCE?').[65]

[64] Ibid, p. 66. Original: 'L'égalité est-elle un mythe?'
[65] Ibid, p. 122.

This ending resists closure and instead turns outward towards the reader, reflecting the expectant tone of the narrator of *Moze* in her call for an active recipient of testimony who would bear witness to, and speak of, the silence and shame attached to colonial legacies. This incomplete address by the ghosts of the past reflects the function of postcolonial modes of haunting, echoing Rosello's contention that such 'ghostly encounters' demand the exposure, rather than (re)burial, of haunting histories. Such texts which incorporate these critical forms of spectrality place an emphasis on ethical and political agency, eschewing the imperative to 'move on' implied by traditional models of mourning, without falling victim to the destructive, repetitive cycle of melancholia, and thus constitute a particular form of 'working through' which, following Craps:

> resist[s] the temptation to leave the reader with the sense that the story has been told, consigned to the past; that it has been taken care of and can therefore now be forgotten. Rather than affirming a clear distinction between the past and the present, they demonstrate how those two are imbricated in one another: the past continues to structure the present.[66]

The creative, cross-temporal structures of these texts allow their authors to place various levels of intimate traumatic affect in dialogue with one another, while also pointing to the potential for – and necessity of – broader communication on the legacies of colonialism through the insistent presence of unearthed, unhomely spectres. As ghosts respect neither solid borders nor linear time, so Telali and Rahmani represent the effects of (post)colonial trauma in a manner which places their claims outside of traditional avenues of justice and reparations, and this recourse to spectrality may ultimately provide a productive means of analysing the diverse ways in which the extratextual other is interpellated in such texts.

Conclusion

In foregrounding the historical specificity of the traumatic effects of individual and shared pasts, not only in relation to the Algerian War and its aftermath, but also in the broader

[66] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, p. 6.

context of post- and neo-colonial power structures, works by daughters of *harkis* demonstrate the potential of critical literary modes of haunting to transcend depoliticised, identificatory models of witnessing. Haunting thus provides a reconfigured platform for both the representation and reception of trauma by straying from the traditional contours of the analytic encounter in which 'the analyst / reader "knows" and "understands" a victim who is "ignorant" and "fails"',[67] instead pointing to a reciprocal, dialogic relationship between the author-narrator as testifier and the reader as active, engaged recipient of narrative testimony. If, following Brisley, 'working through the past is an interminable process that begins not with the transmission of knowledge, but with its critical reception',[68] these postgenerational, postcolonial works allow us to explore what this 'critical reception' might mean. The non-linearity, circularity and invocation of the uncanny which characterises much of the cultural production by female descendants of *harkis* encourages engaged readers to consider their own potential implication or, to use Gillian Whitlock's term, 'complicity' within broader historical and sociocultural structures that have contributed to the traumas which they seek to purge through writing.[69] Their works challenge Western-centric trauma theory's tendency to overlook the intersections between postgenerational and postcolonial iterations of trauma, and may thus allow us to conceive of a more ethical form of witnessing which would provide a creative, historically-situated framework for establishing empathic connections with groups outside one's own networks of identification and affiliation.

[67] Irene Kacandes, *Talk Fiction: Literature and the Talk Explosion* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 96.
[68] Brisley, p. 109.
[69] Whitlock, p. 209.

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Moving On by Going Back: Spatial Figuration of Trauma and Recovery in Susan J. Brison's *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*

Marta Bladek

Susan J. Brison's memoir, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (2002) opens up with a memory of the walk she took on a bright July morning in the summer of 1990.[1] Thrilled with the opportunity to enjoy a 'gorgeous day' in the French countryside, Brison went out on her own as her husband stayed behind to work at home: 'I sang to myself as I set out, stopping to pet a goat and pick a few wild strawberries along the way'.[2] Her jubilant mood and the idyllic charm of the surroundings, however, were abruptly shattered shortly after. What Brison remembers next is 'lying face down in a muddy creek bed at the bottom of a dark ravine, struggling to stay alive'.[3] While the scenes she recalls are sequential, their irreconcilability is striking. The stark contrast between the subsequently remembered places - 'a peaceful-looking country road' and 'a muddy creek bed at the bottom of a dark ravine' - reveals a rupture in the chronology of the morning's events.[4] Rather than establishing continuity and coherence, Brison's successive place memories register a gap that would explain how and why she got into the ditch. When, a few months later, she revisits the scene in memory and attempts to write about having 'been grabbed from behind, pulled into the bushes, beaten and sexually assaulted,' Brison still cannot make sense out of the morning's violent unravelling.[5] '[A]ll I could come up with was a list of paradoxes,' she sums up her early frustrations at not being able to come up with an orderly narrative of the traumatic event and its aftermath.[6]

[1] Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
[2] Ibid, p. 2.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, p. IX.

A composite of Brison's autobiographical and philosophical reflections on the lasting effects of the sexual assault she only narrowly survived, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* explores the challenges that inevitably confront the survivor as she undertakes the task of 'reconstructing a self in the sense of a remembered and ongoing narrative about oneself'.[7] With its emphasis on location and place, the memoirs opening scenes not only depict the dramatic turn in Brison's life, but they also signal the narratives reliance on spatial imagery and metaphors to convey the trauma of rape, as well as the arduous and ongoing process of recovery. Whereas Brison's narrative exposes the limits of conceptualizing the violence of rape in spatial terms, its emphasis on traumas and recoveries spatial aspects invites new ways to interpret the traumatic experience. Informed by a close reading of *Aftermath* and contemporary theories of trauma, this essay puts forward a spatial figuration of trauma as the paradox of simultaneous departure and return, taking leave of and coming back to the site of violation, metaphorically and literally. Only after she has metaphorically and literally revisited the traumatic event—by reliving it through flashbacks, by bearing public witness to it, by going back to the place she was assaulted and by writing about her experience—is Brison able to distance herself from it and begin to look forward to the future that attack has not, after all, foreclosed.

Rape Script

In her influential essay, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention' (1992), Sharon Marcus argues against 'regarding rape […] as a fact to be accepted or opposed, tried, or avenged'.[8] Instead, she proposes an understanding of rape 'as a process to be analyzed and undermined as it occurs'.[9] To prevent or eradicate rape altogether we need to recognize discursive representations and constructions of rape as a script, or a social narrative that 'enacts conventional, gendered structures of feeling and action'.[10] Insofar as it provides an interpretive framework, rape script shapes behaviours and

[7] Susan J. Brison, 'Everyday Atrocities and Ordinary Miracles, or Why I (Still) Bear Witness to Sexual Violence (But Not Too Often)', *WSQ*, 36.1 & 2 (2008), pp. 188-98.
[8] Sharon Marcus, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention', in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 388.
[9] Ibid, p. 388.
[10] Ibid, p. 390.

attitudes that condone, or even justify, sexual violence; it also affects the encounter between the perpetrator and the victim.[11] A careful analysis of elements constituting the script, Marcus insists, is the first step in combating rape.

Brison echoes Marcus's understanding of rape as a socially and culturally mediated practice: '[G]iven the stories of rape I'd grown up with and the ones I'd heard and read about again and again in adulthood,' she reflects, 'one might say I remembered the rape even before it happened, as a kind of postmemory'.[12] As Brison adopts Marianne Hirsch's term, she points out that, unlike Holocaust related postmemories that are transmitted across generations, postmemories of rape 'are absorbed from the culture' in which stories of women's rapes circulate.[13] Exposed to various rape scripts and scenarios, individual women take their susceptibility to sexual violence for granted. Brison acknowledges that postmemories of rape 'inform[ed] the way I lived in my body and moved about in the world'.[14] Brison's familiarity with the rape script not only compels her to take everyday precautions, it also enables her to classify her attack as a sexual assault as it is taking place.

At first, experiencing the assault as 'a highly unrealistic nightmare,' she soon recognizes it as 'a rape-in-progress'.[15] Brison remembers that '[t]here was even a moment of relieved recognition when my assailant began sexually assaulting me. 'OK, I see, this makes (some) sense. It suddenly became oddly familiar'.[16] Brison draws on postmemories of rape to interpret what is happening to her. The ready script organizes her unique experience of being sexually assaulted. Importantly, at the same time as they explain what is she is experiencing, Brison's postmemories of rape prescribe the actions she should take. In an effort to deflect the threat, she draws on a knowable and recognizable scenario: 'I attempted to enact a range of rape-avoidance scripts I'd read about'.[17] Consequently, she surrenders even as she continues to negotiate with the attacker. Insofar as Brison's postmemories of sexual violence not only frame her rape in familiar terms but also determine how she acts, they imply that 'rape is not only scripted–it also scripts'.[18]

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[11] Ibid, p. 391.
[12] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 86.
[13] Ibid, p. 87.
[14] Ibid, p. 86.
[15] Ibid, p. 88.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Marcus, p. 391.

Even as Brison relies on acquired scenarios of rape to make sense out of to the violent assault, she soon discovers their limited applicability. In accordance with the rape script, she offers no resistance and engages in bargaining with the attacker.[19] When this response proves ineffective, Brison is struck with the realization that 'there was no more script for me to follow'.[20] Instead, she gives in to her bodies instinct to fight back: 'I had to fight like prey pursued by a stronger predator - outrun him or outwit him, using animal instincts, not reason'.[21] The attacker leaves her alone and walks away only after she pretends to be dead.[22] Brison's experience of her attack, then, at once re-enacts and exposes the limits of the script that relies on 'the binary framing' of victimization and agency.[23] Neither acquiescence nor resistance protects Brison from being violated. To rephrase Carine Mardorossian who pointedly argues against 'the dominant cultures proclivity to see rape as women's problem', Brison's attack exposes the script's untenable premise that a woman's body and actions can act as 'the site of rape prevention'.[24]

Spatial Metaphors of Rape

To define and describe the violence of a non-consensual sex act, rape script mobilizes multiple spatial metaphors. In *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present Day* (2007), Joanna Bourke sums up the prevalent definition of rape as a conquest: 'Rapists literally invade and attempt to conquer the sexual terrain of their victims'.[25] Similarly, when tracing a genealogy of feminist theorizations of rape, Kathryn Robson notices that rape has long been explained 'as an invasion of a protected inner space that equates to a violation of the embodied self'.[26] Indeed, arguing for a more capacious definition of rape in the aftermath of the #MeToo movement, Linda Alcoff relies on spatial terms as well: 'To violate is to infringe upon

[19] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 88.
[20] Ibid, p. 89.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Carine M. Mardorossian, *Framing the Rape Victim: Gender and Agency Reconsidered* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), p.35.
[24] Ibid, p.56.
[25] Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present Day* (London: Virago, 2007), p. 7.
[26] Kathryn Robson, 'Spaces of Violation: Refiguring Rape in Contemporary French Women's Fiction', *Romance Studies: A Journal of the University of Wales,* 25.1 (2007), 57-67, (p. 57).

someone, to transgress, and it can also mean to rupture or break'.[27] In such a view, the space of violation is already gendered as the body at risk of being raped is presumed to be 'vulnerable, penetrable, and wounded'.[28] As an act of violent trespass, rape is conceptualized as the 'invasion of the female inner space' that collapses the boundary between inside and outside.[29] Because rape figures as an external threat to women's bodily integrity, the danger of sexual violence correlates with women's exposure as they move across space. In line with this logic, it becomes crucial to designate specific places as either safe or dangerous. Another tenet of the rape script, however, suggests that mapping the risk of rape offers no viable precaution after all: the way in which a person navigates and inhabits space may provoke an assault. This assertion invalidates the comforting assurance that a woman will remain unharmed if only she avoids unsafe places.

Rape activists and feminist critics have been drawing attention to many of the assumptions underlying spatial figurations of rape. Research and statistics have invalidated some of the popular beliefs as well. Susan Brownmiller's classic 1975 work, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, challenges the neat distinction between safe and unsafe places for women.[30] Brownmiller cites studies that demonstrate that, as far as the risk of rape is concerned, 'the street, the home and the automobile emerge as dangerous, high-risk places'.[31] Sharon Marcus also dismantles the neat division between protected inside and unsafe outside. She notes that women are continually urged to protect themselves by staying indoors even though the majority of them are raped inside their own homes.[32] A 2013 report issued by U.S. Department of Justice further corroborates Brownmiller's and Marcus's critique of attempts to map the risk of rape onto specific places.[33] The report indicates that 55% of rapes and sexual assaults committed between 2005 and 2010 took place at or near the victim's home and another 12% occurred at or near a friend's home.[34] In

[27] Linda M. Alcoff, *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violation* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2018), p. 12.
[28] Marcus, p. 398.
[29] Ibid, p. 399.
[30] Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster1975).
[31] Ibid, p. 186.
[32] Marcus, p. 399.
[33] Michael Planty and others, *Female Victims of Sexual Violence, 1994-2010: Special Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013).
[34] Ibid, p. 4.

light of the data, the cliché that women can protect themselves by avoiding certain spaces no longer holds.

Brison's narrative illuminates many of the contradictions inherent in the spatial model underlying the rape script. As she reflects on her experience and describes her efforts to regain a sense of relative safety, Brison repeatedly confronts the spatial paradoxes of the rape script. Not knowing the details of Brison's case, the sexual violence victims' counsellor, whom she contacts for legal advice, readily presumes that Brison was attacked in darkness.[35] Although Brison was raped 'in broad daylight,' the counsellor accuses her of provoking the attacker by failing to 'take basic safety precautions like not going out alone late at night'.[36] In line with the spatial figuration of rape, the counsellor mistakenly equates women's safety with the enclosure of their bodies. If staying away from potentially dangerous places is not an option, the counsellor's remarks suggest, a woman should be careful to time her movements so that she can avoid being out when attacks are more likely to happen.[37]

When, having sufficiently recovered, Brison is teaching her first-ever seminar on 'Violence against Women', she is struck by the extent to which the spatial model of rape informs her female students' behaviour. The young women share a sense of having to protect themselves at all times by 'locking doors and windows, checking the back seat of the car, not walking alone at night, looking in closets on returning home'.[38] Not incidentally, all these precautions aim to close off access to women's vulnerable bodies as well as minimize the risk women run by merely being present in unprotected, and thus dangerous, spaces. Whereas the counsellor's admonishment posits women's safety as their own responsibility, the students' preventive strategies show how the spatial figuration of rape curtails women's freedom of movement. In view of these scenarios, rape is a calculated risk a woman assumes each time she lets up her vigilance and fails to look out for potential danger in her physical surroundings.

The curtailed ways in which women move in and occupy space, Brison shows, form an anticipatory response to rape. In the aftermath of an attack, they become rape's

[35] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 9.
[36] Ibid.
[37] The French authorities, who respond to Brison's attack, also operate under the assumption that a woman could be held accountable for her rape under certain circumstances. Brison's status as a blameless victim is not questioned and the brutality of her rape is immediately credible precisely because the attack happened in a 'safe place' (Aftermath, p. 7).
[38] Ibid, p. 18.

consequences. Traumatized by her sexual assault, Brison is unable to take walks around campus unless a friend accompanies her.[39] When she does eventually venture out alone, she remembers herself 'looking over my shoulder a lot and punctuating my purposeful, straight-ahead stride with an occasional pirouette'.[40] Even in seemingly ordinary and unremarkable places like a locker room or a parking lot, Brison feels vulnerable. Determined to prevent the possibility of another assault, she demands that the university install a lock and add a light so that the locker room and the parking lot no longer pose a threat to her and other unsuspecting women.[41]

Yet, these precautions do not eliminate Brison's anxiety nor contain her fear of another attack. As a rape survivor, Brison recognizes that 'a woman can be sexually assaulted anywhere, at any time–in 'safe' places, in broad daylight, even in her own home'.[42] There are no safe places for women, contrary to what the rape script promises. Brison's pointed critique echoes Marcus's assertion that rape discourses rely on 'the false demarcation between an inside and outside of rape in terms of geographical space'.[43] Brison recognizes that neither her own nor any other woman's actions will eradicate the omnipresent threat of sexual violence women continue to face. Although the spatial model of rape prescribes women's behaviour, the restrictions on their comings and goings fail to grant women safety.

Spatial Figuration of Trauma

If *Aftermath* engages the spatial model of rape to highlight its contradictions, the narrative's emphasis on trauma and recoveries spatial aspects suggests a new way to interpret the traumatic experience. The pioneering trauma scholar Judith Herman defines traumatic events as those 'generally involv[ing] threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death'.[44] When figured in even more explicitly spatial terms, trauma can be understood as 'a state of internal crisis in response to an overwhelming

[39] Ibid, p. 61.
[40] Ibid, p. 14.
[41] Ibid, p. 61.
[42] Ibid, p. 19.
[43] Marcus, p. 399.
[44] Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 33.

external event that threatens existing mental structures'.[45] Overwhelming and obliterating the victim's sense of self-possession, traumatic events result in a state of internal crisis, or trauma, in which the original violence and disruption are preserved but not resolved.[46] In trauma's aftermath, then, the survivor continues to confront what Cathy Caruth identifies as the structural contradiction of trauma, the simultaneity of 'destruction *and* survival'.[47]

Painfully aware that her survival is predicated on the experience of having outlived herself, Brison articulates this paradox when she asserts, 'I am not the same person who set off, singing, on that sunny Fourth of July in the French countryside. I left her in a rocky creek bed at the bottom of a ravine. I had to in order to survive'.[48] In an inverted logic, her death has become a precondition for her life. The attack not only robbed Brison of her earlier self, but it also brutally stripped away all her beliefs and certainties that allowed her to 'feel at home in the world'.[49] As she puts it: 'The fact that I could be walking down a quiet, sunlit country road at one moment and be battling a murderous attacker the next undermined my most fundamental assumptions about the world'.[50] Whereas she used to believe in her ability to control and influence her own life, she now recognizes the limits of her own self-determination. Similarly, her earlier trust in the goodwill of others has been replaced by an unsettling realization that 'you can be attacked at any time, any place, simply because you are a woman'.[51] In the months immediately following the attack, then, a pervasive alienation and disorientation compound Brison's experience of her own life as 'a spectral existence'.[52]

Traumatic hauntings, or flashbacks that make the victim relive the extreme event, Brison asserts, constitute 'the worst–the unimaginably painful aftermath of violence'.[53] She

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[45] Janice Haaken, *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 68.
[46] Herman, p. 50.
[47] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 72.
Similarly, Judith Herman talks about 'the dialectic of trauma' (p. 47). In the event's aftermath, the survivor continues to oscillate between two opposing psychological states, intrusion and constriction. Paradoxically, even as the ongoing 'alternation between these two extreme states might be understood as an attempt to find a satisfactory balance between them,' it perpetuates rather than relieves instability (p. 47).
[48] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 21.
[49] Ibid, p. x.
[50] Ibid, p. 26.
[51] Ibid, p. 13.
[52] Ibid, p. 9.
[53] Ibid, p. x.

describes her traumatic memories of the rape as 'uncontrollable, intrusive […] inflicted, not chosen'.[54] Unbearably intense and vivid, they 'immobilize the body by rendering the will as useless as it is in a nightmare in which one desperately tries to flee, but remains frozen'.[55] Triggered by an unexpected reminder and experienced as sensory, or bodily, traumatic memories plunge Brison back into the event in which she remains arrested. Insofar as they perpetuate the extreme event even after it has already come to an end, traumatic memories collapse the division between the past and the present. As a result, the critic Roberta Culbertson writes that 'the violation seems to continue in a reverberating present that belies the supposed linearity of time and the possibility of endings'.[56] As the event from the past intrudes into and is re-lived in the present, it becomes an inseparable part of both.

Yet, according to Cathy Caruth, 'trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it also is a continual leaving of its site'.[57] A spatial metaphor informs Caruth's definition of trauma as the paradox of simultaneous departure and return, taking leaving of and coming back to the site of violation. Constituted by the disjuncture between 'the encounter with death' and 'the ongoing experience of having survived it,' trauma undoes the polarity between destruction and survival.[58] It also collapses the complementariness of departure and return and thus challenges our 'understanding of what it means to leave and to return'.[59] Inextricably bound with each other, both departure and return are inscribed in 'the endless inherent necessity of repetition' that is at the heart of trauma.[60] It is only through repeated acts of going back that the survivor can take leave from the extremity of the original event.

In a passage that echoes Caruth's definition of trauma as an irresolvable crisis of simultaneous departure and return, Brison describes her struggle to comprehend what happened to her: 'I was attacked for no reason. I had ventured outside the human community, landed beyond the moral universe, beyond the realm of predictable events and

[54] Ibid, p. 69.
[55] Ibid, p. 45.
[56] Roberta Culbertson, 'Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self', *New Literary History*, 26, (1995), 169-95 (p. 170).
[57] Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 10.
[58] Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 7.
[59] Ibid, p. 16.
[60] Ibid, p. 63.

comprehensible actions, and I didn't know how to get back'.[61] The assault has produced a lasting displacement, she can neither take leave of the site of trauma nor reenter the places she previously inhabited. In the first few years after the attack, whenever people ask her if she has successfully recovered by now, Brison's response 'depends on what that means. If they mean "am I back to where I was before the attack?" I have to say, no, and I never will be'.[62] Having survived the brutal attack, she feels can never go back because the world as she knew it no longer exists. Finding herself 'alive but in a totally alien world,' Brison considers herself an exile among places and people she had previously taken for granted.[63]

The stark realization that the encounter with extreme violence has set her apart from those around her further intensifies the acute sense of estrangement Brison continues to experience in the rape's aftermath. Even though her relatives and friends have all been informed about the severity of the attack, their responses deeply disappoint and unsettle Brison who feels that the connection between her and them has been irrecoverably severed. Instead of relieving it, the well-intentioned encouragements Brison does receive do not lessen the acuteness of her separation either. The cheerful and untroubled optimism of the card her parents send her shocks Brison with its insensitivity.[64] Urging her not to lose sight of her many blessings, the parents' get-well wishes dismiss the extremity of her experience. In turn, the relatives who exhort Brison to be grateful for having survived fail to refer to the event directly.[65] According to a well-intentioned friend, Brison should find comfort in the thought that since she has already been raped, it is unlikely that she will be violated again.[66] The advice Brison receives from a colleague after the publication of her first article on sexual violence, 'Now you can put this behind you,' succinctly sums up all the exhortations and pronouncements others direct at her.[67]

Brison's continuing distress and suffering, misunderstood or unacknowledged, confronts the pain of separation from those who used to be close to her. The disappointing and hurtful responses of other people reenact and exacerbate the 'utter aloneness' she first

[61] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. x.
[62] Ibid, p. 21.
[63] Ibid, p. 9.
[64] Ibid, p. 11.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, p.10.
[67] Ibid, p. 35.

experienced during the attack.[68] 'Unlike survivors of wars or earthquakes, who inhabit a common shattered world,' Brison reflects, 'rape victims face the cataclysmic destruction of their world alone, surrounded by people who find it hard to understand what's so distressing'.[69] Despite the fact that rape is a group-based trauma, individual victims' suffering can rarely be shared and takes place in private instead.[70] For survivors of sexual violence, the isolation all trauma victims face is exacerbated, not relieved, in the aftermath.

The violation and shattering of the connection between the self and others is one of the most devastating effects of trauma. Since the self is relational, 'formed and sustained in relation to others,' the breach of attachments results in the undoing of the self.[71] In trauma, then, the self's exposure and vulnerability to others is no longer constitutive but destructive: the self can be unmade by others precisely because it is constructed in connection with them. Trauma 'destroys the belief that one can *be oneself* in relation to others,' Judith Herman argues.[72] 'Without this belief,' Brison adds, 'one can no longer *be oneself* even to oneself, since the self exists fundamentally in relation to others'.[73] Inevitably, the victim's alienation from others is compounded by her alienation from herself.

Applying Martin Buber's distinction between 'thou' and 'you' to the Holocaust, Dori Laub argues that trauma is predicated on the absence of an addressable 'other to which one could say 'Thou' in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject, of being answered'.[74] In effect, trauma is not only 'a sudden address from elsewhere that we cannot preempt',[75] but also an address that precludes an answer. In the aftermath of her attack,

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[68] Ibid, p.112.
[69] Ibid, p. 15.
[70] Because her attack was motivated by her gender, Brison refers to her assault, and rape in general, as 'a gender-motivated bias crime' (*Aftermath*, p. 89). She considers her attack to be 'both random—and thus completely unpredictable—and not random, that is, a crime of hatred toward the group to which you happen to belong' (*Aftermath*, p. 13). Had she herself been spared the violence, another woman following in her footsteps would have been raped. Accordingly, Brison talks about rape's effects as 'group-based trauma' (*Aftermath*, p. 94).
[71] Herman, p. 50.
[72] Ibid, p. 53.
[73] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 40.
[74] Dori Laub, 'An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival', In *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 75-92 (p. 82).
[75] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), p. 29.

when others refuse to hear or acknowledge her story of the violent event, Brison re-experiences the withdrawal of mutual recognition.

Recovery: Metaphorical and Literal Returns to the Site of Trauma

While the absence of an addressable other is central to trauma, his or her presence makes recovery possible. As Judith Herman emphasizes, recovery 'can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation'.[76] Precisely because 'the self as fundamentally relational-capable of being undone by violence,' it is 'also [capable] of being remade in connection with others'.[77] A relationship with others based on reciprocity and mutual recognition, then, is a prerequisite for recovery. As a survivor, Brison no longer identifies with her pre-trauma self that was annihilated by the violence of the extreme event. Only the recognition by people around her will make it possible for her to construct a new self, one that would account for both destruction and survival. 'Since the earlier self died,' Brison explains, 'the surviving self needs to be known and acknowledged in order to exist'.[78]

The recognition of the surviving self takes place through the act of bearing witness, which, as Brison defines it, is 'a communicative act'.[79] The survivor must revisit the site of trauma in memory in order to narrate the event to the empathetic listener. The act of bearing witness brings the survivor and a listener together, relieving the acuity of the survivor's estrangement. The reciprocity between the self and an other that trauma shattered can be restored. In the act of bearing witness, the victim is able to address an other who is willing and ready to hear and answer her call. Whereas during the traumatic event 'one cannot turn to a 'you' [and thus] one cannot say 'thou' even to oneself' the listener's belated presence grants recognition and acknowledgement to the surviving self.[80]

Aftermath recounts a wide range of contexts in which Brison is called upon to testify to her attack and her first testimony takes place in the days after the rape. Brison assuages

[76] Herman, p. 73.
[77] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. xi.
[78] Ibid, p. 62.
[79] Ibid, p. xi.
[80] Laub, 'An Event', p. 82.

the concern of the apologetic hospital and police personnel in whose care she finds herself shortly after the rape by explaining that having to answer their questioning about the details of the attack lessens the intensity of her flashbacks. Rather than feeling forced to relive the trauma, she finds it 'therapeutic to bear witness in the presence of others who heard and believed what I told them'.[81] In the presence of those who will hear what she has to say, Brison may step out of the objectifying silence to which the violence has reduced her. Bearing witness thus re-introduces mutuality into the victim's relationship with others. To the extent that testifying relies on a contract between the listeners and the survivor, as Dori Laub argues,the act of bearing witness reintegrates the survivor into the community of others and restores the social compact that has been violated by the traumatic event.[82]

The contractual and communal nature of bearing witness is further reflected in its communicative and interactive aspect. Brison is well aware that out of consideration for her listeners she was continually modifying the scope and length of her testimony:

> My narrative varied as it was told to the farmer and his family, then to a police officer, a doctor, and the ambulance personnel, and later, at the hospital, to Tom, more doctors, a psychiatrists, some gendarmes, my parents, a friend, another friend, then another. My story was shaped by what the listener needed to know more urgently.[83]

As they accommodate her audience's needs and interests, the multiple versions of Brison's story of the attack underscore Dori Laub's observation that 'Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude'.[84] The listener's role is not limited to that of an addressee. Instead, Brison points out, his or her 'interest in the story provided the prompts, the questions, the responses, which, in turn, shaped the story'.[85] Brison is not

[81] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 54.
[82] Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, ed. by Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57-74 (p. 72). Dori Laub writes that in the act of bearing witness the survivor and the listener are mutually bound by '"the contract of testimony," "which specifies their responsibilities to one another ('"Bearing Witness'," p.72).
[83] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 106.
[84] Laub, 'Bearing Witness', pp. 70-1.
[85] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 106.

alone in the telling of her brutal ordeal because by their presence and inputs her listeners co-create her story with her. In addition, the others' company is a guarantee of a safe return from the site of trauma Brison revisits through the act of bearing witness.

Two years after her rape Brison literally returns to the site of trauma. She goes back to France, where the attack took place, in order to testify at the assailant's trial. Certain that the man who attacked her will be sentenced for her assault, she is nevertheless relieved to see armed guards escorting him into the courtroom.[86] As she steps up onto the witness stand ready to testify, suddenly apprehensive, Brison finds the guards' presence reassuring and comforting. '[T]he uniforms, the guns, the judge's robes, the jurors in the precisely placed seats,' Brison comments, are 'the signs of law and order, of decorum, of "civilization," that had vanished during my assault'.[87] The present setting does not replicate the circumstances of the traumatic encounter; in fact, it effectively counteracts them and thus makes Brison's testimony possible. She is the one who speaks out; her attacker is bound to remain silent. Moreover, she no longer has to confront the violence alone, without recourse to help from another. Defenceless and helpless during the assault, Brison is now under the care and protection of the court authorities. The traumatic event cast her 'outside the human community',[88] whereas bearing witness brings her back to its centre.

Yet, at the same time as the presence of others who are ready to hear it enables and encourages Brison's court testimony, her narrative must follow and fit within the legal conventions. At the trial, Brison comments, 'The props were all in place for me to tell my story'.[89] The court setting and customary legal procedures determine how Brison may bear witness to her attack. Because a victim's testimony bears the double burden of accusation and evidence, 'most cases of sexual assault come down to the word of one person against that of another'.[90] Reflective of the dynamic, the courtroom protocol consists of two distinct questioning phases, evidence-in-chief and cross-examination; while the former seeks to establish facts and credibility of the victim's account, the latter aims to undermine both.[91] In

[86] Ibid, p. 105.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid, p. x.
[89] Ibid, p. 105.
[90] Andy Kaladelfos, Nina Westera, and Rachel Zajac 'Sexual Assault Complainants on the Stand: A Historical Comparison of Courtroom Questioning', *Psychology, Crime & Law* 23.1, (2017), 15-31 (p. 15).
[91] Ibid, p. 18.

effect, as Linda M. Alcoff and Laura Grey argue, a rape survivor's testimony is a discursive event reflective of 'the structural arrangements' shaping the context in which bearing witness it takes place.[92] Similarly, the philosopher Laura Hengehold notes that in the legal context rape survivors have 'little opportunity to acknowledge her own interpretive contribution the definition of her assault qua 'trauma' *or* injustice'.[93] Since Brison's testimony also has a specific aim, the attacker's incrimination, she must present and tell her story of the rape in a way that conforms to legal conventions and allows 'justice to be done'.[94] Her original narrative, Brison realizes, has been transformed as a result of her interactions with the French authorities: 'things (including the 'official story') were being rigged from the start, *in order to* get my assailant convicted. Some things were left out and others (such as the description of me as 'sportive') were *added* to my narrative by the officer to make it more convincing'.[95] These modifications seek to establish Brison's credibility as a victim. Committed to ensuring the attacker's rightful conviction, the police and lawyers appropriate her account of the event by adapting it so that it follows the rape script, according to which the male assailant is guilty only to the extent that his female victim can be proven to be blameless.[96] The impact of Brison's testimony, then, hinges on her ability to present herself as 'the 'worthy victim' who cannot be construed as contributing to her assault or provoking the rapist in any way'.[97] Mardorossian points out that the reliance on 'the juxtaposition of the degree of aggression of the rapist with the level of innocence of the victim, necessarily obscures the fact that a victim cannot be more or less innocent of a crime she did not commit'.[98] Despite the paradoxical premise, it is Brison who must convince the judge and jury that her assailant is guilty beyond reasonable doubt. The physical evidence supports Brison's version of the event, and the defendant has been identified as the perpetrator, but

[92] Linda M. Alcoff and Laura Grey, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 18.2, (1993), 260-290 (p. 265).
[93] Laura Hengehold, 'Remapping the Event: Institutional Discourses and the Trauma of Rape', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 26, (2000), 189-214 (p. 200).
[94] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 107.
[95] Ibid, p. 107.
[96] Brison is surprised to notice that her official deposition starts with 'Since I am athletic', a phrase that has been inserted by the officer who transcribed her testimony. This detail, she realizes, is added as a reasonable, and thus unobjectionable, justification of her solitary outing on the morning she was raped. Similarly, she is praised for mentioning her husband 'since my assailant, who had confessed to the sexual assault, was claiming I had provoked it' (*Aftermath*, p. 7).
[97] Hengehold, p. 198.
[98] Mardorossian, *Framing the Rape Victim*, p. 52.

his lawyer deflects his client's obvious culpability by invoking insanity plea.[99] The burden to refute it rests solely with Brison who was 'the only one who knew how he'd behaved' at the time.[100] 'I wanted the court to get it right,' she remembers, 'especially the part about my assailant's mental state at the time'.[101] Like the demands for her story's adherence to the standard rape narrative, the pressure to prove the attacker's sanity constraints Brison's testimony, which must establish the man's guilt above all else.

Rape trial proceedings presuppose, or even require, that the traumatized victim has already been able to overcome the bodily and psychological crisis in which her rape resulted.[102] Brison writes that the pressure to 'keep the story straight' disregarded and thus added to the anguish and confusion she was continuing to experience in her rape's aftermath.[103] In order to be able to present her testimony in a way that makes her witness credible and her accusation unassailable, she intently held on to details, repeatedly remembered the early narrative, and even practised delivering it in court.[104] All the efforts to keep the event alive in her mind were effectively preserving the state of 'heightened lucidity' and unrelenting vigilance she experienced as the attack was taking place.[105] '[T]he requirement for truth,' then, binds the survivor to the scene of extreme violence to which she must continue to return in memory.[106]

Brison is free to 'leave at least some of the horror behind' only after her testimony is heard and acknowledged.[107] When the judge announces the verdict charging her attacker guilty with rape and attempted murder, she experiences an immediate physical release: 'my body was shaking, wracked with sobs, although I didn't really feel anything but a sudden unclenching'.[108] Her factually accurate and consistent testimony has now become a part of the body of collected evidence on which her case and trial were based. Since she is no longer required to keep her memory of the attack intact and unchanging so that all the details come together in a convincing and believable narrative, she can begin to reflect on,

[99] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 108.
[100] Ibid, p. 106.
[101] Ibid, p. 109.
[102] Hengehold, p. 198.
[103] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 108.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, p. 109.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, p. 108.
[108] Ibid.

not just recall, the event. Being able to 'let down my guard, get fuzzy about the particulars,' Brison writes, enables her 'in a sense, [to] forget what had happened to me. Now I could afford to think about it'.[109] Her memory is no longer to be merely preserved; it can now be actively engaged. Instead of taking her back to it, now remembering makes it possible for her to return from the site trauma.

Consequently, Brison distinguishes between the descriptive and transformative, or healing, aspects of any single trauma testimony.[110] Relying on her ability to recall in detail the events 'as they occurred,' the victim's report establishes historical facts.[111] The descriptive aspect of testimony takes precedence in the legal context, which requires that the survivor's testimony is 'as close to a snapshot as possible—a story unmediated and unchanging—from the perspective of a detached, objective observer'.[112] In turn, testimony's transformative potential lets the survivor work through her memories of trauma as she narrates her story without the pressure to 'get it straight'.[113] Since the survivor is not constrained to just report what happened, she can reconceptualize and reevaluate the significance and meaning of the event. Importantly, such reflective engagement facilitates the survivor's recovery by encouraging the integration of traumatic memories into her ongoing life narrative.

The shift from testimony's descriptive function to its transformative potential brings about a change in the very motivation for 'the imperative to tell and be heard,' as Dori Laub calls trauma survivors' compulsion to articulate their experience.[114] Brison also differentiates between living to tell and telling to live, 'that is between getting (and keeping) the story right in order to bear witness and being able to rewrite the story in ways that enable the survivor to go on with her life'.[115] While the former enables justice to be done, the latter can do

[109] Ibid, pp. 108-9.
[110] Brison's reflections on the enabling potential of narrating—orally or in writing--the traumatic experience point to some of the therapeutic benefits of scriptotherapy, Suzette Henke's term referring to 'the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment' (p. xiii). Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
[111] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 72.
[112] Ibid, p. 109.
[113] Ibid, p. 72.
[114] Laub, 'An Event', p. 78.
[115] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. xii.

justice to the survivor's experience insofar as it openly acknowledges the irreparable harm and creatively strives to transcend the limits trauma has so violently imposed.[116] Central to the survivor's survival and recovery, living to tell and telling to live do not as much contradict each other as they reveal a tension between the distinct narrative function each of them serves.[117] By emphasizing 'one rigid version of the past' and thus placing lesser importance on the survivor's present, Brison argues, living to tell may stall recovery.[118] As the survivor bears witness to what happened to her, she is looking back, not forward. In telling to live, on the other hand, retrospectively oriented memories enable and promote prospective remembering. Telling to live, Brison explains, is:

> […] a kind of letting go, playing with the past in order not to be held back as one springs away from it. After gaining enough control over the story to be able to tell it, perhaps one has to give it up, in order to retell it, without having to 'get it right,' without fear of betraying it, to be able to rewrite the past in different ways, leading up to an infinite variety of unforeseeable futures.[119]

Through telling to live the future trauma foreclosed can be opened up. Not limited to factual reconstruction, the retelling invites the survivor's interpretation and reflection, it also accounts for the aftermath in which the survivor continues to confront trauma's effects at the same time as she seeks to accord new meanings to the event. Telling to live, then, at once reckons with and counteracts the obliterating violence of the traumatic event.

Similarly, reflecting on his work with Holocaust survivors, Laub also links survival with the telling of a trauma narrative: 'The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story in order to survive' ('An Event', p.78).

[116] My distinction draws from the insights of Brison and Hengehold, respectively. While Brison recognizes that her court testimony has to be shaped in a specific way so as to 'enable justice to be done' (*Aftermath*, p. 7), Hengehold argues that the legal setting precludes the survivor from being able to testify in a way that would 'do justice' to the incompleteness of her own evolving sexual and self-understanding and her desire to perceive herself throughout its evolution as an agent with legitimate desires and the power to satisfy them' (Aftermath, p. 193).

[117] Following Judith Herman, Brison identifies the following as the key tasks trauma survivor must complete in order to recover as follows: repossessing self-control, forming a narrative of the traumatic event and assimilating it into one's life (Aftermath, p. 103).

[118] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 103.

[119] Ibid.

The reparative potential of retelling fits in with Brison's understanding of trauma as a forceful introduction of a 'surd' into the victim's life. In its mathematical sense, a surd is a nonsensical entry, which interrupts 'the series of events in one's life, making it seem impossible to carry on with the series'.[120] Before the attack, Brison took it for granted that her present would extend into a future; even though she could not accurately predict what would happen to her, she could imagine, or envision, certain aspects of what awaited her.[121] The attack, however, shattered Brison's assumption that her life would continue to unfold in a way that would give it coherence and meaning. Similarly, she could no longer discern any recognizable and reassuring pattern when recalling her life prior to the attack. It became impossible for Brison to depend on 'a remembered and ongoing narrative about [her]self' to make sense of her life.[122] Since the trusted and familiar narratives—about who she was, about what her life stood for and about what she could expect from her future—turned out to be irreconcilable with trauma, her interpretive framework suddenly disintegrated.

Whereas the mathematical definition of a surd focuses on trauma's intrusive and disruptive effects, its linguistic definition, 'a voiceless sound or a sound dampened or deadened by a mute,' highlights another aspect of extreme violence.[123] The trauma victim 'has been reduced to silence, to the status of an object, or, worse, made into someone else's speech, an instrument of another's agency'.[124] Forced silencing prevents the victim from being able to assume the position of a subject; rendered voiceless, she must submit to the imposition of the perpetrator's will. Feeling that her survival depends on her ability to communicate with her attacker, Brison attempts to talk to him during the assault.[125] Her pleas do not assuage the violence, however, and the man walks away only after Brison falls silent and pretends to be dead. In the attack's aftermath, Brison's ability to speak remains compromised: 'I lost my voice, literally, when I lost my ability to continue my life's narrative. I was never entirely mute, but I often had bouts of what a friend labelled 'fractured speech''.[126] Preventing Brison from being able 'to string together a simple sentence without the words scattering like a broken necklace,' stuttering and stammering are the lingering effects

[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid, pp. 103-4.
[122] Ibid, p. 49.
[123] Ibid, p. 103.
[124] Ibid, p. 55.
[125] Ibid, pp. 88 - 89.
[126] Ibid, p. 114.

of the traumatic encounter.[127] While Brison gradually regains the ability to speak in English, she has permanently lost her fluency in French, the language in which she addressed her assailant.[128] The thrilling sense of freedom and adventure Brison always felt when speaking French is gone as well. Overpowered by the force of the traumatic violence, Brison loses the ability to exercise her self-competence; the concomitant loss of voice, or worse, of an entire language, manifests and exacerbates this loss.

It is only through narrative retelling, or telling to live, Brison suggests, that the survivor can effectively work through the crisis a surd, in its double mathematical and linguistic sense, introduces. After the traumatic event dismantles the comforting illusion of life's predictability, retelling makes it possible for the survivor to invent a new self and discover a new meaning for her life. In addition, as the survivor commits herself to the project of telling to live, she is able to reassert her subjectivity and resume agency through the verbal articulation of her experience. 'Narrative,' Brison explains:

> facilitates the ability to go on by opening up possibilities for the future through retelling the stories of the past. It does this not by reestablishing the illusions of coherence of the past, control over the present, and predictability of the future, but by making it possible to carry on without these illusions.[129]

The survivor who retells her life story, which now necessarily includes the traumatic event, has to abandon traditional storytelling paradigms because they fail to account for the disruption trauma introduces. The question she confronts, then, is not whether or not to tell, but *how* to tell her story.

Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self, to which Brison refers to as 'a record of my thinking about trauma and recovery over the past ten years,' represents her efforts to retell the story of her assault in a format that admits, without seeking to seal it off, the traumatic rupture.[130] Brison's own experience informs and inflects, but does not exhaust, her

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid, p. 115.
The connection between trauma and speech manifests itself again when Brison reacts to the news about her brother's suicide by becoming voiceless (p. 114).

[129] Ibid, p. 104.

[130] Ibid, p. xi.

discussion of trauma and its aftermath. A philosopher by training, she deems the conventions of intellectual inquiry her discipline embraces unsuitable for the task at hand. When, in search of an alternative model, Brison turns to survivors' memoirs, she is disconcerted by their tendency to depoliticize and privatize rape and trauma. Uncontainable within the intellectual and narrative frameworks readily available to her, her own story, Brison realizes, must be told differently. It is through '[t]heorizing in the personal voice,' the approach Brison eventually adopts, that she can most effectively address the complexity of her experience.[131] Accordingly, she thinks and writes about her assault and its aftermath in the context of philosophical, ethical, and political issues they have raised. Unlike narrative scripts that emphasize analysis over experience, or vice versa, *Aftermath* seeks to integrate both of them. In that regard, Brison's memoir answers Alcoff and Gray's call for subversive and transformative personal narratives in which rape 'survivors are authorized to be both witnesses and experts, both reporters of experience and theorists of experience'.[132]

Both a survivor and a theorist of trauma, Brison sees her assault's narrative retelling as an ongoing and open-ended undertaking.[133] Its purpose, she argues, is not limited to the reconstruction of the traumatic event and the restoration of order in her life. Since, as Brison puts it, '[t]he past continually changes as new parts of the pattern of one's life emerge,' retelling is a necessarily revisionary project; it encourages the survivor to critically re-evaluate the interpretive framework in which her own life story has been contained.[134] Fittingly, as a narrative retelling of her attack, *Aftermath* registers Brison's evolving understanding of trauma, aftermath and recovery. Initially, she embraces the view that the traumatic event shatters the victim's self because it violently undoes her 'remembered and ongoing narrative about oneself'.[135] The survivor's recovery, then, depends on a gradual integration of the trauma into her life story. In light of Brison's subsequent proposition that the extreme event inserts a surd, or a nonsensical entry, into the fairly predictable sequence of events in one's life, the greatest challenge confronting the survivor is carrying on with her life despite the disruption.[136] Later on, Brison revises these earlier theories. 'Recovery,' she

[131] Ibid, p. 29.
[132] Alcoff and Gray, p. 282.
[133] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 111.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid, p. 48.
[136] Ibid, pp. 103-4.

reflects, 'no longer seems to consist of picking up the pieces of a shattered self (or fractured narrative). It's facing the fact that there never was a coherent self (or story) there to begin with'.[137] Retelling, then, does not ultimately restore the worldview trauma has shattered. Brison no longer conceptualizes the goal of her recovery as an arduous, but possible nonetheless, return to the sustaining certainties and beliefs she had held prior to the attack. Rather, her new understanding of trauma and its aftermath stresses the importance of the survivor's ability to make meaning of events beyond her direct influence. Without conflating the inability to act with passivity, Brison extends the notion of agency so that it is no longer narrowly predicated on a person's ability to control what happens in his or her life. As she puts it, 'life is a story in the telling, in the retelling, and […] one can have some control over *that*'.[138] Even when her self-assertion was once impossible, the trauma survivor can have some power over how she comes to interpret and make sense of the event over time.

Involving the survivor's revision and reinterpretation, narrative retelling allows for the re-externalization of trauma and thus reverses the directionality of the original force of the traumatic event. In cases of human inflicted trauma, such as Brison's attack, the perpetrator's violence is directed towards the victim who cannot retaliate but must turn inward instead. Turned in, the traumatic violence breaks the ego's protective barriers and shatters the victim's psychic integrity, which cannot be restored unless the crisis has been re-externalized.[139] Acts of testimony constitute the victim's belated retaliation to the original violence insofar as it transforms the internal crisis into a narrative that articulates and verbalizes the survivor's response to the traumatic event. Importantly, at the same time, the re-externalization of trauma also counteracts the obliteration and silencing of the victim's self. Yet, Brison cautions, the survivor's retelling can never be a redemptive narrative with a satisfying ending.[140] It cannot, after all, undo the effects of trauma even as it sets out to redress them. The recuperated agency and voice belong to the surviving self, not the self-trauma shattered. Testifying to the attack, the survivor always bears witness to the self she has lost. Even though narrative retellings, or the repeated revisiting of the extreme event, allow the survivor to establish her present distance from it, they also reveal that the site of trauma must remain a point of no return.

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[137] Ibid, p. 116.
[138] Ibid, p. 115.
[139] Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 69.
[140] Brison, *Aftermath*, p. 117.

In the essay she wrote five years after the publication of *Aftermath* and seventeen years after the attack took place, 'Everyday Atrocities and Ordinary Miracles, or Why I (Still) Bear Witness to Sexual Violence (But Not Too Often)' (2008), Brison narrates her story once again.[141] Another retelling of the attack, this recent essay reads like a palinode, a simultaneous return to and a departure from her earlier characterization and understanding of the assault's impact on her life. Just as she does in her memoir, Brison emphasizes the continued importance of testifying to her experience of sexual violence. She notes, however, that her reasons for doing so have changed dramatically in the past few years. Bearing witness in public is not therapeutic for her anymore. As Brison puts it, she has moved on and 'moved beyond' both living to tell and telling to live.[142] The story of her rape, she reflects, 'has got shorter and less central to my life's narrative, until I now no longer need to tell it at all'.[143] The assault has ceased to figure as the central experience of her life. Its importance has receded so much so that Brison does not even consider sharing her story with people who are becoming her new friends, they do not need to be told about it in order to know and understand who she is.[144] If she does engage in yet another retelling, Brison does so because while she is testifying to her individual trauma she is also 'bearing witness to something much larger, and much worse, than what happened to me personally: namely, the atrocity of widespread and ongoing gender-based violence against women around the world'.[145] Brison's own rape motivates her public acts of witness, but the experiences of other women are its focus: 'I must tell the word about sexual violence—not because it happened to me, but because it happens to so many other women'.[146] Brison's story continues to matter precisely because it can, all too easily, become another woman's story.

In addition to explicating the ways in which Brison's public acts of witness realize her ongoing commitment to speaking against sexual violence in general, 'Everyday Atrocities and Ordinary Miracles, or Why I (Still) Bear Witness to Sexual Violence (But Not Too Often)' also retells the story of the attack's aftermath. Referring to a passage from *Aftermath*, in which she talks about having to take leave of her earlier self so that she might survive, Brison

[141] Susan J. Brison, 'Everyday', pp.188-98.
[142] Brison, 'Everyday', p. 195.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid, p. 188.
[146] Ibid, p. 192.

retracts that original statement.[147] She admits that 'In spite of my having written, years ago, that I died in that ravine, I now have more in common with my pre assault self than with the person I became for more than a decade afterward.'[148] Even though she continues to confront the trauma's lingering effects, such as susceptibility to depression, the fear of enclosed spaces, and the loss of the ability to enjoy solitary walks in the woods, Brison insists: 'I *have* regained my lost self'.[149] Recovery, after all, she suggests, is not just about being able to go on, it is, ultimately, about being able to go back to who you were before the unthinkable happened. The essay's conclusion reinforces Brison's revised idea of recovery from trauma as a return to the life the extreme event violently interrupted. After she assures her readers that she is 'no longer in the story' and has 'walked out of the picture,' she discloses her present location: 'I'm sitting at my piano, with a few good friends, making a joyful noise'.[150] The imagery invokes—and rewrites--the opening scene of *Aftermath*. She is not alone. Her song is not cut short; it is, in fact, amplified by the voices of those who will do her no harm.

[147] Brison, Aftermath, p. 22.
[148] Brison, 'Everyday', pp. 188-89.
[149] Ibid, p. 195.
[150] Ibid, p. 197.

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Rape Testimony in Contemporary Memoir

Amanda Spallacci

In her memoir, *Sex Object* (2016), Jessica Valenti asks:

> we still don't have a name for what happens to women living in a culture that hates them [...] what about those of us who walk through all of this without feeling any of it—what does it say about the hoops our brain had to jump through to get to ambivalence?[1]

Sigmund Freud conceptualizes ambivalence in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) as repressed aggression towards the lost object, and this inappropriate response to loss prevents the subject from completing the work of mourning.[2] Mourning, for Freud, is a healthy response towards the lost object that allows the subject to eventually overcome the loss. Conversely, Freud describes the subject who represses their aggression towards the lost object, resulting in a state of ambivalence, as being psychically stuck and unable to get over the loss; unlike mourning, the subject is melancholic.[3] With reference to rape testimonies as they appear within memoirs, specifically *Not That Kind of Girl* (2014) by Lena Dunham, *Sex Object* (2016) by Jessica Valenti, *Black Lotus* (2016) by Sil Lai Abrams, and *Hunger* (2017) by Roxane Gay, this article suggests that the history of rape laws in the United States, certain conventions of legal testimony, rape myths, and intersecting systems of oppression that make certain groups of women more vulnerable to acts of sexual violence—and their testimonies that are met with suspicion if they choose to report their rape—can produce a state of melancholia for these American authors. Furthermore, adopting Ruth Leys' claim that trauma and affect theory tend to 'espouse' an anti-mimetic or 'materialist position', which 'amount to a single logic', these tendencies in trauma and affect theory can produce a

[1] Jessica Valenti, *Sex Object: A Memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), p. 18.
[2] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914 - 1916): On the History of Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, eds. Anna Freud, Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Vintage, 2001).
[3] Ibid, p. 240.

narrow reading and analysis of rape testimonies.[4] I argue that memoirs, particularly those that feature a rape testimony embedded within a life story, require nuanced frameworks that can account for the complexity of these traumatic testimonies. I propose a framework that incorporates Anne Anlin Cheng's (2000) theory of melancholia, as well as Ruth Ley's (2007) theorization of guilt and Elspeth Probyn (2005) and Sara Ahmed's (2003) work on shame, and I argue that memoirs can serve as sites of political activism in which women can expose the limits of legal testimony in situations of rape, they can debunk and refute rape myths that undermine women's testimonies, and finally, these memoirs seem to demonstrate that melancholia, for African American authors, Abrams and Gay, is not a pathological form of mourning, but rather a state or site of resistance.[5]

Rape Laws and Discourses of Equality + Disproportionally High Rates of Rape in America = Melancholic Women

Cheng's work on adapting Freud's psychoanalytic theory of melancholia to include denial and exclusion — by positing melancholia 'as a kind of consumption' that denies and excludes the 'Other'— has shown a strong link between melancholia and conceptions of racial and cultural identities.[6] For Cheng, the racialized subject in the United States unconsciously experiences melancholia in order to live in a nation that purports a rhetoric of equality that *denies* the problematic and ongoing history of racism in America, maintaining a 'national topography of centrality and marginality' sustained by the 'exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others' to produce 'a dominant standard, white national ideal'.[7] Critics of psychoanalysis argue that the theory tends to universalize testimonies and subsequently fails to account for differences among subjects; however, Cheng challenges these critics by claiming that 'the psychoanalytic subject is universal only insofar as it posits every subjective

[4] Ruth Leys and Marlene Goldman, 'Navigating the Genealogies of Trauma, Guilt and Affect: An Interview with Ruth Leys', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 79:2 (2010), pp. 656 - 679.
[5] Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001);Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2005); Sil Lai Abrams, *Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity* (New York: Gallery Books / Karen Hunter Publishing, 2016); Roxane Gay, *Hunger: A Memoir of my Body* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).
[6] Cheng, p. 9.
[7] Ibid, p.30.

being as historical beings, embedded in time, family, and sociality', and, thus, rather than inscribing essentialism, psychoanalysis 'alerts us to context'.[8] By adopting Cheng's theory of melancholia in the context of rape in the United States, the following section outlines how the authors of the memoir may be forced into an unconscious state of melancholia.

Literary scholars and activists Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (1983), Saidiya Hartman (1997), and Valerie Smith (1990) contextualize contemporary discourses about rape through a historical investigation of rape laws in the United States as well as with an analysis of cultural discourses that link racial and gender oppression.[9] Dowd Hall argues that, as women are able to earn financial capital, they also begin to postpone marriage, live alone or as single heads of households, and, as a result, become 'easier targets for sexual assault'.[10] This capitalistic influence in particular, as Dowd Hall suggests, generates a sense of liberation contingent on a false promise of equal opportunity for women, and rape is used as a weapon to ensure that women are cast as marginalized in order to re-establish white men's dominant position in the center. This relationship of exclusion and retention of women within the public sphere can produce a melancholic female subject. According to Angela Davis (1983) and Valerie Smith, rape laws were constructed and established in the United States to protect the property of white men; since women were seen as property, any assault against a white man's daughter or wife was an assault against his property. The rape of an enslaved black woman could enter the law if the slave owner claimed damage of property; or, if the enslaved woman fought back against the rapist, who was usually the slave owner, then criminal charges could be made against the enslaved woman.[11] The repression of legal recognition of rape of black women 'was essential to the displacement of white culpability that characterized both the recognition of black humanity in slave law and the designation of the black subject as the originary locus of transgression'.[12] This historical context helps to

[8] Ibid, p. 28.
[9] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Mind That Burns in Each Body', in *Powers of Desire*, ed. by Christine Stansell, Ann Barr Snitow and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 328 - 349; Saidiya V. Hartman, 'Seduction and the Ruses of Power', in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 79 - 114; Valerie Smith, 'Split Affinities: The Case of Interracial Rape', in *Conflicts in Feminism*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 271 - 287.
[10] Dowd Hall, p. 342.
[11] Angela Y. Davis, 'Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist,' *Women, Race, Class*, (New York: Random House, 1983), p.172-202; Smith, p. 271 - 287.
[12] Hartman, p. 79 - 80.

explain black women's intersectional embodied experiences and the material practices that give credence to Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's claim that 'rape is an overwhelmingly intraracial crime, and the victims are more often black than white'.[13] Rape laws in the United States as well as the repression of their historical conception are meant to conserve and protect patriarchal power, yet they also deny this historical account by allowing women to bring forward allegations against men for sexual violence.

Referencing both her frustration with the criminal justice system's inability — which often seems like a refusal — to prosecute rapists as well as society's acceptance that 'some men do horrible things', Valenti claims that 'living in a place that has given up on the expectation of your safety means walking around in a permanently dissociative state'.[14] According to Valenti, women often believe that rape laws are in place to protect them, and they accept the narrative that violence against women is inevitable because to actually engage with these cultural narratives 'would be self-destruction'.[15] From a melancholic standpoint, Valenti seemingly suggests that, by promising women a false sense of safety and security, rape laws in the United States invite women into the public sphere where they are assaulted by men, creating a relationship of *exclusion-but-retention* that reaffirms white men's dominant position in the centre and women's place in the margins; furthermore, discourses like 'some men just do bad things' *denies* that violence against women is a serious problem. Valenti adopts the term 'dissociative' to name the psychic process into which women force themselves so that they can somehow live 'in a culture that hates them'.[16] A state of ambivalence, which Valenti uses interchangeably with the term dissociation throughout her memoir, appears to be equally apt in naming this phenomenon for the reader. If women believe that rape laws will protect them, they may choose to report their rape to the criminal justice system, and if the case is deemed serious enough, the survivor may have to testify about the rape in a courtroom in front of a judge, jury, defense lawyers, and the rapist in an experience that can re-traumatize the survivor.

[13] Dowd Hall, p. 334.
[14] Valenti, p. 16.
[15] Ibid, p. 18.
[16] Ibid, p. 16.

Memoir as 'Alternative Jurisdiction'

A rape testimony — delivered by a survivor in a juridical setting — is evaluated as evidence, and due to the relationship between testimony and the law, the court will deem the survivor's testimony as truthful if it adheres to the conventions of legal testimony, an often-impossible occurrence given the effects of trauma on memory. The survivor is required to provide a coherent, linear narrative, using comprehensive language; yet, following a traumatic event like rape, a survivor can experience effects of trauma such as denial, repetition, and dissociation that might cause the survivor to deliver a fragmented and non-linear testimony about the rape.[17] Selma Leydesdorff and Nanci Adler (2013) claim that the survivor's testimony — constructed by her memories of the event, which might not be accessible or completely intact because of the effects of trauma on the mind — becomes the 'proof for the legal truth'.[18] Defense lawyers can, and often do, exploit these effects of trauma and their impacts on the survivor's testimony in order to undermine and ultimately discredit the survivor's rape allegation.

Similar to the effects of trauma on memory and testimony, defense lawyers can also appeal to rape myths—which are misconceptions and misinformation about rape that circulate publicly and that Americans perceive as fact—and displace the blame of the assault away from the rapist and onto the survivor, using blaming tactics involving 'inappropriate' dress, substance use, the survivor's relationship to the perpetrator. Rape myths 'enter the law and permeate everyday life', and, according to Leigh Gilmore (2016), are used as a weapon to generate doubt about rape allegations in legal contexts, the media, and society against any woman who testifies about rape.[19] While rape laws and discourses about rape oppress all women in the United States, and can relegate them into a state of melancholia,

[17] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 39 - 47.
[18] Selma Leydesdorff and Nanci Adler, 'Introduction: On the Evidence Value of Personal Testimony, in *Tapestry of Memory: Evidence and Testimony in Life-Story Narratives*, ed. by Nanci Adler and Selma Leydesdorff (London: Routledge, 2013), p. xiii.
[19] Leigh Gilmore, 'Stanford Sexual Assault: What Changed With the Survivor's Testimony', *The Conversation, PBS,* 16 June 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/point-taken/blog/conversation-stanford-sexual-assault-what-changed-survivors-testimony/> [accessed 17 October 2016], n.p.

Sil Lai Abrams, an African American author, demonstrates how rape laws and rape culture produce even more dangerous circumstances for black women.[20]

Rape testimonies receive negative reception and criticism from a variety of institutions in the United States; however, a survivor's position of power in society, marked by race, class, gender, age, sexuality, and ability 'influence whether one is seen as credible or authoritative'.[21] In her memoir, *Black Lotus,* Abrams, a survivor who testifies that she was raped on two separate occasions by different men, confesses that she feels conflicted about her rape, and not because she does not accept that she was raped, but because she knows she will never receive justice, and expresses 'anger at the knowledge that if I were to come forward today, I would have to come armed with over fifty other women sharing a similar story — and would most likely still be branded a liar by society'.[22] As Abrams points out in her memoir*,* rape survivors experience trauma not only because of the violence of the act, but also when they attempt to navigate the criminal justice system because survivors are often not believed, especially black women. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray (1996) note that black women who have been raped by white men are much less likely to be believed than white women reporting rapes by men of oppressed races because, as Valerie Smith writes, 'a variety of cultural narratives that historically have linked sexual violence with racial oppression continue to determine the nature of public response' towards black women who disclose that they were raped.[23] Abrams demonstrates that African American women experience disproportionately high rates of sexual violence because of their embodied subjectivity, and are more likely to be silenced and disbelieved when they attempt to bring a perpetrator to justice.

Many survivors of different atrocities have historically refrained from testifying about their trauma in legal contexts and have used a variety of mediums such as memoir in order to circulate their account in the public sphere. Rape survivors experience injustice and are at

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[20] Sil Lai Abrams, *Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity* (New York, Gallery Books and Karen Hunter Publishing, 2016).
[21] Susan D. Rose, 'Naming and Claiming: The Integration of Traumatic Experience and the Reconstruction of Self in Survivors' Stories of Sexual Abuse,' *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives*, ed. by Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff and Graham Dawson, (New York: Routledge 1999), p. 160-179.
[22] Ibid, p. 241.
[23] Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?', in *Getting A life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography*, ed. by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 267; Smith, p. 274.

risk of being re-traumatized if they decide to testify within the criminal justice system; conversely, memoir, due to the genre's testimonial qualities, provides a creative medium for survivors to assemble their memories into a narrative — beyond a testimony of the event — and helps survivors to combat the ongoing problems that they encounter in the public sphere: conventions of legal testimony and rape myths. Life writing scholarship about testimony and human rights uses the legal rhetoric of forming an 'appeal', Meg Jensen (2014) argues; similarly, Leigh Gilmore (2001) classifies testimony as an 'alternative jurisdiction', while Cynthia Franklin and Laura E. Lyons (2004) suggest that delivering a testimony in the public sphere, outside of the legal system, is a 'profoundly political act'.[24] Abrams, Dunham, Gay, and Valenti never report or testify about the rape within the legal system; instead, they form an 'appeal' by testifying within an 'alternative jurisdiction': in this case, a memoir that circulates in the public sphere. Through a history of rape laws in the United States, and by outlining the negative effects that the conventions of legal testimony, rape myths, as well as patriarchal and white supremacy have on rape survivors, this section attempted to illustrate that rape survivors encounter a variety of barriers if they decide to speak about their rape in the public sphere. While memoir offers the survivor a medium to present their *own* story in the public sphere, the following section will explain how trauma and affect theory do not offer a sufficient reading, or, in other words, do not do *justice* to the rape testimonies in these memoirs.

From Trauma Studies to Memory Studies: Socio-political Contexts

Just as legal testimony is meant to uncover the truth of the event, trauma theory is also preoccupied with the traumatic event. Outlining the symbiotic relationship between trauma theory and the event, Allen Meek (2009) suggests 'that trauma theory seeks to establish some privileged or exceptional link between testimony, witnessing and the trauma event'.[25] Ruth Leys (2000) explains that the debate between the mimetic and anti-mimetic models of

[24]Meg Jenson, 'The Fictional is Political: Forms of Appeal in Autobiographical Fiction and Poetry', in *We Shall Bear Witness*, ed. by Meg Jenson and Margaretta Jolly (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), p. 152; Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 143; Cynthia Franklin and Laura E. Lyons, 'Bodies of Evidence and the Intricate Machines of Untruth', *Biography*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2004), p. IX.
[25] Allen Meek, *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 8.

trauma, which resulted in a turn to the anti-mimetic model in contemporary trauma theory, is responsible for the concern with the traumatic event. For Leys, the practice of hypnosis—during which the patient's mind leaves their body and they lack any control of responsibility—demonstrated the 'psychical dissociation from the self' that causes the survivor to involuntarily identify with the aggressor that occurs during trauma and played a major theoretical role in the conceptualization of the mimetic model of trauma.[26] Like hypnosis, the photograph's ability to capture and present a traumatic event, then to reproduce and circulate its image, peeked the attention of clinical psychologists such as Elizabeth Brett and Robert Ostroff along with Bessel van der Kolk, to name a few, who were responding to changes in the fields of neurobiology and psychology — in particular, the turn away from psychoanalysis — and the traumatic image became a means of understanding trauma as an anti-mimetic phenomenon. The anti-mimetic model purports that memories of a traumatic event do not include a subjective or cultural mediation at the conscious or unconscious level, but, instead, that trauma is the result of an external event that traumatizes a sovereign autonomous subject, and 'the record of [the] unassimilable event is dissociated from memory'.[27] Leys (2007) argues that the conceptualization of the 'traumatic image, conceived as an "iconic" memory that haunts the victim in the form of flashbacks, dreams, and other intrusive repetitions [...] has come to dominate American discussion of trauma'.[28]

Due to the fraught relationship between rape and the law, and to the fact that, in most cases, a survivor will never be able to provide material evidence for the rape, trauma theory's commitment to trauma as bound up in the external event is problematic for reading rape testimonies. In particular, some trauma theorists in the humanities, most famously Cathy Caruth, argue that the flashbacks or nightmares that a survivor experiences after the event are 'traces' of the event, or, as Susanna Radstone (2007) calls them, 'traceless traces'.[29] Caruth's popular claim that the traumatic nightmare is defined as an unclaimed experience — as a 'literal', unmediated, and unassimilated trace of the trauma, that is beyond representation — authenticates survivor testimonies because it links the concept of

[26] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.9.
[27] Susana Radstone, 'Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics', *Paragraph*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2007), p. 14
[28] Leys, *From Guilt to Shame*, p. 50.
[29] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4; Radstone, p. 20.

'unclaimed' traces or experiences to a real, external traumatic event.[30] More simplified, this theory deems these unassimilated traces proof of the traumatic event.[31] This theory has undoubtedly helped scholars to read survivor testimonies — especially Holocaust testimonies — and to prescribe survivor testimonies as valid historical accounts by connecting them to their traumatic origin. Caruth's theorization of trauma, especially her formulation of belatedness and repetition, is important for understanding rape testimonies because it explains why some survivors do not report their rape immediately following the event and why conventions of legal testimonies, that are predicated on coherence, linear narrative structure, and comprehensive language, are impossible conditions that rape survivors are forced to meet in the criminal justice system.

After Dunham is raped by a man from college named Barry, she casually offers the details of the previous night to her friend Audrey who, startled by the news, grasps Dunham's hand and sympathetically classifies the event as rape.[32] At her friend's suggestion that she is a victim of sexual assault, Dunham's only reaction is to ' [...] burst out laughing'.[33] While this reaction could be read as a form of denial for psychological protection, it also indicates Dunham's inability to comprehend this encounter as rape because it deviates from dominant narratives of rape that imagine violent strangers in dark alleys. Such 'rape myths' are culturally pervasive, and they regulate social, as well as legal, discourses of what 'counts' as sexual violence.[34] As a result, Dunham finds the comparison between the two extremely contrasting experiences / ideas laughable. Trauma theory asserts that trauma is not always registered at the time of the traumatic event, but returns to haunt the survivor later in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and hallucinations, and while this conception of belatedness can explain why Dunham does not initially agree with Audrey that she was raped, it does not account for the complexity of Dunham's testimony beyond the event. While trauma theory can explain the effects of trauma on the mind and testimony, in the context of rape, it does not account for the rape myths that survivors have internalized nor the survivor's subject position and the role that these cultural influences play in mediating traumatic memories.

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[30] Caruth, p. 4.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Dunham, p. 61.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Erlich, Susan. *Representing Rape: Language and Sexual Consent.* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 29.

Conversely, memory studies accounts for the cultural context in which survivors negotiate their trauma and explains how traumatic memories are contingent on mediation in both the private and public spheres.

Memory studies is a multidisciplinary field that combines concepts from anthropology, literature, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology.[35] Cultural memory includes a vast spectrum of memory practices as possible objects of cultural memory studies, such as post memory (Marianne Hirsch: 2008), multidirectional memory (Michael Rothberg: 2009), transcultural memory (Dominick LaCapra: 1994, 2011), and prosthetic memory (Allison Landsberg: 2001), among others.[36] Cultural memory is defined as the 'interplay of the present and past in sociocultural contexts'.[37] In other words, memory implies a relationship to an event that took place in the past; however, memory studies are concerned with the ways in which a memory of the past is negotiated and remembered in the present given specific sociocultural contexts. Yet, a definition of culture—as the term is understood in cultural memory studies—is equally valuable. According to Astrid Erll (2010), culture is defined by a three-dimensional framework comprising 'the social (people, social relations, institutions), material (artifacts and media), and mental aspects (cultural defined ways of thinking, mentalities),' and all three dimensions are involved in the 'making of cultural memories'.[38] With respect to testimonies of rape as they appear in memoir, scholars should account for the way that survivors select specific memories and transcribe these memories into narrative forms (memoir) within the current socio-political context, in which the social (institutions such as the criminal justice system), material (the media), and mental aspects (rape culture) try to suppress, silence, and discredit survivors' testimonies.

Dunham's testimony, about a sexual assault that begins as consensual with an acquaintance, problematizes dominant discourses about rape and points out that not only

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[35] Henry L. Roediger III and James V. Wertsch, 'Creating a new person of memory studies,' *Memory Studies,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2008, p. 9.
[36] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust,* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization,* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009); Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust,* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
[37] Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,' in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook,* ed. by Sara B. Young, Ansgar Nunning, and Astrid Erll, (New York: Walter de Gruyter Gimb H & Co. KG, 2010), p. 2.
[38] Ibid, p. 4.

must she mediate these rigid cultural narratives about rape, but also that having to navigate these rape myths is traumatic as well. By presenting flashbacks of her childhood throughout her rape testimony, Dunham demonstrates that these past moments, in which she 'learned' about rape throughout her life, return to haunt her after the rape and become a part of her trauma. At age seven, Dunham learns the word 'rape' and recalls that she pronounced it 'rabe' like the playwright, using it with 'reckless abandon'.[39] Ironically, the word 'learned' displays a complete misunderstanding of the language and definition of rape. Similarly, years later, Dunham consents to sex with a man named Barry, and as she slips in and out of consciousness, she notices that even after numerous requests that Barry wear a condom, he continues to remove it. Dunham consents to sex with a condom, and Barry's refusal to do so undermines Dunham's agency; yet, her level of intoxication harms her autonomy and her capacity to actively consent to any sexual act with Barry. Even though Dunham is in excruciating physical and emotional pain the following day because the sex with Barry was '*terribly aggressive',* her friend Audrey's assertion that Dunham was raped makes Dunham laugh, and while this response might be a form of psychological denial, it also indicates Dunham's inability to comprehend this encounter as rape because it deviates from dominant narratives of rape. According to David Lisak (2008), who researches sexual assault, when people hear the term 'rapist', many of them think of a 'guy in a ski mask, wielding a knife, hiding in the bushes,' and while this image is frightening and does happen, well over 80% are actually non-stranger rape.[40] Dunham's understanding of rape has been shaped by these misconceptions, and like her seven year old self, after she was raped by Barry, Dunham lacks the language and ability to define this experience as rape. While memory studies can account for the socio-political context of rape myths that most women in America must navigate, which compounds the trauma from being raped, affect theory can attend to the subject's identity and the relationship between rape trauma, identity, and remembering.

[39] Dunham, p. 55.
[40] David Lisak, *Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence* (University of Massachusetts at Boston, 2008), p. 2.

From Trauma Studies to Affect Theory: Embodied Subjectivity

The position that a survivor occupies in society makes them more vulnerable to certain forms of violence, like rape, and their testimonies are more likely to be met with suspicion and disbelief. Testimony, within the field of trauma studies and particularly through the work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) and Cathy Caruth, carries an ethical dimension: as Caruth argues 'that the history of trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another'.[41] In other words, the survivor cannot bear witness to the event without witnessing oneself, and so they require another person to bear witness to the testimony of trauma; yet, Amber Dean (2015) notes 'how overdetermined the language of *bearing witness* has become,' especially as this language is used to 'describe an empathetic or compassionate response to violence, suffering or loss'.[42] Leys criticizes Caruth's notion of bearing witness because she assigns victimhood not only to the survivor, but also to those who bear witness, and these witnesses are 'always marked by the difference and division that characterizes the traumatized subject'.[43] Like Leys, Dean argues that the notion of bearing witness 'stops short of a reconsideration of how we are ourselves implicated in the violence or suffering experienced by others'.[44] Trauma theory does not always account for embodied and cultural differences that make some subjects more vulnerable than others to certain forms of violence and disbelief surrounding their testimonies; instead, it homogenizes critical differences of subjectivity by positioning the witness as so empathetic that they can *know* the victim's experience, which has serious implications for rape testimonies. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith (2002) argue that witnessing violence in any form requires 'empathy as well as distance — being able to say 'it could have been me but at the same time asserting that "it was not me"'.[45] With respect to rape, Leydesdorff and Adler argue that 'courts seek testimony, but they do not want life stories', and, as a result, 'judges

[41] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History,* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Caruth, p. 11.
[42] Amber Dean, *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 23.
[43] Leys, *Trauma*, p. 297.
[44] Dean, p. 23.
[45] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, 'Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction', *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2002), p. 10.

do not bear witness to the whole trauma'.[46] If rape is presented as a 'simple report' instead of a narrative about a life, a potential to 'essentialize experience and often identity [...] by obscuring the way in which experience itself is discursively mediated' manifests itself.[47] Affect theory, through the frame of the body, refuses essentialism by accounting for the embodied subject position of survivors.

Affect theory accounts for this tension because it focuses on individual subjectivity; according to Teresa Brennan, affects enter individuals, meaning '[p]hysically and biologically something is present that was not there before'.[48] Brennan argues that 'it is not genes that determine social life; it is the socially induced affect that changes our biology', and poses the question: 'to whom is affect directed?'.[49] Affect for Brennan, then, is not about what happens in the body, but about exchanges between bodies. In the context of rape, Jane Caputi adopts Brennan's framework and the transition of affect that she renames as "dumping" to explain that, through rape, negative and toxic affects are transmitted to the other. Rape and the subsequent affectual dumping is a process marked by power, and negative affects are more likely to be directed towards 'women, the poor, those stigmatized by racism, sexuality, age, and so on'.[50] Cultural labels and assumptions about certain groups of women make them increasingly vulnerable to sexual violence. Furthermore, by theorizing trauma through affect, Meera Atkinson and Michael Richardson (2013) acknowledge that feminist and critical race theorists have always focused on the body, and specifically those bodies most ignored, maligned, and exploited, whether in social, political or theoretical realms'.[51] Narratives about trauma may sensationalize trauma—a process which creates distance by placing the reader in a voyeuristic role—or incite an empathetic reading, which can depoliticize and universalize violence against women. Affect theory, however, intersects with feminist and critical race theory in order to account for the different ways in which women from different subject positions choose to represent their testimonies in their memoirs. While Dunham demonstrates that she has to navigate and try to refute rape myths

[46] Leydesdorff and Adler, p. 10.
[47] Alcoff and Gray, p. 283.
[48] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 1.
[49] Ibid, p. 2 and p. 48.
[50] Jane Caputi, ''Take Back What Doesn't Belong To Me:' Sexual Violence, Resistance and the 'Transmission of Affect, '' *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 26, No.1, 2003, p. 2.
[51] Meera Atkinson and Michael Richardson, *Traumatic Affect* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 7.

in order to come to terms with her rape, Abrams explains that she not only has to navigate rape culture, but also the cultural discourses and beliefs about her body and identity that make her more vulnerable to violence, and that her testimony is more likely to be met with suspicion.

In her memoir, Abrams describes how she had to construct a counter-narrative to the 'repetitive messages that black is dirty, coarse, violent, hypersexual, irresponsible, and ugly.'[52] Responding to the negative images and discourses about black women in mainstream contemporary culture, bell hooks (2015) argues that these representations of black womanhood originate from slavery and tend to objectify and over-sexualize black women.[53] One way to negotiate these cultural narratives for Abrams involved sleeping with white men in order to garner 'the white man's stamp of approval', but, looking back, Abrams realizes that as she was trying to elevate her self-esteem, these white boys were 'satisfying an urge' for a 'taste of the exotic'.[54] Through an analysis of representations of African American women in pornography, Patricia Hill Collins (1993) concludes that these images represent 'the continuation of the historical treatment of actual bodies' because these black women are often depicted in a submissive posture in a violent position of slavery, as opposed to images of white women in pornography.[55] These cultural narratives and representations speak to the continued oppression, specifically sexual violence, that black women experience in contemporary society. One particular night, Abrams wakes up and is being raped by a white man. She is eventually able to fight him off and runs into the kitchen for a knife. The friends in the surrounding rooms ask Abrams to leave, rather than the rapist. She confesses that no one in the room believed her when she said that she was raped because the boy 'was too good looking and popular.[56] Years later, as Abrams writes her memoir, she remembers that she blamed herself for being raped, but now she knows 'what this phenomenon is called: rape culture'.[57] Not only is Abrams raped by a white man who feels entitled to her body, but her friends also do not believe her testimony because her allegation is against a white man, and, because she has no recourse, Abrams begins to blame herself.

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[52] Abrams, p. XII.
[53] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation,* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 49.
[54] Abrams, p. 205.
[55] Patricia Hill Collins, 'Pornography and Black Women's Bodies', in *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography*, by ed. Diana E. H. Russell (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), p. 99.
[56] Abrams, p. 205.
[57] Ibid, p. 338.

The complexity of this passage and the layers of racialization, racism, and its internalization that Abrams must unpack in relation to her rape throughout the testimony requires much more than the empathic reading that trauma theory provides. Namely shame, examined through the lens of affect theory, theorizes the intersections of the body, identity, and trauma.

Affect scholars are interested in shame because, as they argue, shame serves as a site of resistance to cultural norms associated with identity, and as Probyn claims, sexuality is an 'area ripe for shame'.[58] Shame is part of identity because it goes to the 'heart of who we think we are' and coincides with embodied politics because it signals 'considerations of why one feels ashamed': as survivors share their life stories of trauma and their experiences of shame in the public, we begin to 'question of value systems'.[59] According to Sara Ahmed, 'the way in which pain of shame is felt upon the skin surface, at the same time as it overwhelmed and consumes the subject, is crucial'.[60] Shame, for Ahmed, becomes a part of identity, and stems from the relationship between trauma and the body. Shame is a social affect, meaning that feelings of shame are born out of socio-cultural contexts, and, as a result, has the ability to change; it depends on a spectator and is performative, making shame a productive site of resistance against cultural norms and possible healing from these oppressive norms. Gay and Abrams represent their testimonies about rape with a serious tone and use the word shame more often: Gay forty-six times, and Abrams twenty-one times, whereas Dunham and Valenti's testimonies embody a humorous tone and they use the word shame far less frequently (eight times each). By adopting affect theory to analyse the body and shame, and by noting the number of times the word shame appears in each memoir, I can account for the reasons why women feel ashamed after a traumatic experience such as rape and how their embodied subjectivity is part of this shame.

While studying a rape testimony as it appears in memoir, reading through the body and the affect of shame seems like a logical methodology. Leys, in an analysis of shame and guilt, argues that shame adheres to the anti-mimetic model—like the trauma theory developed by Cathy Caruth—and that guilt is an affect theorized through the mimetic model of trauma and through melancholia.[61] Similarly to Cheng's conception of racial melancholia,

[58] Probyn, p. X.
[59] Ibid, p. X, XIII, X
[60] Ahmed, p. 104.
[61] Leys, *From Guilt to Shame*.

Leys claims that under extreme instances of trauma, the survivor experiences hostile impulses out of fear that are repressed and turned against the ego and experienced in the form of guilt.[62] Conceptualizing guilt through mimesis was problematic for scholars who believed that psychoanalysis cast all survivors into the same mold, and that the mimetic model implied a sense of complicity between the survivor and perpetrator.[63] As a result, scholars turned away from psychoanalysis, which analyzed behaviour, and towards affect, which analyzed subjectivity; subsequently, discussions of shame replaced those pertaining to guilt in trauma and affect studies.[64] Yet, Gay admits that after she was raped, she often clung 'tightly, desperately, to [her] secret and [her] guilt and [her] shame'.[65] Like Gay, the authors of the memoirs use the terms 'guilt' and 'shame', often in the same sentence, indicating that the theoretical shift from guilt to shame, due to the shift from psychoanalysis and mimesis to materialism and anti-mimesis, ignores the real and lived experiences of both guilt and trauma in the memoirs. These memoirs require a framework that not only accounts for shame through affect, but that also considers guilt and the unconscious.

Memory, Affect, and Psychoanalysis

In the context of rape trauma, memory studies accounts for the socio-political contexts that include the rape culture and myths that survivors must navigate in order to mediate their rape; affect theory, through the body, accounts for a survivor's subject position and that certain groups of women are more vulnerable to being raped, and, through shame, considers the impact of trauma on identity; however, theory still has to account for the unconscious and the relationship between guilt and trauma. Rather than adopt the 'event-centered approach', which considers a 'sovereign, yet passive' subject, as the anti-mimetic trauma theory proposes, Radstone advocates that theories of trauma ought to account for the work in the humanities that conceptualizes 'a de-centered subject who is caught up in processes of symbolization, desire and fear that lie partly beyond the reach of consciousness'.[66] While affect undoubtedly accounts for a trauma survivor's subjectivity,

[62] Ibid, p. 41.
[63] Ibid, p. 83.
[64] Ibid, p. 137.
[65] Gay, p. 68.
[66] Radstone, p. 18.

Nathan M. To and Elena Trivelli (2015) argue that the complexity of psychoanalytic and the unconscious is absent from affect studies, even though, 'in the transmission of trauma, bodies and psyches intertwine, sharing and enacting many stories of history'.[67] Similarly, and with respect to trauma, Brennan asserts that trauma is directly linked to the transmission of affect because 'some of its victims testify with extraordinary activity concerning the experience of something infiltrating their psyches as well as their bodies'.[68] In this sense, trauma theory both within and beyond the humanities must account for the ways in which the personal, cultural, and traumatic, or rather how the 'inter-intra-subjective processes through which meanings are conferred, negotiated and mediated'.[69] According to Cheng, psychoanalysis allows for a reading beyond a 'single logic,' to borrow from Leys, because of the 'possibility that intra-subjectivity exists as a form of intersubjectivity and that intersubjectivity often speaks in the voice of intra-subjectivity: a mutually supportive system.'[70] Indeed, Cheng does not advocate for scholars in the humanities to revert back to psychoanalysis, but rather, and through an analysis of texts by African American Authors while using the melancholia of race as her framework, Cheng demonstrates that perhaps scholars never stopped using psychoanalysis. I suggest a reading practice that involves affect to account for embodied subjectivity, and psychoanalysis through melancholia in order to merge the psyche and body together in a theorization of trauma. As Jonathan Flatley (2008) argues, 'the aesthetic production of the melancholic may be an attempt precisely to combat depression, not, as one might assume, by way of an escape into aesthetic pleasures but precisely by directing her or his attention toward melancholy itself'.[71] This process defines the process at work in these memoirs, but for the authors' of these memoirs, melancholia does not stem from depression; rather, melancholia asserts itself as the survivors of rape trauma must navigate their memories through the trauma of rape, rape myths, and their own identity. Borrowing from Flatley, I argue that these memoirs invite a reading of melancholia through the formal elements of the text.

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[67] Nathan M. To and Elena Trivelli, 'Affect, memory and the transmission of trauma', *Subjectivity,* Vol. 8, No. 4 (2015), p. 311.
[68] Brennan, p. 121.
[69] Radstone, p. 18.
[70] Leys and Goldman, p. 677; Cheng, p. 28.
[71] Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 36.

In her memoir, *Sex Object*, Valenti explains that she was raped while she was unconscious at a party and states:

> I have never called this assault. I'm not really sure why. As a feminist writer I've encouraged others to name the thing that happened to them so our stories can be laid bare in a way that is inescapable and impossible to argue with. And I realize, and I realized then, that by definition penetrating someone while they are unconscious—even if you've had sex before with this person—is rape. I just have never wanted to call it that.[72]

Here, Valenti contests the public understanding of rape as something that everyone can or should easily name and explain, and indirectly exposes how the criminal justice system, an institution that is supposed to support and protect survivors, places unrealistic expectations onto the survivor and their legal testimony and creates favourable conditions for perpetrators, abusers, lawyers, and the public to discredit testimonies about rape. The title of the chapter in which this passage appears is 'Grilled Cheese', and the chapter begins with the following sentence: '**THE DAY AFTER HE FUCKED ME WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS, I HAD** Carl buy me a grilled cheese sandwich and French fries'.[73] An unmissable signpost to readers, the beginning of the opening sentence of Valenti's chapter appears in bold letters and foregrounds the assault, while the second half of the sentence is not bolded and describes the way in which Valenti responded to the rape. Valenti draws attention to discourses of disbelief and suspicion that surround rape testimony, especially when rape survivors display behaviours that defy the cultural expectations of how a rape victim should and would act following an assault. As Rennison notes, rape is the only 'crime in which victims have to explain that they didn't want to be victimized' because of the belief that the number of false allegations of rape is high, when in reality, the occurrence of false allegations is low, between 2-4 percent.[74] The second half of the sentence appears to be

[72] Valenti, p. 112.
[73] Ibid, p. 109.
[74] Rennison quoted in: Jane Brody, 'The Twice-Victimized of Sexual Assault', *New York Times*, 12 December 2011; Kimberly Lonsway, Joanne Archambault and David Lisak, 'False Reports: Moving Beyond the Issue to Successfully Prosecute Non-Stranger Sexual Assault', *The Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2009), p. 2.

much less significant than the first half, implying that, for Valenti, the fact that she was raped is much more important than the way in which she responded to the event, and this formal inversion demonstrates Valenti's struggle to understand her rape because she has consumed the cultural rape myths that prevent her from understanding her assault while simultaneously knowing that she was victimized. This internal struggle with her rape trauma, represented in the formal aspects of the chapter, demonstrate an unconscious melancholia.

Similarly, in a less humorous tone, Gay testifies about her rape and repeats the phrase "something terrible happened" and the word "consume" throughout the following passage:

> Something terrible happened. That something terrible broke me. I wish I could leave it at that, but this is a memoir of my body so I need to tell you what happened to my body. I was young and I took my body for granted and then I learned about the terrible things that could happen to a girl body and everything changed.
>
> Something terrible happened, and I wish I could leave it at that because as a writer who is also a woman, I don't want to be defined by the worst thing that has happened to me. I don't want my personality to be consumed in that way. I don't want my work to be consumed or defined by this terrible something.[75]

The repetition conveys Gay's rape as a deeply traumatic experience — one that continues to affect her life — that readers should take seriously. Furthermore, the repetition of the word 'consumption' represents the process of melancholia. Cheng, adapting Freud, describes melancholia as a consumption, in which the subject is in an endless condition of self-impoverishment.[76] Even though Gay was raped when she was twelve years old, she confesses that she continues to Google her rapist. Gay claims:

> I Googled him when I wrote this book. I don't know why. Or I do. I sat for hours, staring at his picture on his webpage on his company's website. It nauseates me. I

[75] Gay, p. 45.
[76] Cheng, p. 8.

> can smell him. This is what the future brings. I think about tracking him down the next time I'm in his city.[77]

The continuous consumption of images and information of her rapist indicates that Gay is in a melancholic state, and understanding melancholia as a consumption of self-impoverishment that, Cheng argues, 'is also nurturing', provides scholars with a framework to analyze these sections of Gay's text, rather than ignoring them because they denote a sense of mimetic identification.[78]

Melancholia as Resistance

Combining affect theory and psychoanalysis in order to analyze testimonies of trauma, through frameworks of mourning and melancholia with their related affects of shame and guilt, allows scholars to study rape testimonies as they appear in contemporary memoir. According to Leys, shame 'has been consistently theorized as a specular affect that has the fantasy of visibility and disclosure built right into it'.[79] As a result of this 'spectatoral' dimension, shame is a 'self-conscious action' which, I argue, designates shame as a performative affect. Melancholia and its related guilt are theorized as a failed sense of mourning, in which the survivor can never overcome their grief. Conversely, shame is aligned with mourning, in which a subject can overcome loss. The melancholic subject is stuck, while the mourning subject is about to triumph over the trauma. The following section analyzes the authors' choices to end the rape testimonies in particular ways; specifically, Dunham and Valenti choose to end the chapter by testifying that they have overcome the rape trauma, aligning their trauma with mourning, while Gay and Abrams do not indicate that they have moved on from the rape trauma, aligning their trauma with melancholia. In order to reach an understanding beyond the modern categories of knowing, a Black feminist poetics requires a suspension of these modern categories because 'blackness knowing and studying

[77] Gay, p. 84.
[78] Cheng, p. 8.
[79] Leys, *Trauma*, p. 133.

announces the End of the World as we know it'.[80] Gay and Abrams deny readers a happy ending by *not* performing that they have conquered the trauma, and rather than conceptualize melancholia as a state of pathological mourning, these authors demonstrate that melancholia can be a state of resistance.

Dunham and Valenti, perhaps unconsciously, perform a sense of healing from their rape. At the end of her chapter about her rape, Dunham accepts that she has been sexually assaulted, and after an emotional conversation with her partner, she looks in the mirror and concludes the chapter by saying: 'I look alright. I look like myself'.[81] Similarly, Valenti ends her chapter by declaring: 'I never saw Carl again. We never spoke after I left his apartment after eating my grilled cheese and French fries. He did give me cab money, though. And I know that I took it'.[82] Unlike Gay, who testifies that she continues to Google one of the men who raped her, Valenti tells readers that she never saw nor spoke to her rapist again after she ate her meal and took money from Carl for her cab ride home.

By contrast, Abrams concludes her rape testimony by proclaiming 'oh how the mighty have fallen', and Gay concludes by confessing to readers that 'those boys treated me like nothing so I became nothing'.[83] While the lack of closure through a performance of mourning might demonstrate a sense of pathological mourning, I suggest that the decision not to provide a happy ending for the reader is a state of resistance. In her analysis of Paul Gilroy and Saidiya Hartman, Cheng reminds readers that, even during slavery, outsiders might view suicide as a sign of defeat; however, in a system in which survivors are devoid of will, suicide is a chance for survivors to reclaim a sense of agency in a capitalist system that is contingent on slave labour.[84] In other words, 'under extreme conditions', the management of grief 'exceeds our vernacular understanding of agency'.[85] My argument does not suggest that racialized women cannot or do not move on from the rape trauma; instead, I do not take melancholia as a pathological form of mourning, but as a form of resistance that demonstrate Abram and Gay's resilience.

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[80] Denise Ferreira Da Silva, 'Towards a Black Feminist Poetics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World', *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research,* Vol. 44, No. 2 (2015), p. 83.
[81] Dunham, p. 66.
[82] Valenti, p. 118.
[83] Abrams, p. 335; Gay, p. 53.
[84] Cheng, p. 21.
[85] Ibid.

Abrams concludes her memoir by saying: '[i]t is my belief that the things that can destroy you can also rebuild you'.[86] She demonstrates resilience, having experienced oppression based on her Chinese and Black identity, and her feminine identity. As Cheng argues, reading race is a precursor to femininity because femininity comes to acquire its social and aesthetic values under the signs of racial difference.[87] Affect and trauma facilitate the impact of official narratives on such stories and people who narrate them, and in order to understand the complexity of rape trauma, and trauma more generally, scholars must expand their frameworks beyond dichotomies between the anti-mimetic and mimetic models of trauma, shame and guilt, the body and psyche, and between affect and psychoanalysis to account for aspects of trauma that may not have been previously considered.[88] Reading practices in the humanities are important because, for a testimony to be accepted or recognized as collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs argues that the memory must 'be functionally related to the achievement of the group goals of a community, and the content and structure of the memory have to exhibit meaningful relationships to these goals'.[89] Personal testimony and political activism about rape have begun to saturate popular culture across a variety of mediums, and these discourses expose issues such as the suspicion and disbelief with which rape testimony is often met in the juridical settings and the public sphere. Relatedly, rape testimonies, as they appear in memoir, demonstrate the complexity of trauma and demand more nuanced reading practices. More scholarship thus needs to be generated on memoirs that depict rape: we need to continue to explore forms of memory that challenge the conceptions of trauma and official historical accounts.

[86] Abrams, p. 566.
[87] Cheng, p. 21.
[88] To and Trivelli, p. 306.
[89] Halbwachs quoted in: Qi Wang, 'On the Cultural Constitution of Collective Memory', *Memory*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2008), p. 306.

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Book Reviews

Katherine Burn

A. Hinton, *The Justice Façade: Trials of Transition in Cambodia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Cloth, 304 pages, £80, ISBN 978-0198820949. Paperback, 304 pages, £24.99, ISBN 978-0198820956.

The Justice Façade by Alexander Laban Hinton published by Oxford University Press in 2018 is an ethnographic work incorporating phenomenology to explore the notion of transitional justice as utilised in the ECCC trials in Cambodia. Hinton's longstanding work as the president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, combined with his scholarship on the Cambodian genocide (see previously published, *Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer,* 2016) provide an enriched lens in which to disrupt traditional representations of trauma. Hinton's aim is to reorient the accepted understanding of 'transitional justice' towards a more nuanced account through the methodology of phenomenology. Transitional justice asserts a binary in which the reparations of global atrocities inform a veneer of supposed democratic freedom and justice as everyday struggles are ignored in favour of this progressive façade. Previous academic scholarship, Hinton asserts, also propagates this reductive tendency towards linear development as the 'progressivism of the transitional justice imaginary can also be seen in academic accounts, including the genealogies that assume rough early beginnings that come together in a swelling flow of global justice' (Hinton, 2018, p.13). The transitional justice imaginary is thus an extension of Kathryn Sikkink's notion of the 'justice cascade' (Sikkink's term charts the increase in reparative action on behalf of individual suffering present during events of human rights violations), reoriented through phenomenological analysis. The façade of transitional justice, Hinton convincingly argues, obscures the work at grassroots level, thus requiring a phenomenological lens which 'shifts the focus from totalizing universals to lived experience embedded in historical, social, and political contexts' (Hinton, 2018, p.25).

The explication of the 'justice façade' invokes a distinctly Heideggerian analysis as Hinton focuses on the limitations of everyday conventionalism, critiquing the parameters of transitional justice and its effect on the people at the margins of its supposed concern. The

published booklet by the KID (Khmer Institute of Democracy) featuring 'Uncle San, Aunty Yan, and the KRT (Khmer Rouge Tribunal)' (Hinton, 2018, p.65) illustrates Hinton's argument that justice is a linear movement from fascism to progressivism; a linearity that is reconstructed through the imaginings of the afflicted. The characterisation of Uncle San and Aunty Yan highlights the veneer of transitional justice as the booklet seeks to educate the Cambodian people in a largely Westernised format, ignoring Buddhist influence and the 'framing of Khmer ethnopsychology' (Hinton, 2018, p.170). Phenomenology enables Hinton to reorient the focus of the text towards a methodology aware of its own liminality as the ECCC (Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia) discounts the progression within Cambodia since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge and before the global intervention of the trial. The aim of the book situates temporality and the representation of trauma at the forefront of its investigation as Hinton criticises the grand narratives of hybridised global transitional justice, and instead seeks to explore the ramifications of the trial within the lives of the civil parties involved. Hinton notes that, 'while there are many strands of phenomenology, much of it follows philosophers like Heidegger and Husserl, who explored the way in which being is temporally mediated by a past, including the broader "lifeworld" (*lebenswelt*)' (Hinton, 2018, p.25). The methodology is informed by Heidegger's fundamental ontology, rather than continuing the Husserlian line of phenomenology, as notions of the everyday ('everydayness') are delineated through an analysis that simultaneously explores the past, present and future impact of trauma on the Khmer Rouge survivors. The text is less an exegetical account of Heideggerian analysis within trauma scholarship, than it is a robust practical application of phenomenological thought to contemporary anthropology, reinforcing the importance of the discipline as a radical lens in which to dislocate preconceptions of justice.

Hinton divides the book into three sections: Vortices, Turbulence and Eddies. The introduction exploring KRT outreach (as aforementioned), aesthetics and dramatic responses to the trial, 'Breaking the Silence' (Hinton, 2018, p.187) provide an original analysis of representations of justice that link phenomenological implications of everydayness with both the legal sphere of the trial and the groundwork conducted by NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations). The subsection, 'Self-portrait with a mirror', within the chapter on aesthetics interrogates local artist and survivor Vann Nath's response to the human rights violations occurring in S-21 (Tuol Sleng prison). Nath's self portrait provokes an

engaging discussion of the Lacanian mirror stage which also represents the gap between 'visual culture and what has been imagined, and never fully attained' (Hinton, 2018, p.132). Phenomenological analysis here presents itself as a fundamental tool in decoding 'visual culture' (Ibid) as Hinton extends the Heideggerian lens to discuss the impact of art as testimony. Nath's portrait informs his testimony in court which Hinton skilfully argues is the aesthetic work of the justice façade: a reductive, though persuasive, linear transformation between suffering and catharsis. Similarly, the ontological analysis of the *Breaking the Silence* play curated by the DC-Cam ECCC Outreach programme reveals the 'setting-into-work of truth' (Heidegger and Krell, 1993, p.211) nature of art in which a particular representation of culture is articulated, disclosing a space and manner of being. Both the portrait and the play are thus material components of the justice façade and Hinton's original analysis reinforces the dissemination of such articulation on grassroots levels.

In conclusion, *The Justice Façade* is an engaging and original contribution to trauma studies. The analysis (which I have here explicitly analysed as Heideggerian) is only implicitly stated as the text *applies* phenomenology rather than *describing* its origins e.g. Husserl and Heidegger are briefly mentioned in the introduction however they do not reappear throughout the text. Hinton's heterogeneous work parallels the hybridity of global justice and the result is a persuasive and exciting new addition to the field.

A. Hinton, *Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). Cloth, 360 pages, $104.95, ISBN: 978-0-8223-6258-6. Paper, 360 pages, $28.95, ISBN: 978-0-8223-6273-9.

Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer also by Alexander Hinton published by Duke University Press in 2016 adds to anthropological scholarship investigating the Cambodian genocide. Hinton's text investigates the trial of Duch (original name Kaing Guek Eav aka Kiev), the Khmer Rouge cadre who ran S-21 between 1976-1979. The text presents an intriguing argument, once again utilising the lens of phenomenology, to explore the space between the role of man and monster. Hinton cites Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* as the genesis of the provocation: how do we account for the atrocities of humanity? The answer, as argued throughout the text, lurks in the banality of

everyday violations as acts of thoughtlessness – Duch presents himself as a maths teacher seduced by the regime; a communist wanting to improve the life of the Cambodian people. The text successfully explores the liminality between the representation of a (self-aware Judeo-Christian) impression of evil and the man on trial seeking forgiveness.

The original methodology reinforces the turn towards more diversifying narratives within trauma studies. Hinton's excellent abecedarian, 'Apology. Blank ink. Confession. Conversion. Christianity…' reveals a stylistic approach that combines the aesthetics of phenomenology with piercing analysis, whilst successfully evading rhetoric. Duch's life is starkly represented through a series of provocative images, 'Smash. To crush or reduce to nothing. A Scream. Silence' (Hinton, 2016, p.43) whilst never appearing gratuitous, 'Zero. Empty. No enemies. Unmarked' (Ibid). The segment prefaces the chapter on Confession and provides an alternative reading as the mundane is contrasted and thus connected to acts of atrocity. Hinton's phenomenology works as an applied tool and the abecedarian highlights the necessity for representations of lived experience.

Hinton seeks to recalibrate the framing prevalent in trauma narratives, 'these frames have both a public and private life' (Hinton, 2016, p.11). Such frames reiterate the binaries existing within representations of human rights violations, i.e. good and evil, suffering and catharsis, the barbaric and progress. Hinton's focus on the banal thus inhabits the context within such framing – he uses the portrait of Duch from the museum at Tuol Sleng which is continuously defaced – to illustrate his argument, adding yet another dimension of the uncanny. This hybrid approach provides a new image of Duch as someone haunting and haunted, yet the explication of the trial contests the inclination to overly sympathise (a critique that Hinton is aware of and thus addresses). Focusing on the redactic as the accumulation of the 'uncanny's suggestion of excess, overflow and eruption' (Hinton, 2016, p.32), Hinton's work examines the 'excess' (Ibid) prevalent within the banal – Duch's portrait, for example, appears evil due to the eyes being crossed out which he initially analyses as a Judeo-Christian depiction of wickedness rather than the Buddhist concept of ignorant blindness. Representations of trauma, therefore, have a tendency to operate within didactic frames presupposing a specific socio-economic context however the overspill of meaning has largely been ignored. The portrait conceptualises the work of the redactic as Hinton reconsiders his original reading after exploring the lives and everyday motivations of the survivors.

The text considers alternate portrayals of Duch from 'Cog' to 'Master' and 'Zealot' before concluding with the 'Redactic: Final Decision' (Hinton, 2016, p.243). Duch's trial consists of graphic testimonies which Hinton handles with care as he continually seeks to explore the unspoken, 'cracks were beginning to emerge in the Trial Chamber's carefully crafted judgement, as what had been redacted by its articulation suddenly appeared in a torrent of emotion and criticism' (Hinton, 2016, p.242). *Man or Monster?* concludes with a final reflection on framing as Hinton notes that during his research, he watches himself on a recording of Duch's final sentencing, 'I see an image of the image of someone looking at an image. I look at it again and again. I'm almost positive. But the picture is slightly blurred' (Hinton, 2016, p.255). The uncanniness of his own reflection links Hinton's original analysis of Duch's portrait at Tuol Sleng with his deferred presence at the trial, conceptualising the work of the redactic as diachronic. Hinton's analysis invokes a highly original voice, one which resonates throughout his work as a destabilising presence, making the reader doubt their own ethical preconceptions. The temporality of the trial is, therefore, reconstituted as Duch's immediate gesticulations/admissions are cross-referenced with lingering Khmer ethnopsychology revealing the problematic global (Westernised) framing that is transposed onto the work of the ECCC.

In conclusion, the 2016 text thoroughly interrogates the trial of Duch without reductively formalising a conclusion – he exists somewhere within the binary of his representation. Hinton's phenomenological method creates an engaging read as the narrative oscillates between synchronic analyses of the accused, 'Duch remained on his feet, hands clasped just below his belt, fingers fidgeting…' (Hinton, 2016, p.69) and more diachronic observations from the trial, 'the process rendered a social order, through a "disposition" that set things properly in favour of abstract truth' (Hinton, 2016, p.241). The result is a powerful reading of the trial that clearly inspires the following (and aforementioned) text published in 2018. Combined, both monographs present a new orientation within trauma studies, resurrecting the phenomenological lens as a radical methodology in its ability to interrogate the unspeakable.

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Clíona Hensey

Clíona Hensey recently completed a PhD at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Her Irish Research Council-funded project, titled “Reconstructive Performances of Memory and Trauma in Life Writing by Daughters of Harkis”, seeks to explore the imaginative and dialogic intersections between memory, trauma and witnessing in a corpus of texts written by daughters of harkis whose families sought refuge in France after the end of the Algerian War in 1962.

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Amanda Spallacci is a SSHRC doctoral fellow and PhD candidate at the University of Alberta. Her research intersects trauma theory, affect theory, and memory studies in life writing and film. Her dissertation is tentatively titled *Reading Contemporary Memoirs about Rape in the Wake of #MeToo*.

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Laura May Webb recently graduated from Swansea University with her doctoral thesis entitled 'Redefining Testimonio: The Enduring Significance of Testimonial Writing in Post-Dictatorship Argentina'. Her work focuses on the representation of trauma and memory studies in contemporary Latin American literature. She has an MA in Literary Translation and a BA in French and Spanish. She is also a freelance proofreader and translator, part-time kickboxing instructor and mother of three spirited children, based in Swansea, South Wales.